

A Comparative Study of Lesson Topics in High School Textbooks Used in Japan, Korea and China

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Topics in language textbooks provide frameworks in which to introduce language forms (target structures and skills). Over more than three decades, notional-functional approaches and communicative language learning approaches to language learning have underpinned the view that lesson topics should be aimed at providing meaningful contexts to introduce language forms. The globalization of English further requires the development of topics which better represent the multinational use of English in high school English textbooks. Thus, topic content plays an essential role in textbook development. In the present study, therefore, we will investigate the lesson topics that appear in high school English textbooks used in Japan, Korea and China. The textbooks in each of the three countries will be classified according to the same criterion, the Nippon Decimal Classification (NDC), which is used by almost all of the libraries in Japan. The results will be compared in order to identify their characteristics. Furthermore, we will investigate the forms (e.g., explanations, narratives, dialogues) of lessons and consider the relationship

between the results of the content and the forms of the lessons. We will also consider topics by country in textbooks used in Japan, Korea and China at the end of the study.

Due to the lack of research attention into the content and topics of English textbooks, it seems as though much more emphasis has gone toward studying the skills-based approaches of language learning. In Japan there have been quite a few studies of textbook analysis about words and sentences, but it is rather difficult to find studies of lesson topics. The only studies about lesson topics in high school textbooks we were able to find in the literature in Japan include Toyoda (2004), Kawai (2004), Torii (1978), and Yasuhara (1965), which formed the primary basis of this study. While skills-based learning remains essential in English textbooks, the purpose of this study is to highlight the importance of the content and topics within these textbooks. It could be argued that due to the seemingly impressionable age of high school students, the content and topics found in their English textbooks may exert a greater influence on their attitude toward life, language learning and intercultural understanding.

The Japanese teaching guideline, *A Manual of the Course of Study for High School English Textbooks*, gives the textbook users detailed guidance in language materials such as pronunciation, vocabulary and collocations, sentences, sentence patterns and grammatical items. It also suggests that such lesson topics as everyday life, manners and customs, stories, geography, history, etc. should be included in the textbooks. Thus, the curriculum guideline has had an influence on the selection of lesson topics in Japan. This also holds true for Korea and China to a certain degree (Otani et al., 2004).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to compare the lesson topics, forms and topics by country in high school textbooks used in Japan, Korea and China, in light of the education policy as well as historical, social and economic contexts of each country. To this end, this study will examine English textbooks in these countries, report the data, and analyze the results in order to decipher the tendencies specific to each of the three countries. It is

our hope that the results of this study will influence textbook authors, publishers and other administrators in each of the countries so that they may have more interest in lesson topics and improve their textbooks.

METHODOLOGY: TEXTBOOKS AND NDC

Textbooks Used in Japan

In Japan there are six kinds of senior high school English textbooks

TABLE 1
Textbooks Used in Japan

Textbooks	Publishers	Year	Lessons
<i>Crown English Series I</i>	Sanseido	2004	8
<i>Crown English Series II</i>	Sanseido	2004	10
<i>Encounter English Series I</i>	Shubunkan	2004	8
<i>Encounter English Series II</i>	Shubunkan	2004	8
<i>Genius English Course I</i>	Taishukan	2004	12
<i>Genius English Course II</i>	Taishukan	2004	10
<i>Mainstream I</i>	Zoshindo	2004	10
<i>Mainstream II</i>	Zoshindo	2004	12
<i>New Legend English I</i>	Kaitakusha	2004	10
<i>New Legend English II</i>	Kaitakusha	2004	12
<i>One World English Course I</i>	Kyoiku Shuppan	2004	9
<i>One World English Course II</i>	Kyoiku Shuppan	2004	11
<i>Planet Blue English I</i>	Obunsha	2004	9
<i>Planet Blue English II</i>	Obunsha	2004	12
<i>Prominence English I</i>	Tokyo Shoseki	2004	10
<i>Prominence English II</i>	Tokyo Shoseki	2004	10
<i>Unicorn English Course I</i>	Bun-Eido	2004	10
<i>Unicorn English Course II</i>	Bun-Eido	2004	11
<i>Voyager English Course I</i>	Daiichi Gakushusha	2004	10
<i>Voyager English Course II</i>	Daiichi Gakushusha	2004	10
Total			202

authorized by the Ministry of Education; *English I*, *English II*, *Reading, Writing, Oral English I* and *Oral English II*. We examined specifically the main lessons in the textbooks, titled *English I* and *English II*, because they comprehensively integrate general language skills, and are used by almost all schools in Japan. We excluded the activities and exercises between the main lessons in *English I* and *English II* textbooks because they are not consistent with the topic focus of the lesson. The textbooks for *English I* and *English II* published in 2004 number 70 in all. There was a wide margin in the level of difficulty between the textbooks. The textbooks are sequenced based on their level of difficulty, ranging from 'very easy' to 'rather difficult.' In this study we selected 20 'rather difficult' textbooks. There were 202 lessons in total, as shown in Table 1.

Textbooks Used in Korea

In Korea, there are seven kinds of senior high school English textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. *High School English*, *English I*, *English II*, *English Conversation*, *Reading, Writing* and *Business English*. The textbook, *High School English*, is for a required class, and the others for the optional classes. For our research, we chose three different textbooks, *High School English*, *English I* and *English II*. Each lesson in these textbooks is composed of four sections to improve the learners' four skills. In our study, we examined their main reading passages because the stories were comprehensive and represented the topic focus of each lesson. Thus, we excluded texts of listening and speaking, and the exercises among respective lessons in *High School English*, *English I* and *English II*. In 2004, 15 textbooks for *High School English* and 10 for *English I* and *English II* were published. There are no major differences in difficulty level among the textbooks for each grade. The total number of lessons we examined in our research was 180, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Textbooks Used in Korea

Textbooks	Publishers	Year	Lessons
<i>High School English I</i>	Kumsung	2003	12
<i>High School English I</i>	Kumsung	2004	12
<i>High School English II</i>	Kumsung	2004	12
<i>High School English</i>	Sisayongo	2003	12
<i>High School English I</i>	Sisayongo	2004	12
<i>High School English II</i>	Sisayongo	2004	12
<i>High School English</i>	Chihaku-sa	2003	12
<i>High School English I</i>	Chihaku-sa	2004	12
<i>High School English II</i>	Chihaku-sa	2004	12
<i>High School English</i>	Dusan	2003	12
<i>High School English I</i>	Dusan	2004	12
<i>High School English II</i>	Dusan	2004	12
<i>High School English</i>	Chonjae	2003	12
<i>High School English I</i>	Chonjae	2004	12
<i>High School English II</i>	Chonjae	2004	12
Total			180

Textbooks Used in China

In the past, most of the English textbooks used in China were those published by the People's Education Press as authorized by the government. In recent years, however, the diversification of textbooks has been promoted. Textbooks published by other publishers have also been adopted to respond to the needs of local areas and various levels of students' scholastic ability. In this study, the textbooks published in Shanghai were examined, in addition to those published by the People's Education Press. On the whole, the textbooks are based on a topic-based syllabus. In addition, the topic in the main reading passage is consistently used in the other sections of each lesson. Thus, we analyzed only the main reading passages that were most representative of lesson topics. In this study, we focused on the main reading passage in each lesson and excluded other exercises, tasks and additional reading materials. There exist some differences in the level of difficulty among the textbooks. The textbooks published by People's Education Press, in which more lessons

are included, are the most difficult in terms of the level of vocabulary and the length of each reading passage. However, this fact does not affect the overall characteristics of lesson topics and forms. A total of 159 lessons were examined, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Textbooks Used in China

Textbooks	Publishers	Year	Lessons
<i>Senior English for China 1A</i>	People's Education Press	2003	12
<i>Senior English for China 1B</i>	People's Education Press	2004	10
<i>Senior English for China 2A</i>	People's Education Press	2001	12
<i>Senior English for China 2B</i>	People's Education Press	2001	12
<i>Senior English for China 3</i>	People's Education Press	2002	24
<i>New Century Senior English 1-1</i>	Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press	2001	10
<i>New Century Senior English 1-2</i>	Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press	2002	10
<i>New Century Senior English 2-1</i>	Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press	2002	10
<i>New Century Senior English 2-2</i>	Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press	2003	10
<i>New Century Senior English 3-1</i>	Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press	2003	8
<i>New Century Senior English 3-2</i>	Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press	2004	8
<i>Oxford English S1A</i>	Shanghai Education Press	1999	6
<i>Oxford English S1B</i>	Shanghai Education Press	1999	6
<i>Oxford English S2A</i>	Shanghai Education Press	2000	6
<i>Oxford English S2B</i>	Shanghai Education Press	2000	6
<i>Oxford English S3A</i>	Shanghai Education Press	2001	5
<i>Oxford English S3B</i>	Shanghai Education Press	2001	4
	Total		159

Criterion Used to Classify Lesson Topics: NDC

The Nippon Decimal Classification (NDC), which corresponds to the European Dewey Decimal System, was used as an analytical framework to classify the lesson

topics in each textbook. Table 4 shows the first ten classification items.

TABLE 4
The First 10 Classification Items in NDC

0	<i>General works</i>
1	<i>Philosophy</i>
2	<i>History</i>
3	<i>Social Sciences</i>
4	<i>Natural Sciences</i>
5	<i>Technology</i>
6	<i>Industry</i>
7	<i>the Arts</i>
8	<i>Languages</i>
9	<i>Literature</i>

TABLE 5
Hierarchy of NDC

0.General Works	50.Technology, Engineering	510.Construction, Civil engineering
1.Philosophy	51.Construction, Civil engineering	511.Mechanics and materials
2.History	52.Architecture, Building	512.Surveying
3.Social Sciences	53.Mechanical engineering	513.Designs and executions
4.Natural Sciences	54.Electrical engineering	514.Engineering of roads and highways
5.Technology	55.Maritime engineering	515.Bridge engineering
6.Industry	56.Metal and mining engineering	516.Railroad engineering
7.The arts	57.Chemical technology	517.Hydraulic engineering
8.Languages	58.Manufacturing	518.Sanitary and municipal engineering
9.Literature	59.Domestic arts and sciences	519.Pollution and environmental engineering

Each of these 10 items (in one figure) is classified into 100 more items (in two figures), and each of these 100 items into 1000 items (in three figures), and so on. In this study, we used up to 1000 classification items (0-999) though we will discuss only 10 classification items (0-9) in this study. Classifying lesson topics proved to be a difficult task because of the subjective nature of the work. In other words, lesson topics overlapped into several categories. Thus, many discussions took place to decide into which category to place a lesson topic. Table 5 illustrates the hierarchy of NDC.

Criterion Used to Classify Lesson Forms

Because there is no such established criterion as the NDC system to classify lesson forms, we supplemented 6 types of lesson forms in *A Manual of the Course of Study for High School English Textbooks* (1999) with 10 more lesson forms. Thus, we used the 16 lesson forms in this study (See Table 6).

TABLE 6
Criterion to Classify Lesson Forms

a	<i>Explanations</i>
b	<i>Dialogues</i>
c	<i>Narratives</i>
d	<i>Plays</i>
e	<i>Poetry</i>
f	<i>Letters</i>
g	<i>Biographies</i>
h	<i>Diaries</i>
i	<i>Essays</i>
j	<i>Interviews</i>
k	<i>Speeches</i>
l	<i>Songs</i>
m	<i>Current Affairs</i>
n	<i>Articles</i>
o	<i>Reportage</i>
p	<i>E-mail</i>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lesson Topics

Table 7 shows the results of lesson topics in the high school English textbooks used in Japan, Korea and China, which were classified according to the first 10 classification items in NDC in Table 4.

TABLE 7
Lesson Topics

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Japan	1.49	8.91	5.45	29.70	17.33	10.40	3.47	10.89	9.41	2.97
Korea	1.67	6.67	15.00	31.11	12.22	1.11	0.56	7.22	5.00	19.44
China	3.77	3.77	8.81	21.39	15.72	11.32	6.92	11.95	5.66	10.69

The largest number of lesson topics comes from *Social Sciences* (3) in all three countries. The lesson topics regarding *Social Sciences* (3) in Japan and Korea account for 30 percent of all topic categories, whereas those in China account for 20 percent. Under *Philosophy* (1), most of the textbooks in Japan deal with psychology, whereas those in Korea and China deal with ethics and morality. Under *History* (2), most of the textbooks in Japan and China deal with geography, whereas those in Korea deal with biographies. Under *Natural Sciences* (4), animals and medicine are the most frequently used lesson topics in Japan and China. However, in Korea, animals are not chosen in this field, although medicine is chosen frequently. The lesson topics regarding *Technology* (5) and *Industry* (6) account for 15 percent in Japan, 20 percent in China, and nearly zero percent in Korea. The lesson topics regarding *the Arts* (7) account for 10 percent in Japan and China, and 5 percent in Korea. Under *Languages* (8), the most frequently used lesson topics are about languages in general in all three countries, and the second most frequently used lesson topic is English. Japan uses this topic category most frequently in all three countries. Under *Literature* (9), the most frequently used lesson topics are British and American literature. There are

very few topics about literature of each of their own countries.

On the whole, China tends to pay more attention to the balance in the selection of lesson topics, compared with Japan and Korea. Also, *Social Science* and *Natural Science* topics are widely used in all three countries. These are thought to be the core areas of lesson topics. However, compared with Japan and Korea, China does not attach great importance to the role of *Social Sciences* in the adoption of lesson topics. Furthermore, the topics found within *Literature* are used considerably in Korea and China, while they are less frequently used in Japan. This fact seems to be related to the curriculum guidelines of the Japanese Ministry of Education, which places less emphasis on topics concerning literature. Also, much emphasis is placed on the topics of *History* in Korea. This tendency appears to be influenced by the foreign language education policy of Korea in which cultural traditions are more emphasized. Furthermore, the topics of *Technology* and *Industry* are notably used in Japan and China, whereas they are rarely used in Korea. Thus, this shows that the selection of topics is associated with the foreign language education policy of each country. The textbook topics in Japan and China are more relevant to the development of economy and industry, which are reflective of the education policy of the two respective countries. On the other hand, as Kawai (2004) points out, the larger number (compared with Japan and China) of Korean textbook topics that focused on history and cultural traditions are more reflective of the educational guidelines of Korea.

Lesson Forms

Table 8 shows the results of lesson forms in Japan, Korea and China, which were classified according to the 16 lesson forms in Table 6.

TABLE 8
Lesson Forms

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p
Japan	48.36	2.45	13.06	0.99	0	0.83	10.33	0.85	6.75	3.08	1.81	0	0.04	7.92	1.55	1.98
Korea	40.00	4.44	15.56	1.67	0.28	3.33	5.56	2.78	11.94	2.22	1.11	0	3.33	2.78	2.78	2.22
China	45.81	2.51	24.81	3.14	0	3.13	8.13	0.43	5.03	0.63	1.31	0	0.96	1.89	2.22	0

Explanations (a) represents the largest number of lesson forms in all three countries. The second most frequent lesson form is *narratives* (c) in all three countries. Except for these two categories, Japan has more *articles* (n), and fewer *letters* (f) and *current affairs* (m) than Korea and China. Korea has more *essays* (i), *diaries* (h) and *current affairs* (m) than Japan and China. China has more *narratives* (c) (they account for 25 percent of all) and *plays* (d) and fewer examples of *interviews* (j) and *e-mail* (p) (zero) than Japan and Korea. In China, narratives and story telling have traditionally been used as rhetorical styles; thus *narratives* and *plays* seem to be notably used in the textbooks. There are a few examples of *poetry* (e) which are found only in Korea. There are no examples of *songs* (l) in all three countries.

Overall, *explanations* and *narratives* are considered to be the major types of lesson forms. Also, *articles* in Japan, *essays* in Korea and *narratives* in China represent notable patterns of lesson forms. There is a possibility that rhetoric and culture are related to the preference and adoption of these patterns of lesson forms. However, this issue needs to be further investigated, based on a more detailed analysis of rhetorical styles.

Combination between Topics and Forms

Tables 9-11 show the combination between lesson topics and lesson forms in the three countries, in which the horizontal axis 0-9 show the lesson topics and the vertical axis a-p show the lesson forms.

The most frequent combinations of topics and forms are *Social Sciences* (3)/*explanations* (a), *Natural Sciences* (4)/*explanations* (a), *the Arts* (7)/*explanations* (a), *Languages* (8)/*explanations* (a), and *Literature* (9)/*narratives* (c). The combination with *Philosophy* (1) is *explanations* (a) in Japan and *narratives* (c) in China. It varies widely in Korea. The combinations with *History* (2) are *explanations* (a) and *reportage* (o) in Japan, *explanations* (a) and *narratives* (c) in China, and *biographies* (g) and *explanations* (a) in Korea. Lesson topics in the field of *Social Sciences* (3) were found to have the largest and most varied number of lesson forms in all three countries. Also, some lesson

TABLE 9
Japan

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
a	1	8.79	4	22.55	18.63	16.98	6	6	13.74		97.69
b		0.21		1.43	1	1			0.31	1	4.95
c		4	1	13		0.39	1	2		5	26.39
d								2			2
e											0
f				1.37					0.30		1.67
g			1	4.87	5	1		9			20.87
h			1	0.71							1.71
i	1	1		6	3	0.63		2			13.63
j		1		2.85	1.37				1		6.22
k				2				1	0.65		3.65
l											0
m				0.09							0.09
n	1	3		2	6	1			3		16
o			3	0.13							3.13
p			1	3							4
Total	3	18	11	60	35	21	7	22	19	6	202

TABLE 10
Korea

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
a	3	2	5	26	15	2	1	9	7		70
b			1	3	1			1			6
c		1	3	6						22	32
d										3	3
e										0.50	0.50
f		3								3	6
g			10								10
h		1	2	1						1	5
i	1	2		10	2			3		4.50	22.50
j			3	1							4
k		2									2
l											0
m				4	1				1		6
n			1	1	2				1		5
o			1	2	1					1	5
p			1	2							3
Total	4	11	27	56	22	2	1	13	9	35	180

topics tend to be correlated with a larger number of forms. In addition, there are more examples of the combination of *Social Sciences* (3) and *essays* (i) in Japan and Korea than in China. There are comparatively many examples of the combination of *Natural Sciences* (4) and *Articles* (n) only in Japan. We found many examples of *Technology* (5)/*explanations* (a) and *Industry* (6)/*explanations* (a) in Japan and China, but there are very few examples of *Technology* (5) and *Industry* (6) in Korea. There is a combination of *the Arts* (7) and *biographies* (g) in Japan and China, but not in Korea. In Japan and China, *Literature* (10) is usually combined with *narratives* (c), but in Korea it is combined with a variety of forms: *narratives* (c), *essays* (i), *plays* (d), *letters* (f), etc.

TABLE 11
China

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
a	4	1.95	6	16.32	10	12.08	6.67	9	6.30	0.52	72.84
b	1				2					1	4
c	1	3.05	5	5.97	4	1.92	1.33	2	2.70	12.48	39.45
d						1		1		3	5
e											0
f				3.97				1			4.97
g			2.92		3		2	5			12.92
h				0.68							0.68
i		1		2	3	1		1			8
j				1							1
k			0.08	2							2.08
l											0
m				1.53							1.53
n					1	1	1				3
o				0.53	2	1					3.53
p											0
Total	6	6	14	34	25	18	11	19	9	17	159

Explanations are associated with all of the lesson topics except for *Literature* in the three countries. In China, *narratives* are used in all categories of lesson topics. They are considerably used even in the category

of *Natural Sciences*. Thus, some lesson forms also tend to be associated with a larger number of topic categories.

Table 12 shows the top-five combinations between topics and forms.

TABLE 12
The Top-5 Combinations

	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4	No.5
Japan	a x 3	a x 4	a x 5	a x 8	c x 3
Korea	a x 3	c x 9	a x 4	g x 2	i x 3
China	a x 3	c x 9	a x 5	a x 4	a x 7

The combination with *explanations* (a) is widely used in Japan and China. But the patterns of the combination of topics and forms in Korea are various and different from those in Japan and China.

Topics by Country

In our investigation of the lesson topics in the high school English textbooks in this analysis, we are able to quantify how frequently various countries were represented as topics in textbooks specific to each of the countries: Japan, Korea and China.

Table 13 shows the percent of the lesson topics by country that appear in the textbooks in each of the three countries.

The number of lesson topics by country is as follows: 175 in Japan, 222 in Korea, and 216 in China. Japan has fewer topics than Korea and China. Next to Europe and their own country, the USA appears most frequently in the textbooks of all three countries. This fact reflects that the USA still plays a central role in the areas of *Social Sciences*, *Natural Sciences*, *Technology*, *Industry*, and *the Arts*. Furthermore, topics concerning the USA are more frequently used in Japan than in Korea and China. This tends to represent the close ties between Japan and the USA in the areas of politics, science and arts. Topics concerning their own country are fewer in China than in Japan and Korea. Japan and Korea select topics relating to their own country mainly in

TABLE 13
Topics by Country

	Japan(%)	Korea(%)	China(%)
Their Own Country	24.1	18.9	10.6
Their Own Country + USA	6.8	0.5	0.5
Their Own Country + UK	0	0	1.4
Their Own Country + Europe	0.8	0	0.5
Their Own Country + Canada	0	0.5	0
Their Own Country + USA + Canada	0	0	0.5
Their Own Country + UK + Asia	0	0	0.5
Their Own Country + Asia	0.8	2.3	0
Asia (Except Their Own Country)	9.0	15.3	13.4
USA	28.6	17.8	21.8
USA + UK + Asia	0	0	0.5
UK	8.3	5	12.0
UK + Asia	0	0.5	0
Europe (Except UK)	4.5	24.8	23.6
Canada	2.3	1.8	1.4
South America	6.0	2.7	3.7
Africa	4.5	7.2	3.7
Oceania	4.5	3.2	5.6
North and South Poles	0	0	0.5

the area of *Social Sciences*, while China does not associate this area with topics concerning their own country.

China has adopted an open door policy and placed more emphasis on intercultural understanding in its foreign language education policy. As a result, more lesson topics regarding foreign countries seem to be selected in the textbooks. Topics concerning the UK are greater in China than in Japan and Korea. This represents the historical relationship between China and UK. Topics concerning Europe are fewer in Japan than in Korea and China. Topics regarding Asia are less frequently adopted in Japan than in Korea and China. Topics concerning Africa are comparatively greater in Korea than in Japan and China. On the whole, Japan tends to concentrate on topics concerning the USA and their own country, and pay less attention to topics

relating to Europe. Korea adopts more topics with regard to Africa as well as Europe, their own country and the USA. China deals with more topics concerning the UK and Oceania in addition to Europe, the USA and Asia. There are many examples of topics that deal with the relationship between the USA and Japan, but almost none regarding the relationship between the USA, and Korea and China. There are some examples of topics that deal with the relationship between the UK and China, but none regarding the relationship between the UK, and Japan and Korea.

Further, according to our analysis, there seems to be a tendency within all three countries to avoid topics that involve a comparison of countries and regions. From the viewpoint of intercultural understanding, it seems necessary to bring a comparative perspective to the selection of lesson topics.

It should be noted, therefore, that the foreign language education policy, in addition to historical and economic relationships (e.g., China-UK, Japan-USA) with foreign countries, is associated with the adoption of lesson topics by country. Also, China places more emphasis on the lesson topics of foreign countries than Japan and Korea. In addition, Korea and China tend to pay more attention to the diversity of countries in the adoption of lesson topics than Japan. Thus, in terms of intercultural mutual understanding, it is important that there exist a balance in the selection of lesson topics. That is, understanding of the diversity of foreign cultures as well as our own culture needs to be promoted. Furthermore, the top-three results of topics by country in Japan, Korea and China are shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14
Top-3 Combination of Topics by Country

	No.1	No.2	No.3
Japan	USA	Their Own Country	Asia (Except Their Own Country)
Korea	Europe (Except UK)	Their Own Country	USA
China	Europe (Except UK)	USA	Asia (Except Their Own Country)

CONCLUSION

In this study, we were able to shed light on what the textbook authors select as lesson topics and forms to present to learners. It is also suggested that the foreign language education policy and curriculum guidelines of each country at the national level, which are also predicated on cultural, historical, social and economic contexts (i.e., development of economy and industry), have a certain effect on the adoption of lesson topics and forms.

Additionally, from a regional perspective, we have found many differences in lesson topics and lesson forms as well as their similarities in the senior high school English textbooks used in Japan, Korea and China. For example, it is intended that this analysis be of some use to textbook writers who want to improve the English textbooks in the three respective countries.

It is a great surprise that all of the three countries adopt almost none of the topics from the other two countries. English is said to be an international language. Further, the globalization of English suggests that people will be crossing borders at an even higher pace in the future. Thus it stands to reason that authors, publishers, and administrators should not only select topics about countries where English is the native language, but should also include textbook topics that address areas of interest of other countries. We especially feel that topics representative of our neighboring Asian countries should be included in textbooks of the respective countries. In the future, there will be many more cross-border interactions with our neighbors and it is likely that English will be used in these situations. Therefore, topic familiarity among the citizens of our neighboring countries is needed to increase the level of communication in the target language. Learning more about countries in our region (i.e., topic familiarity) further offers insights about the ways of each country. In other words, there will be an increase in the level of international understanding as well.

Consequently, in the realm of education, textbook writers, publishers, curriculum planners and teachers should be aware that topic development plays a critical role in developing learners' English communicative language

abilities and international understanding, which are the overall objectives of English education in Japan, Korea and China.

Moreover, we should reconsider and further develop the criteria for classification in order to make a more consistent and detailed analysis of lesson topics and forms. Finally, differences in the selection of lesson topics and forms among the publishers need to be further examined. We hope that this study will provoke the authors, publishers and educational institutions at all levels in Japan, Korea and China to improve their English textbooks.

THE AUTHORS

We are all members of the Study Group of English Education in the East-Asian Countries. We have long been studying a comparative study of English education in Japan, Korea and China. Last November we presented a paper at the Second Annual Asia TEFL Conference in Seoul on November 6, 2004.

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