Comparing the Textbooks for Junior High School Students in Taiwan and Japan

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is two-fold:
1) To report the results of the comparative study of the textbooks for junior high school students in Taiwan and Japan.
2) To discuss the implications of the results for the English language education in both countries.

Sections 2 and 3 provide information about the system of (English) Education and English education for junior high school in Taiwan and Japan respectively as a necessary background for the comparative study. The results of the comparison are reported in Section 4 from the following three viewpoints: 1) Vocabulary; 2) Sentence patterns and grammatical items; and 3) Materials. Section 5 summarizes the preceding parts and discusses the implications the study has for the English language education in both Taiwan and Japan.

2. System of (English) Education in Taiwan and Japan

- Both have the 6-3-3 system including the first 9-year compulsory education.
- English is taught/learned as a foreign language starting with the first year in junior high school.

3. English Education for Junior High School in Taiwan and Japan

3.1 Textbooks for junior high school

1) Taiwan
There is only one kind of English textbook developed by the National Institute of Compilation and Translation, which belongs to the Ministry of Education in Taiwan (i.e. *English* 1-6). They are compiled based on the course of study for English in junior high school prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

2) Japan
There are six kinds of English textbooks for junior high school developed by commercial publishing companies and authorized by the Ministry of Education in Japan (i.e. *New Horizon English Course* 1-3; *New Crown English Series* 1-3; *Total English* 1-3; *One World English Course* 1-3; *Sunshine English Course* 1-3; *New Everyday English* 1-3).
1-3). They are compiled based on the course of study for English in junior high school prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

3.2 Objectives
1) Taiwan (based on Ministry of Education, REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 1985, Course of Study for Junior High School, translated by Tse, 1987)
   a) To enable students to acquire the basic skill in English so that they can understand, speak, read, and write simple modern English.
   b) To establish firm foundations for the students' subsequent study of English.
   c) To provide students with a background in English necessary for future educational or vocational aims.
   To develop the students' basic ability to understand and use a foreign language, to deepen their interest in language, and to have them get a basic understanding of foreigners' ways of living and looking at things.

3.3 Time Allocation
1) Taiwan (based on Ministry of Education, REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 1985, Course of Study for Junior High School)
   a) Required English course: two to three hours per week for the first and second school year.
   b) Selective English course: four to six hours per week for the third school year only.
   a) Three hours per week for the first and second school years.
   b) Four hours per week for the third school year.

4. Analyses of Textbooks
   -- Taiwan's English (E) 1-6 (Chang, 1991) and Japan's New Horizon (NH) 1-3 (Ota et al., 1991) and New Crown (NC) 1-3 (Nakamura et al., 1990) are chosen for the analyses.
   -- These textbooks are analyzed from the three aspects, 1) Vocabulary; 2) Sentence patterns and grammatical items; 3) Materials.

4.1 Vocabulary
1) Items for the analysis
   a) How many words are introduced in the textbooks?
   b) What types of words are introduced in the textbooks?
   c) What words are introduced earlier in Taiwan's textbooks than in Japan's (and vice versa)?
2) Results
   a) Taiwan: The higher the grade is, the more words are introduced.
Japan: The opposite
ii. In total, more words are introduced in Taiwan's textbooks.

b) i. Taiwan's textbooks have more everyday words.
   (e.g. bedroom, restaurant, cheap, complain, hate, worry, laugh)
ii. Taiwan's textbooks have more words about foreign countries.
   (e.g. England, Australia, Spain, Malaysia, Greek, San Francisco)

Taiwan: More adjectives and verbs (especially the past tense) are introduced in the first year. (e.g. adjectives: important, easy, short, late, cool; verb: got, went, saw, did)
Japanese: More nouns and pronouns are introduced in the first year. (e.g. nouns: language, guitar, baseball, and names of months; pronouns: me, us, mine, yours, hers, ours)

4.2 Sentence patterns and grammatical items

1) Items for the analysis
   a) How many sentence patterns and grammatical items are introduced in the textbooks?
   b) What types of sentence patterns and grammatical items are introduced in the textbooks?
   c) What sentence patterns and grammatical items are introduced earlier in Taiwan's textbooks than Japan's textbooks (and vice versa)?

2) Results
   a) i. Almost the same number of sentence patterns and grammatical items are introduced in Taiwan's and Japan's textbooks (i.e. Taiwan: 31 sentence patterns and 90 grammatical items; Japan: 31 sentence patterns and 93 grammatical items).
      ii. The most sentence patterns (11 patterns) and grammatical items (39 items) are introduced in the first year in Japan's textbooks while the most sentence patterns (14 patterns) and grammatical items (38 items) are introduced in the third and second year respectively in Taiwan's, which indicates that sentence patterns and grammatical items tend to be introduced earlier in Japan's textbooks.
   b) i. Almost the same sentence patterns and grammatical items are introduced in Taiwan's and Japan's textbooks. However, some sentence patterns and grammatical items only appear in Taiwan's textbooks (e.g. S+V+O+C (infinitives without "to"), subjunctive (basic usage)) and some only in Japan's textbooks (e.g. exclamatory sentences (How (what) ~ !), relative pronouns (whose and whom)).
      c) i. There are many sentence patterns and grammatical items which are introduced earlier in Japan's textbooks. (e.g. The passive voice is introduced in the second year in Japan's textbooks whereas in the third year in Taiwan's.)
      ii. However, there are several exceptions. (e.g. Why ~ ? and the past tense (regular and irregular are introduced in the first year in Taiwan's textbooks while in the second year in Japan's.)
4.3 Materials
1) Items for the analysis
   a) Genres (i.e. literary or non-literary) and style (i.e. conversational or descriptive)\textsuperscript{7}
   b) Situations (i.e. characters, places, and topics)
   c) Cultural backgrounds (i.e. what countries are treated?)
   d) Length of text
   e) Others (i.e. use of the mother tongue, photographs and pictures, and exercises)

2) Results
   a) Taiwan's textbooks have about half as much literary text as Japan's do. (i.e. E: 11.4%; NH: 20.2%; NC: 27.5%)\textsubscript{8}
   b) Taiwan's textbooks have no so-called pure literature, while Japan's have simplified versions of it (e.g. 'The Little Prince' in NC).
   c) Taiwan: Little Literary text is found in the first and second year (i.e. 0% and 4.2% respectively). In the third year, however, it accounts for about 30% of all the text.
       Japan: Little literary text is found in the first year (i.e. NH: 0%, NC: 18.7%). In the second and third year, however, it accounts for about 30% of all the text.
   d) Taiwan's textbooks have more conversational text. (i.e. E: 65.7%; NH: 61.9%; NC: 37.3%)
   e) Both Taiwan's and Japan's textbooks have the most conversational text in the first year. (i.e. E: 72.7%; NH: 80.0%; NC: 50.0%)

b) i. Taiwan: The majority of the characters are Taiwanese (71.1%), Americans being the only other people (28.9%).
   ii. Japanese account for about 40% and people from a variety of countries, both English speaking and non-English speaking, are found. (e.g. American, British, Australian, Chinese)
   iii. In both Taiwan's and Japan's textbooks, school and home are two of the most common places where things take place.
   iv. Taiwan: Topics about Taiwan, especially environmental problems in Taiwan (e.g. E6, Lesson 6 'Laws Are Not Enough') are often treated.
   v. Japan: Topics about the comparison between Japan and foreign countries (e.g. NC-2, Lesson 9 'Gestures Talk') as well as foreign countries themselves are often treated.

c) Taiwan: Taiwan is dominantly dealt with (82.9%) with America coming second (14.6%). Few non-English speaking countries are treated (2.4%).
   Japan: Besides Japan, which accounts for about 40%, various English speaking (NH: 39.7%, NC: 35.5%) and non-English speaking (NH: 18.7%, NC: 25.8%) countries are dealt with.

d) Taiwan's textbooks are nearly twice as long as Japan's. (i.e. E: 2543 lines; NH: 1340 lines, NC: 1360 lines)

e) (Use of the mother tongue)
i. Both Taiwan's and Japan's textbooks have the translations of new words, which are listed in the right margin of the text and at the end of each volume respectively.

ii. In Taiwan's textbooks, the titles of exercises are given both in English and Chinese while in Japan's, only in Japanese.

(Photographs and pictures)
Taiwan: Colored pictures are provided approximately on every two pages. No photographs are used.
Japan: Black-and-white pictures are provided almost on every page. Black-and-white photographs are found approximately on every ten pages.

(Exercises)
Taiwan: Exercises are provided at the end of each lesson and follow a similar pattern (i.e. intonation practice -> sentence pattern practice -> oral practical -> application). Translations (from English into Chinese or vice versa) never appear.
Japan: Exercises are provided at the end of each lesson and contain a variety of tasks (e.g. paraphrasing, substitution drills, translations (from English into Japanese and vice versa)).

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary
1) Similarities
   a) Educational system (the 6-3-3 system)
   b) English learning environment (EFL starting with first year in junior high school)
   c) Weekly English teaching hours (see 3.3)

2) Differences
Taiwan                Japan
a) Message-centered  a) Grammar-centered
  i. More words
     More adjectives
  ii. Introduction of
     - S+V+O+C (infinitives without "to")
     - Subjunctive
       (basic usage)
  iii. Earlier introduction of
     - Why ~ ?
     - the past tense
       (regular and irregular)
  iv. Longer text
   i. More nouns and pronouns
   ii. Introduction of
     - exclamatory sentences
       (How (what) ~!)
     - relative pronouns
       (whose and whom)
   iii. Earlier introduction of
     sentence patterns and grammatical items in general
     (e.g. the passive voice)
b) Emphasis on conversation
   i. More everyday words
   ii. More conversational text
   iii. More everyday topics
   iv. (Exercises)
        Emphasis on oral practical

c) Focus on Taiwan
   i. Taiwanese are the main characters.
   ii. Taiwan is mainly treated.

b) Emphasis on translation
   i. More literary text
   ii. (Exercises)
        Emphasis on translation

c) Focus on foreign countries
   i. People from various countries appear.
   ii. Various countries are treated.

5.2 Implications

In spite of the similarities, there are some marked differences between the textbooks for junior high school students in Taiwan and Japan. So, I would like to discuss what they imply for the English education in Taiwan and Japan, adding my personal views as well.

First of all, for the English education in Taiwan, there is less attention to 'linguistic' aspects, that is, grammar and translation, of English education in school. Awareness of the linguistic aspects are, in my opinion, important in English education in school because it will possibly lead to 'interest in language' mentioned in the course of study for junior high school in Japan. Moreover, there is much less attention to 'international' or 'cross-cultural' aspects of English education in school. In fact, in the objectives in Taiwan's course of study (see 3.2), there is no mention of such aspects. However, these aspects should not be neglected given the status of English as an international language and also to 'get a basic understanding of foreigners' ways of living and looking at things' in terms of Japan's course of study.

Secondly, for the English education in Japan, 'communicative' and 'practical' aspects in English education in school are put less emphasis. This is unwarranted, I think, since there is a growing demand for Japanese being more outspoken in this international society. This point may already be recognized as Japan's new course of study for junior high school, which will be put to use next year, clearly states as one of the objectives, 'to foster a positive attitude toward communication in a foreign language.' The emphasis on grammar and translation in Japan's textbooks for junior high school may not be so desirable from a communicative point of view. In order to foster a positive attitude toward communication,' wouldn't it be a good idea to put more emphasis on 'message' and 'conversation' as Taiwan's textbooks do? Another point is that perhaps more attention should be paid to 'Japan!' After all, communication is two-way and I think expressing things about our own country in English is very important to achieve 'international understanding,' which is mentioned in the new course of study for junior high school in Japan.

Finally, I think that the textbook writers in Taiwan and Japan can learn from each other in order to compile better textbooks, which, I believe, will ultimately lead to the realization of a better EFL education.
Notes

1. This paper is based on my master's thesis (Huang, 1992a) and presentations elsewhere (Huang, 1991a, b, 1992b). I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Mikio Matsumura of Hiroshima University and Associate Professor Shogo Miura for their kind help.
2. The 1978 version of the course of study is mentioned because it is still the one currently being used and the new 1989 version is to be implemented in 1993.
3. The reason for the choice is that they are two of the most widely used textbooks, which together account for 60% of all the English textbooks used in junior high school in Japan (see Modern English Teaching 28/8; 1, 1991). To be more comprehensive, however, other textbooks are also in need of analyzing.
4. These three categories and the following items for the analyses are all borrowed from Kyokasho-kenkyu-center (1984).
5. Words were classified in terms of the categories used in the course of study for junior high school in Japan (1978) which Kyokasho-kenkyu-center also borrowed.
6. Basically, we focused on the sentence patterns and grammatical items specified in the course of study for junior high school in Japan (1978). However, we also looked at the sentence patterns and grammatical items which are not mentioned in the course of study if they at all appeared.
7. We, following kyokasho-kenkyu-center (1984), included as literary text not only 'pure literature' (e.g. 'The Giving Tree' in NH-3) but also the text which has stories (e.g. jokes detective stories, poems).
8. Note that all the textbooks have approximately the same number of words in one line, which makes the counting of lines comparable.
9. It is very interesting to note:
   a) Exclamatory sentence (How(What) ~ !) and relative pronouns (whose and whom) are dropped from the new course of study for junior high school in Japan (1989).
   b) In the NH 1-3 which have been newly compiled based on the new course of study, the regular past is introduced in the first year for widening the repertoire of expression and the passive voice is introduced in the third year to avoid relying too much on the linguistic manipulation of voice conversion (Shimomura, 1992).

References


