

# Teaching English Through English: An Analysis of a Sample of Japanese and South Korean Textbooks

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In many parts of Asia, the national curriculum for English in schools recommends that teachers should use English as a medium of instruction. We analyzed samples of Ministry of Education-approved textbooks and teachers' guides produced in Japan and South Korea in order to determine how the authors interpret this recommendation. There were clear indications that they had difficulty in complying with it. The selection, ordering and presentation of materials appeared to be predicated on the assumption that the teachers would use translation as a primary means of conveying meaning. However, the appearance of at least partial compliance was provided by the inclusion in teachers' manuals of formulaic monologue sections in English which could be used to frame lessons and lesson segments.

アジアの多くの地域では、英語の授業はできるだけ英語で行うことが学校教育課程で奨励されている。本論では日本、韓国の文科省により採択された教科書と教師用指導書を分析し、著者らがどのようにその状況を解釈しているかを調べた。著者らはその勧告の適応に困難を感じていることは明らかであり、そういった教材は教師による翻訳が主な意味伝達手段であることを前提としているようである。とはいえ、期待されている状況に応じるべく教師用指導書の中では、少なくとも定型表現を含むモノローグが英語で提供されている。これは授業やその一部を構成する上で使用可能であろうが、生徒からの想定回答も提示され、その結果、人工的でオーセンティック(生きた英語)ではない教師中心の授業になる傾向がある。

In many countries throughout the world, a teaching English through English (TEE) policy is now in place. This has been the case in South Korea since 2001 (Choi, 2015) and in Japan, but with reference to senior secondary schooling only, since 2013 (Tahira, 2012). In South Korea, the expectation is that this TEE policy will involve using English for 80% or more of the total lesson time (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development,

2006); while in Japan, there has been no such specification. In neither Korea nor Japan has there been any real clarity around exactly how the policy should be implemented.

Liddicoat (2004) referred to the importance of textbooks in relation to the success or otherwise of certain types of educational reform. Therefore, as part of a larger scale research project, we analyzed a sample of widely used Ministry of Education-approved English language textbook series (each released in 2012) to determine the extent to which the authors interpreted and implemented TEE policies as recommended in the most recent curriculum guidelines (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [Korea], 2008, pp. 59-60; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT: Japan], 2009, p. 7). In the case of South Korea, two textbook series were analyzed. One was intended for junior high school students: *Middle School English I & II* (Kim, Yi & Yi, 2012); the other for senior high school students: *High School English* (Yi et al., 2012). In the case of Japan, only one series, intended for senior high school students, was analysed: *Captain English Course I & II* (Sano et al., 2012). In all cases, the authors of the textbooks were predominantly university-based academics, although, of the 41 contributors to the Japanese series, eight were secondary school teachers and one was a publisher. Also, in all cases, the textbooks had been screened and approved by the Ministry of Education in the country concerned. In the case of Japan, that approval process rests, in part, on the extent to which textbooks conform to the pertaining teachers' guide instructions for each lesson—e.g., “Good morning everyone. Today we are going to study Lesson 4” (Langham, 2007, p. 8).

## *The Use of English as the/a Medium of Instruction in English Classes*

The concept of teaching languages through the medium of the target language emerged as part of what has come to be known as ‘the Reform Move-

ment' in the late 19th century. Those who contributed to that movement envisaged an approach in which spoken interaction was given priority. However, only some of the proponents of this approach advocated using the target language as the language of instruction (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Also, while many advocates of communicative language teaching (CLT) in its various manifestations believe that the target language should be the primary language of instruction in language classes, others do not (e.g., Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Belz, 2003). Among those who maintain that there is a place for both L1 and L2 instruction, there is disagreement about when and how each should be used. In South Korea, an official scheme of certification relating to TEE was introduced in 2009. For the most part, teachers have been negatively impacted by the scheme, some of whom have suffered emotional scars and have even left the teaching profession (Yi et al., 2011). Perhaps one of the reasons for this is the fact that some teacher trainers appear to approach the issue of TEE as if it were solely a matter of English language proficiency (Hayes, 2012). They do so even though learner-centred approaches to education, including CLT, generally involve a reduction in teacher talking time (Gharbavi & Iravani, 2014; Thornbury, 1996) and disregard the wide range of concept introduction and concept checking strategies, which do not rely heavily on teacher talk, that have been developed (e.g., Scrivener, 1994).

### Approach to Textbook Analysis

The textbook analyses centred on a number of focus points which were determined on the basis of a review of major changes and developments that have taken place since the heyday of grammar translation. It is with one of these focus points only—the language of instruction—that we are concerned here. What we sought was any indication, direct or indirect, of the authors' expectations in relation to the language of instruction to be used by the teachers.

### Analysing the Textbooks: The Approach to Teaching English Through English

In each of the students' books, directions, instructions and questions often appear in the L1 or are accompanied by translations. In addition, there is frequent translation of words and phrases from texts that form the core of each unit (see Figures 1 & 2).

Lesson 9 Don't Give Up

Part 1 ..... 光代さんは決して幸せとはいえない十代を過ごしました。

I was a first year junior high school student when my classmates started to bully me. Feeling miserable, I tried to kill myself with a knife.

A passer-by saved me, but I was unhappy. Finally, I dropped out of school and left home. At sixteen I married a gangster and had my back tattooed.

My life was really terrible. However, when I was twenty-two, a wonderful thing happened. I met my father's friend, Mr. Ohira.

**bully** [buli ぶり]

**knife** [naif ナイフ]

**passer-by** [pásarbai 徘徊(ハイ)]

**unhappy** [anhápi アンハピ]

**gangster** [gángstá ギャングスタ]

**tattooed** [tátú たくわー] < tattoo

**? Questions**

1. 光代さんはなぜ自殺しようとしたのですか。
2. 22歳のときにだれと出会いましたか。

3. kill oneself 自殺する

6. drop out of ~ ~から脱落する

8. have one's back tattooed 背中に入れ墨をする

**Function** ■ 前に述べたことと反対の内容を導く : My life was really terrible. However, when I was twenty-two, a wonderful thing happened.

seventy-seven 77

**Katie's Shoe**

Hi, I'm John. What's your name?  
My name is Katie.  
Oh, there I am. She's my twin sister.  
Hi, Katie. Nice to meet you.  
Look, it's Mr. Parker. She's my English teacher.  
That's all right. Here's your BALL.  
Thank you, Mr. Lee.I'm in seventh grade. Are you in seventh grade, too?  
Yes, I am.  
No, she isn't. She's from Canada.  
is she American?

Is that your ball, Katie? Yes, it is. I like soccer.

Mr. Lee. He's a PE teacher.

That's all right. Here's your BALL.

Thank you, Mr. Lee.

Wow! It's cool!

Yes!

**Before You Go On**

1. (1) John is a PE teacher. (2) Mr. Lee is from Canada. (3) John's twin brother.

2. (1) Katie's twin brother. (2) Mr. Lee is a PE teacher.

**Over to You**

1. Mr. Lee is a PE teacher.

2. Mr. Lee is from Canada.

Figure 1. Captain English Course Revised II, p. 77.  
Figure 2. Middle School English I, pp. 16 & 17.

In the Korean series, there is less translation alongside the main text than in the Japanese texts. However, before the main text is introduced, all of the language it contains is presented and translated in short segments.

In language courses where translation is not intended to be the primary method of conveying new

meanings, the expectation is that other techniques for communicating meaning will be adopted. For example, textbook writers could present newly introduced language in the context of familiar language in such a way as to help elucidate its meaning. They could ensure that illustrations are designed in such a way as to assist with interpretation of the language being taught. Most importantly, the writers could introduce teachers to some of the many different strategies that have been developed to clarify meaning and check understanding without recourse to translation. However, the sequence in which language is introduced in the textbooks we have analyzed suggests that there is no carefully considered strategy for using language that is already familiar to students as a scaffold in introducing language that is likely to be new to them (Oh, 2016; Umeda, 2014). Furthermore, illustrations often seemed to be designed more with scene setting than clarification of specific meanings in mind (see Figure 1 above). In addition, our findings indicated that the teachers' guides did very little to introduce meaning presentation (concept introduction) and meaning checking (concept checking) strategies that do not rely on translation. It goes without saying that teachers' guides are indispensable to language instructors. In these teachers' guides, however, the teachers are often simply instructed *what* to teach, but given no guidance as to *how* they should do so. Note, in particular, the section in italics (added for emphasis) in the second example below:

- Teach them all twelve months in English so that they can say their birthday.
- Teach them that they should use the ordinal for the date and pay attention to the pronunciation of -th [θ] (*Teachers' Guide: Middle School English I*, p. 102).

*Teacher:* Good! Look at the picture and mark the item you enjoy doing most.

Listen to the dialog and *check if the students understand it* (*Teachers' Guide: High School English*, p. 12).

Although, in terms of the curricula, the expectation is that teachers should use English as much as possible as the medium of instruction in class, the teachers' guides accompanying the series analyzed do not provide any practical advice on how this can be achieved. This, combined with the extent of translation included in these guides, suggests that what textbook writers advise teachers to do and what they actually expect and encourage them to

do are two different things. In spite of all of this, the teachers' guides include what might be described as "lesson scripts," which are sometimes lengthy, in English and provide teachers with the expressions that might be used by them at certain lesson stages. In some cases, hypothetical student utterances are also provided (see examples below).

*Teacher:* Open your books to page 134 and read today's topic aloud. I want you to read the two expressions right under the topic. They are "What do you think of the picture?" and "I know what you mean, but it's a famous painting." Let's learn about them together. (*Teachers' Guide: High School English*, p. 216)

*Teacher:* Now we will listen to some short sentences. Listen carefully and find what each student enjoys doing. (Listen) What is the girl's favourite activity?

*Student/s:* Her hobby is reading books.

*Teacher:* What is the boy interested in?

*Student/s:* He is interested in watching movies.

*Teacher:* Good job. This time we will listen to a dialog longer than the one we heard before. The first time you listen, try to find out what the man wants to do in the future. (Listen) What does the man want to do in the future? . . .

*Teacher:* It's time to talk and practice using what we just learned. Look at the picture on page 15. What is it?

*Student:* It's an application form for school clubs.

*Teacher:* Yes. Now I am going to give you a form. First, fill in your name and age in the blanks. Then choose which club you want to join from the clubs mentioned. Finally, check the reasons why you want to join the club. Are you ready?

(*Teachers' Guide: High School English*, pp. 12-13)

What we found in the textbooks that were analysed was a curious paradox. On the one hand, the students' books seem to be designed in such a way as to require translation to facilitate understanding. On the other hand, the teachers' guides encourage the teachers to use lesson scripts in English at various stages in the lesson cycle. Whether teachers actually do so or not, the fact remains that this type of material is indicative of the authors' interpretation of TEE. Furthermore, it is predicated on the assumption that the students will understand the language of the lesson scripts. Certainly, there is no guidance as to what teachers should do in cases

where their students do not understand.

## Conclusion

Teachers of English in Japan and Korea are grappling with the complexities involved in attempting to teach English through the medium of English in a context in which there appears to be little useful discussion of *when* they should do so, *how* they should do so, and *why* they should accept that their attempts to do so will necessarily benefit their students. One of the problems the teachers face is the fact that at least some of the Ministry-approved textbooks made available to them provide what appears to be contradictory and conflicting advice. Furthermore, many of the textbooks fail to offer useful guidance in relation to the many strategies, including reducing teacher talking time, that can be employed when attempting to use the target language as a language of instruction. When this is considered in light of the fact that Ministry-approved textbooks often have multiple authors, including some of those university-based academics who provide language teacher training courses, questions about the extent to which a TEE policy is currently capable of productive implementation inevitably arise. Such questions become even more salient when it is borne in mind that in South Korea, where the policy has been in existence for almost two decades, the positive impact of the official certification scheme appears to have been low. In the longer term, TEE policies, when accompanied by clear guidance, may prove generally effective. In the shorter term, Ministries of Education in Japan, Korea, and in other parts of Asia, would do well to reconsider the advisability of attempting to impose such policies.

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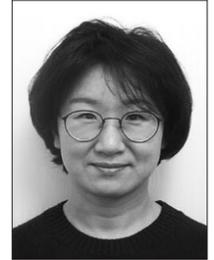
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## [JALT PRACTICE] TLT INTERVIEWS



### Torrin Shimono & James Nobis

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Colleagues! Welcome to the November/December edition of TLT interviews. For this issue, we bring you an interesting discussion with Dr. Jennifer Sclafani about her fascinating research on political discourse. Dr. Sclafani is a sociolinguist and Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University. Her publications have appeared in *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *Discourse & Society*, and *Language in Society*. She was interviewed by Daniel Dunkley, an English lecturer at Aichi Gakuin University, Nagoya. His research interests include testing, cultural studies and methodology and he holds an MA from Surrey University, UK. He can be reached at [ddunkley@dpc.agu.ac.jp](mailto:ddunkley@dpc.agu.ac.jp). So without further ado, to the interview!

**Daniel Dunkley:** Dr. Sclafani, could I begin by asking you: What is sociolinguistics?

Jennifer Sclafani: It's the study of language and society. That includes many different subfields. One is language variation: How does language vary regionally, socially according to ethnicity, according to cultural background, or according to political affiliation. Another area is interactional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. There we study, from a descriptive perspective, the language of everyday conversation as well as the structure and use of language in various institutional contexts. For example, I look at classroom language use. A third field is language use in the media, both print and broadcast.



An Interview with Dr.  
Jennifer Sclafani  
Daniel Dunkley  
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