

3.1.5 Which-interrogative

The frequency of the which-interrogative is quite low in all of these countries. Except for Malaysia, the which-interrogative is never taught in Books 1 and 2 in the other countries (Figure 5). In Japan the which-interrogative is taught only in Book 4 of all the volumes, in spite of the fact that the which-interrogative seems to be often used when asking about limited choices in real communication.

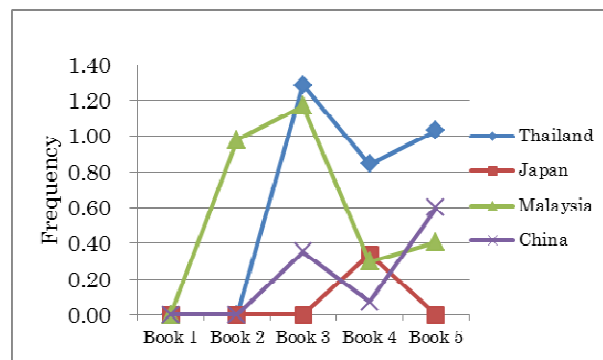


Figure 5: Frequency of Which-questions

3.1.6 When-interrogative

The when-interrogative graph looks quite similar for both Japan and China (Figure 6). In particular, in Thailand the frequency of the when-interrogative is much lower in all the five volumes. This may imply that this when-interrogative is not regarded as an important structure at primary schools in Thailand. Unlike the where-interrogative, the total frequency of the when-interrogative is lower, and the frequency of *when* in Book 4 is quite low in all of these countries.

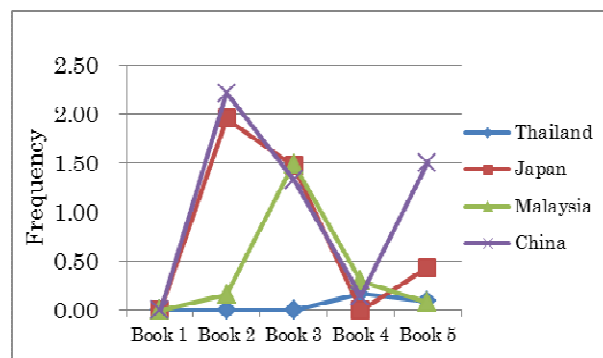


Figure 6: Frequency of When-questions

3.1.7 Why-interrogative

Figure 7 indicates that the frequency of *why* occurrences in these countries looks quite different. In China, the *why*-interrogative first appears in Book 2 and it is constantly reviewed from Book 3 to Book 5. However, in Thailand the *why*-interrogative is not taught in either Book 1 or Book 2, but it is treated from Book 3 to Book 5. Looking at the frequency for Japan, there are no *why*-interrogatives in any of the first three volumes, but it is taught gradually in Books 4 and 5.

The responses to *why* in communication is generally difficult, because when asked *why*, students have to describe the reason or opinion on their own, unlike the fact-based questions *what*-, *who*- and *which*-interrogatives. In EFL countries such as China and Thailand, it is understandable that *why*-questions lag behind *what*- and *who*-questions because the answers to *why*-questions are more demanding for beginning EFL learners to produce.

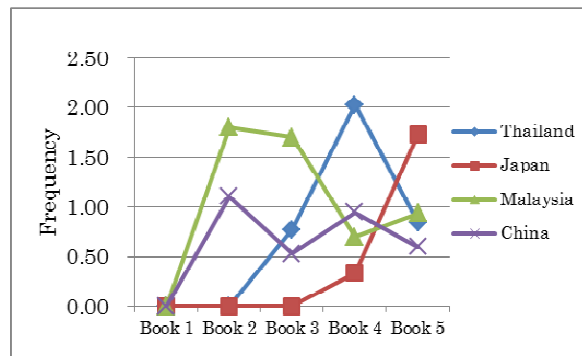


Figure 7: Frequency of Why-questions

3.1.8 Token of Wh-interrogatives

As Figure 8 shows, it is evident that the number of wh-interrogatives in English textbooks from Book 1 to Book 5 in Japan is much smaller than that of the wh-interrogatives in three other countries' textbooks. Although the frequency depends on the volume of each textbook whether the number of the wh-interrogatives is larger or not, the total number of the wh-interrogatives in each textbook in Japan is too small compared to that of other countries' textbooks.

Furthermore, when you think that the textbooks in China, Malaysia and Thailand are primary school levels, we cannot help but say that English textbooks and English teaching contents in Japan remain far behind the other countries in terms of communication-oriented English teaching.

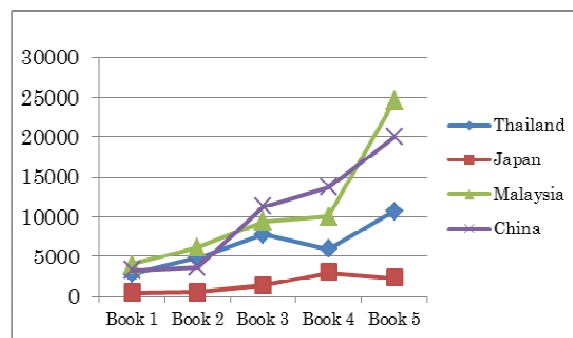


Figure 8: Token of Wh-interrogatives

3.2 Research Question (2)

Research question 2 asks, 'Are similarities or differences present among the four countries' textbooks regarding the frequency and appearance of each wh-interrogative question?' For Japan, the direct interrogatives *what* and *how* begin to be introduced in Book 1. In Book 2, *where* and *when* are introduced, and then, *who* is taught to students in Book 3. It looks as if the introduction of the wh-interrogatives in textbooks is well-organized in consideration of Japanese students' learning stage.

Table 1: Frequency of the Wh-interrogatives in Japan (per 1000 words)

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
What	22.00	7.80	7.36	6.06	2.16
Where	0.00	1.95	2.21	0.34	0.00
How	7.33	0.00	5.15	3.03	0.86
Who	0.00	0.00	1.47	0.34	0.00
When	0.00	1.95	1.47	0.00	0.43
Why	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.34	1.73
Which	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.34	0.00

Table 1, however, shows that the data for wh-interrogatives is not well ordered from Book 1 to Book 5. For example, although the how-interrogative is taught in Book 1, it is neglected in Book 2 for the sixth graders. Also, the why- and which-interrogatives are never taught in three consecutive years from Book 1 through Book 3, especially the which-interrogative is treated only in Book 4 of all the textbooks.

As stated in Uenishi (2010), in Malaysia, *what*, *where*, *how* and *who* are treated at the same time in Book 1 at primary schools in Malaysia. In Book 2 *when*, *why* and *which* are taught to second graders in Malaysia, and after that, all these wh-interrogatives are treated in all volumes in this country. In a sense, the introduction of all these wh-interrogatives to the first and second grades at primary schools can be viable in Malaysia as an ESL country. In EFL countries, however, it might be doubtful if they teach all the wh-interrogatives at the first and second grades at primary schools.

Table 2 : Frequency of the Wh-interrogatives in Malaysia (per 1000 words)

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
What	12.71	6.54	7.33	4.70	3.30
Where	5.73	2.13	1.59	0.30	0.57
How	5.48	2.62	2.23	1.80	1.39
Who	3.74	4.09	0.64	0.30	0.57
When	0.00	0.16	1.49	0.30	0.08
Why	0.00	1.80	1.70	0.70	0.94
Which	0.00	0.98	1.17	0.30	0.41

As stated in Uenishi et al.(2009), the introduction of the wh-interrogatives in Thai textbooks seems to be better-organized than in Japanese textbooks. Specifically, in Book 1 *what* and *who* are introduced, and in Book 2 *how* and *who* are taught to students at primary schools. Moreover, in Book 3, *where*, *why* and *which* are introduced as new wh-interrogative questions. Then the when-interrogative is introduced in Book 4 despite the fact that the numerical value is small. This consistent teaching seems to be typical for EFL countries' textbooks. Even though the frequency of the when-interrogative is much lower in all volumes, the teaching of the wh-interrogatives is considered to have been done well in primary school textbooks in Thailand.

Table 3 Frequency of the Wh-interrogatives in Thailand (per 1000 words)

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
What	1.45	10.47	5.53	6.24	3.47
Where	0.00	0.00	0.77	2.02	0.84
How	0.00	2.46	4.25	7.09	2.53
Who	5.82	1.23	2.32	0.51	1.69
When	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.09
Why	0.00	0.00	0.77	2.02	0.84
Which	0.00	0.00	1.29	0.84	1.03

In China, the what-interrogative is taught most frequently, then followed by the where-interrogative from Book 1 through Book 5. Then, the how-interrogative is brought up as the third most frequent interrogative in Chinese textbooks. Generally speaking, the introduction of the wh-interrogatives is better organized in China, compared to Japanese textbooks. More specifically, in English teaching at primary schools in China, in Book 1 *what*, *where*, *how* and *who* are introduced, and then in Book 2 *when* and *why*, and in Book 3 *which* starts to be taught as a new interrogative.

Table 4: Frequency of the Wh-interrogatives in China (per 1000 words)

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
What	14.21	16.00	12.12	8.45	10.49
Where	5.25	3.59	2.57	3.06	0.95
How	4.32	1.38	0.80	2.48	3.95
Who	0.62	2.48	0.53	0.51	0.00
When	0.00	2.21	1.33	0.15	1.50
Why	0.00	1.10	0.53	0.95	0.60
Which	0.00	0.00	0.35	0.07	0.60

As for similarities among these four countries, the frequency of the what-interrogative is the highest in all of the textbooks. Furthermore, it can be said that the which-interrogative tends not to be taught so frequently from Book 1 through Book 5. The frequency of the how-interrogative is the second highest of all of the wh-interrogatives in Japan, Malaysia and Thailand, and in China it is frequently taught even if the frequency of how-interrogative is the third highest.

Regarding differences among the four countries, the frequency of each interrogative varies from country to

country. For instance, in Thailand the when-interrogative is treated in Books 4 and 5, but it shows quite a small numerical value. Although it depends on the textbook of each country, four countries' textbooks are diverse in the token of wh-interrogatives. Especially, in China the number of the interrogatives is much larger, compared to the three other countries.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, selected textbooks from China, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand were analyzed and discussed in terms of the frequency of the teaching of the direct wh-interrogative questions. As a result, the following findings were identified.

First, looking at the frequency of each wh-interrogative question, there are similarities and differences among the four countries. For example, the frequency of the when-interrogative from Book 1 through Book 5 in China is quite similar to that found in Japanese textbooks. On the other hand, the where-, how- and who-interrogatives were introduced in a quite different order in these countries.

Next, regarding the consistency of the wh-interrogatives in the textbooks in these four countries, the introduction of the wh-interrogatives in China and Thailand seems to be better organized as a EFL country than in Japan. In China four wh-interrogatives are introduced at the first-grade level. In the case of Chinese urban cities like Beijing, many children seem to start to learn the sound and rhythm of English words at kindergarten by listening and mimicking. However, the introduction of the wh-interrogatives in Japan does not seem to be consistent or well-organized. Like in China and Thailand, the direct wh-interrogative questions in Japanese textbooks should be taught in a continuous way in order for students to improve their communicative skills.

Third, the token of the wh-interrogatives in English textbooks in Japan should be reviewed as well. To promote communication-oriented English teaching in Japan, the wh-interrogatives should be more frequently taught in the textbooks. For that purpose, the number of pages of the textbooks should be larger and more wh-interrogatives should be treated in Japanese textbooks, like those in Thai or Malaysian ones.

Further research should be promoted to contribute to production of better textbooks and lead to the development of students' communicative skills.

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