

Topics Introduced in Revised Japanese Junior High School English Textbooks

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Abstract

One of the important factors for English study is learning materials, that is, authorized textbooks by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for English classes at school. The new Course of Study for junior high school was implemented this year. So, all the junior high school English textbooks have been revised. The total pages of all the textbooks increased and they include more topics than before. We want to know how these textbooks changed, especially, the topics that are used.

From the results of our analysis, clear differences were shown about the topics in each textbook and each grade. The topics may have effects on students' motivation in learning English. In order to improve the present English education in Japan, the result of our study and some implications will be presented at the PAAL conference.

Keywords

textbooks, English education, the Course of Study, junior high school

Introduction

According to the new Course of Study, the number of words that junior high school students learn increased from 900 words to 1200 words. Moreover, the number of English classes increased from three hours to four hours a week for all grades because of communication activities. The guideline suggests that English classes should have integrated teaching styles of four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, all the junior high school English textbooks must have been revised.

Research

Our research is to find out all the topics from six junior high school English textbooks: NEW HORIZON English Course1.2.3, NEW CROWN English Series1.2.3, SUNSHINE English Course1.2.3, TOTAL ENGLISH New Edition1.2.3,

ONE WORLD English Course1.2.3, COLUMBUS21 English Course1.2.3. The number of the textbooks analyzed is eighteen, three grades from six publishing companies. All the lessons were analyzed but extra reading materials were excluded. In order to classify the topics, the contents of each topic were divided into eight topics.

Analysis

The figure 1 shows that proportion of the topics used in the six textbooks. The percentage of each topic were different in each textbook. Each textbook uses the eight topics in a different way, and in a different proportion. 'Cross-cultural communication,' 'daily conversation,' 'self-expression,' and 'introducing other people' are included in all the textbooks. Moreover, the results show that only one textbook includes all the eight topics but others don't include all of them.

The figure 2 shows that proportion of each topic in each grade. 'Daily conversation' appears less in the third grades than the first and second grades. And also, the topics about different culture-'cross-cultural communication' and 'cross-cultural understanding'-are increasing as the grade proceeds. The result shows that the textbooks for the second and third grades will make students be more interested in foreign countries. Another point that we found out was that there were few topics about environment or welfare throughout all the grades; they should be treated as important matters. The purpose of junior high school textbooks is to make students be able to communicate in English.

Figure 1

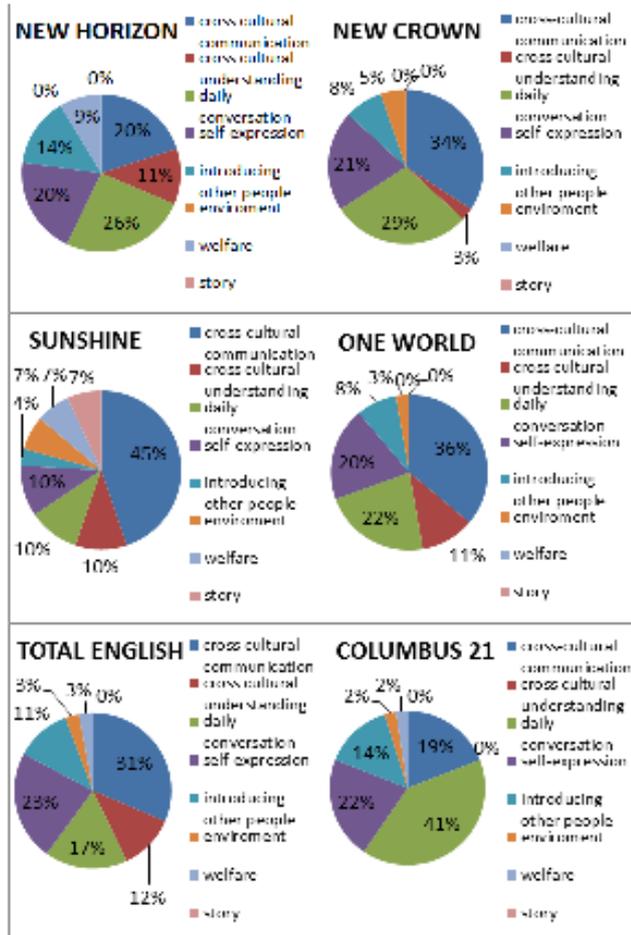
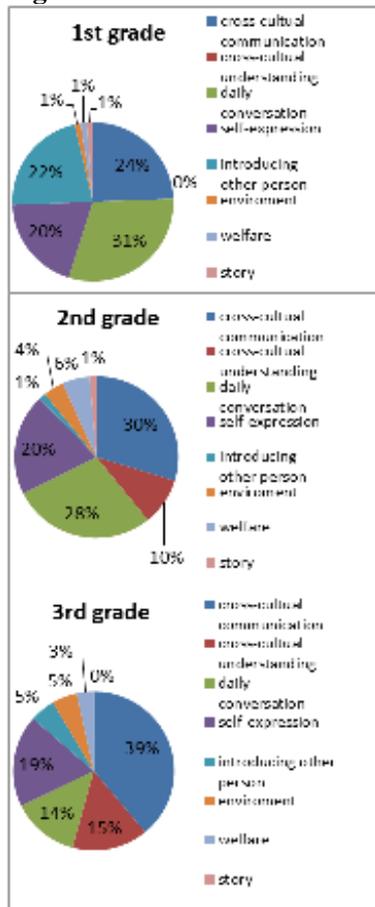


Figure 2



Implications

When the textbooks were analyzed, we tended to classify the topics based on the first impression from pictures, photos or the titles of each lesson. However, we noticed that the passages convey the messages which were different from our first classification and we focused on the messages which each lesson tried to send.

Students will be interested in contents because of various topics adopted in each textbook. So the topics in textbooks are very important for students. From the result of our study, we felt that including not only daily conversation but also the contents which have valuable messages for students is necessary. We also thought the topics in textbooks have possibilities in giving some kinds of impact on students and their ways of thinking.

Topics about social matters such as environmental problems or welfare should be more included. Then, we thought that topics about international exchanges should be included as they are in the textbooks now. That is because it is essential for students to use English as one of the important communication tools in international society. The detailed suggestion will be presented at the 17 PAAL conference.

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