

*Perspectives on World Englishes in Government-Authorized High School Textbooks
in Japan*

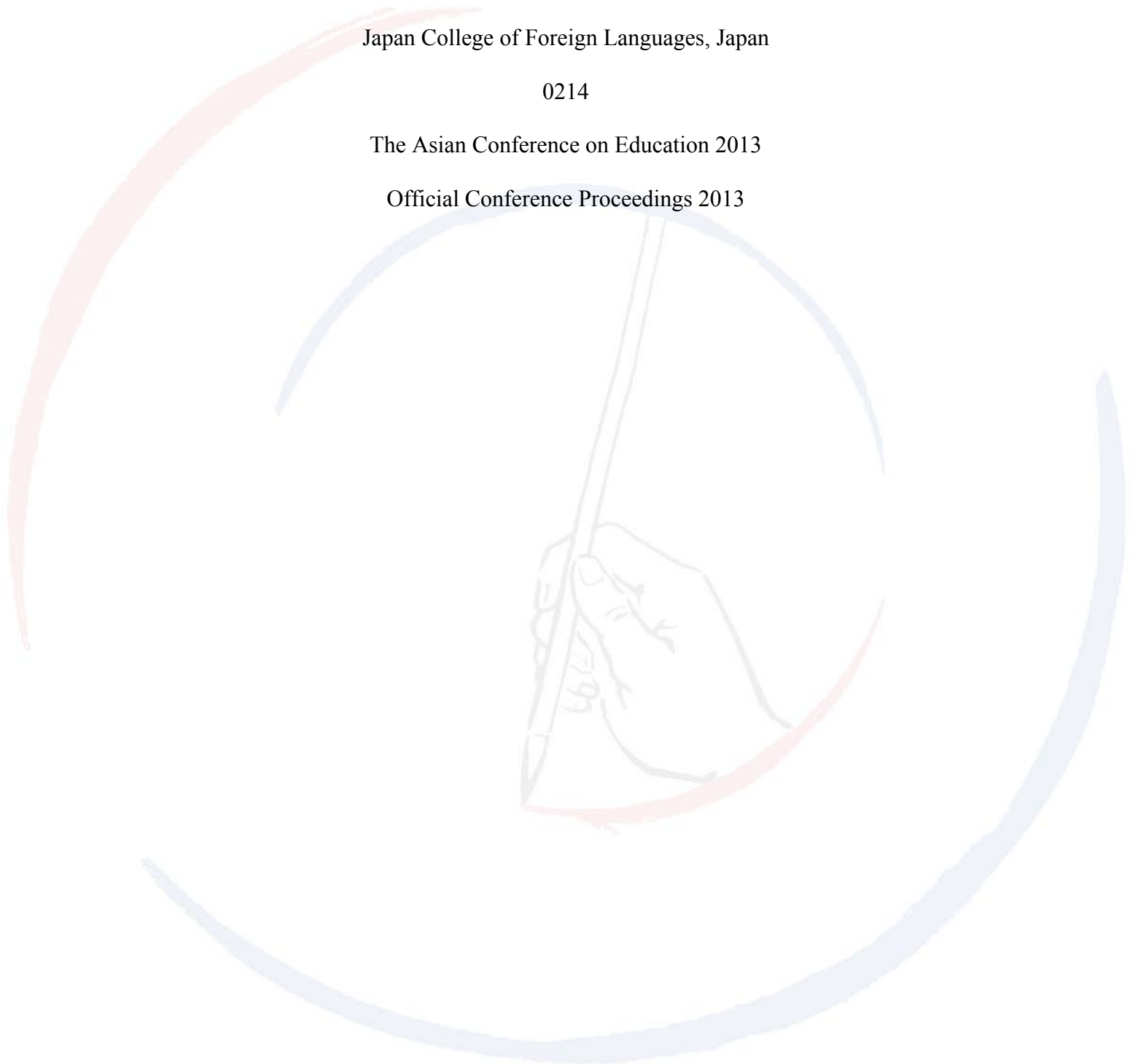
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The notion that English has been functioning as one of the most influential and powerful international contact languages has become the globally common assumption. In ELT environment, it is clear that students have been under pressure to become successful speakers of English due to this global demand of a common language. As it is pointed out that English will be one of the strongest candidates for an international language in ASEAN, it is important especially for Asian ESL/EFL learners and teachers to cultivate the understanding of the linguistic and cultural diversity of World Englishes (henceforth WE) and the function of English as a lingua franca (henceforth ELF) (Crystal 1997; Kachru 1998; McArthur 2003; Graddol 2006; Kirkpatrick 2007). ELF in this paper refers to English which function as a contact language mainly among traditionally called non-native speakers while WEs refers to local varieties of English, including ones from Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles¹ (Jenkins 2006). As Graddol (2006) predicted, one of the key trends of English in 21st century is the future decrease of influence toward English given by native-speaker norm(s) of English (p.14). In ELF speaking environment, English language is *de jure* treated as a truly means of communication and independent from any legitimacy control from the traditional native speakerism. Yet, awareness about the global as well as Asian roles of ELF has not been connected to the need of reconsideration of norm-dependent educational standard model (Seidlhofer 2001). Moreover, as Halliday (2013) noted, the fallacy or “cultural disbelief” that non-native teachers and students have ‘problems’ in autonomy and communicative ability of English has been pervasive in their own attitudes and conceptions about English language especially in South East Asia (p.21). In Japan, for instance, Honna and Takeshita (2000) reported the students’ negative attitudes toward their own English due to the lack of the ‘perfectness’ of being like a traditional native speaker and Kudota (1998) found there is a strong preference for a traditional native speaker model and prejudice against Outer and Expanding Circles varieties of English among Japanese students. I consider them obstacles to develop ELF because these negative attitudes toward WE might prevent ELF speakers from valuing and enhancing the linguistic and cultural diversity with WE and the intercultural communicative ability of ELF. In this study, a qualitative analysis was conducted to unveil the treatments of ELF and the linguistic and cultural diversity of WE in Japanese high school teaching settings. The study investigated government authorized textbooks of English adopted from 2013 in ways the current situations of ELF and linguistic varieties of WE are introduced in them because textbooks are one of the major resources which students gain linguistic as

well as cultural information about English language. Additionally, I believe it is partly possible to perceive Japanese government's attitude toward the perception of the legitimate language model in ELT settings in Japan because textbooks used in classroom are under control of government textbook authorization process. In the authorization process, the private publishers create textbooks and submit them to the national textbook examination conducted by the ministry of education. Contents of textbooks must meet the requirements given by the curriculum guideline in order to pass the examination of authorization process. The decision of which textbooks to be used is done by local boards of education for the case of public schools and by schools in the case of private schools (MOFA² 2013).

Research Questions

In Japan, the ministry of education provides the national curriculum guidelines for all subjects. Overall objective of all foreign languages education focuses on three goals: 1) to “develop students’ communication abilities”, 2) to “deepen their understanding of language and culture” and 3) to “foster a positive attitude toward communication through foreign language” (MEXT³ 2009, p.1). Also, the national curriculum guideline presents a suggestion about the language model in high school ELT settings:

Contemporary standard English should be used. At the same time, consideration should also be given to the reality that different varieties of English are used to communicate around the world (MEXT 2009, p.6).

From the overall objective and suggestion, it is not clear about which standard variety should be taught in Japanese high school ELT settings. Yet, there is any concrete set of linguistic rules for “contemporary standard English” provided by the national guideline. In terms of students’ understanding of culture, there is no suggestion about what culture(s) should be introduced in ELT settings. In order to investigate how the government covertly represents English language and culture to be taught from high school textbooks, two research questions are given:

- 1) How do government authorized English textbooks in Japan treat “the reality that different varieties of English are used to communicate around the world” (NEXT 2009, p.8) in their contents?

- 2) How is the perception toward “contemporary standard English” (MEXT 2009, p.6) made by the national curriculum guideline represented covertly in the textbooks?

Materials Analyzed

The materials analyzed in this study are 49 English textbooks which were authorized by the ministry of education in 2012 and adopted to the educational environment in 2013(MEXT 2012). The 49 textbooks are categorized into four subjects: Basic English Communication, English Communication I, English Expression I and English Conversation. Out of four subjects, English Communication I is the mandatory subject while the three other subjects are elective. The number of the textbooks analyzed in this study was 1 textbook for Basic English Conversation, 27 textbooks for English Communication I, 17 textbooks for English Expression and 4 textbooks for English Conversation shown as below:

Table 1.1 Number of Textbooks Analyzed

Subject	Category	Number
Basic English Communication	elective	1
English Communication I	mandatory	27
English Expression	elective	17
English Conversation	elective	4
Total		49

(MEXT 2009)

See Appendix1 for the detail of subdivided objectives of subjects

Points to Examine

In this study, I conducted the qualitative analysis of textbooks under two points to examine. Firstly I focused on themes of chapters given by textbooks in the ways whether cultural diversity of English and/or the concept of ELF are introduced and secondly on exercise and representation of language *per se* in ways of what linguistic varieties of English were introduced. The first point was set to investigate the representation of culture(s) which the curriculum guideline was to provide to the educational settings. The second point was given to find the covert assumption of

“contemporary standard English” which the curriculum guideline provided as a model language for high school ELT settings.

Analysis

Out of 49 English textbooks analyzed in this study, 6 textbooks (12.2%) have a chapter explaining the linguistic and/or cultural heterogeneity of English in the globalized world and/or the intra/international functions of ELF. Among these six textbooks, however, none of them provided any concrete linguistics examples of WE, and the lexical (i.e. spellings)/phonetic (i.e. IPAs of words) information introduced in them were American English. Also, none of the textbooks which provided the linguistic and/or cultural diversity of WE noted a problem or “conflict” (Jenkins 2009, p.42) between mutual intelligibility and language as identity.

Table 1.2 Number of Textbooks which have a Chapter on WE and/or ELF

Subject	Number	Total
English Communication I	2	27
English Expression I	4	17
Basic English Communication	0	1
English Conversation	0	4
Total	6(12.2%)	49

(MEXT 2012)

See Appendix 2 for the details of the material information

In a textbook *New One World: Communication I*, for example, the theme of lesson 1 is based on the concept of English as a global language. It provided the information about the function of EFL. The first part of this chapter introduced three high school students from Korea (i.e. Expanding Circle), Italy (i.e. Expanding Circle) and Nigeria (i.e. Outer Circle) talking about the reasons why they study English. The reason given by a Nigerian student is related to the intranational function which English plays in Nigeria while the reason given by an Italian student indicates the possible function of English as a lingua franca in European countries. The reason given by a Korean student is also an expectation of the international communicative function which English language holds. The lesson also pointed out the legitimate issue of English as a global language with a sentence noted that “English no longer belongs only to

native speakers” (Ito et al. 2013, p.12). Yet, although the lesson noted the intranational use of English as a common language within Nigeria, neither is there linguistic introduction about local varieties of Nigerian English nor mentioning about the possible mutual intelligibility problem in the intra/international environments in which some varieties of Nigerian English have faced (Kirkpatrick 2007, pp.102-103). The linguistic representation in this lesson was standardized to American English in spite of the fact the diversity of WE is indispensable in the discussion of English as a global language. Another example *On Air: English Communication I*, the lesson 10 provided the critical insight about the spread of powerful language in the discussion of ELF. In the lesson, it clearly stated that “The language of international business as well as international diplomacy is largely English” (Yashiro et al. 2013, p.106). However, the lesson also provided the comment that the spread of EFL might negatively influence the linguistic diversity in general:

Language is not just a tool for communication. It is the history and culture of the people. People identify with their language. The language represents their value, belief and their way of life (Yashiro et al. 2013, p.108).

Nonetheless, the representation of English given by this textbook was also standardized in American English and the chapter did not mention the diversity of WE although it focused on the value of linguistic diversity. Third example *Monument: English Expression I* and fourth example *Mainstream English Expression I* covered the topic about the global function of ELF in chapter 16 and 13 respectively while fifth example *Perspective English Expression I* noted the intranational function of English in Singapore and India along with the global function of ELF. Although there are no linguistic examples of Outer and Expanding Englishes introduced in the chapter, the last example *Departure: English Expression I* attempted to start the topic of the global function of ELF with the sentences to point out and provide insights and positive attitude toward students’ concern or inferiority about ‘imperfectness’ of their English against the traditional native speakers’ norm(s):

Do you ever say to yourself, “I wish I could speak English like a native speaker?” You don't have to think so. There are many people all over the world who speak English as if it were their own language and don't care if they make mistakes (Yamaoka et al. 2013, p.88).

Although these six textbooks attempted to introduce the linguistic and/or cultural diversity of WE and the intra/international functions of ELF, the covert assumption about an educational model was standardized in American English. One out of six textbooks tried to challenge the negative attitude toward students' disbelief about the conception of "perfectness". Yet, the majority of the textbooks did not attempt to introduce the issues of the facts English language has faced in the globalized world. Contrary to this, in *Atlantic English Communication I*, for instance, I found an overt expression in a favor with the traditional norm(s) dependence from dialog between an Inner Circle native speaker and a Japanese student in chapter 14 such as "No, it's not wrong, but it's not so natural. Normally, native speakers use this pattern..." (Michell et al. 2013, p.117). These findings indicate the concept of "contemporary standard English" given by the national curriculum guideline restricts the possibility of an educational model of English language within one of the most influential Inner Circle norms (i.e. American English). This might be a reason why the chapters with the topics of the linguistic and/or cultural diversity of WE did not provide any concrete linguistic samples even from standardized varieties from Outer Circle(e.g. standard Singapore English) even though these varieties meet the criteria of "contemporary standard English" noted in the guideline.

Conclusion

The analysis found there are few textbooks (6 out of 49) which provide with information about cultural and/or linguistic diversity of Englishes in high school environment in Japan. Among these textbooks, none of them introduced any concrete linguistic examples of WE, including standardized varieties in Outer Circle. Also, the perception about "contemporary standard English" is likely to be one of the most powerful Inner Circle models, i.e. American English although the national curriculum guideline did not clearly mention it. The study concluded firstly the linguistic and/or cultural diversity of WE and intra/international roles of ELF may not be considered as one of the key notions which English language has faced in the globalized world in high school ELT settings in Japan. Secondly, covert assumption or tacit understanding about the possibility of an educational model in ELT settings presented by the national curriculum guideline is likely to be limited to the extent of Inner Circle model(s). I believe it is necessary to investigate how ELT materials describe 'English language' along with its history and linguistic and cultural heterogeneity because the

information provided by them may influence how learners and teachers perceive and develop the linguistic and cultural ideology of English and evaluate varieties including their own. The further analysis is needed to investigate possible causalities and mechanisms which may produce pessimistic attitudes and intolerance toward non-Inner Circle varieties and fallacy or ‘cultural disbelief’ regarding native-speakerism intrinsically in Outer and Expanding Circles.

Appendix 1: Objectives for Subdivided Subjects: (MEXT 2009)

Subject	Objectives
English Communication I	To develop students’ basic abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., while fostering a positive attitude toward communication through the English language (p.1).
English Expression I	To develop students’ abilities to evaluate facts, opinions, etc. from multiple perspectives and communicate through reasoning and a range of expression, while fostering a positive attitude toward communication through the English language (p.3).
Basic English Communication	To develop students’ basic abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, while fostering a positive attitude toward communication through the English language (p.1).
English Conversation	To develop students’ abilities to hold conversations on everyday topics, while fostering a positive attitude toward communication through the English language (p.4).

Appendix 2: High School Textbooks Introduced in the Study (See MEXT 2012 for the entire list of the high school textbooks analyzed)

Ito, H et al. 2013, *New World Communication I*, Tokyo:Kyoikushuppan

Mitchell, S et al. 2013, *Atlantis: English Communication I*, Cheers, Tokyo.

Mori, A et al. 2013, *Perspective: English Expression I*, Daiichigakushusha, Tokyo.

Suzuki, E et al. 2013, *Monument: English Expression I*, Kyorinkan, Tokyo.

Yamamoto, R et al 2013, *Mainstream: English Expression I*, Zoshindo, Tokyo.

Yamaoka, K et al. 2013, *Departure: English Expression I*, Taishukan, Tokyo.

Yashiro, K et al. 2013, *On Air: English Communication I*, Kaitakushuppan, Tokyo.

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Ministry of Foreign affairs of Japan, 2013, *How a textbook becomes part of a school curriculum*, viewed 1 October 2013,
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Monbukagakusho, 2009, *Koutougakko gakushu sidou ryouryo kaisetu gaikokugo: section 8 foreign languages* (Interpretation for national curriculum guideline for high school: section 8 Foreign Language), viewed 20 October 2013,
<http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/eiyaku/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/04/11/1298353_9.pdf>.

Monbukagakusho, 2012, *Koutougakkou shiyou kyoukashomokuroku: heisei25nendo shiyou* (High school textbooks list: used from 2013), viewed 1 October 2013,
<http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotoukyoukasho/mokuroku/24/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/02/18/1320021_03.pdf>.

Notes:

1. See Kachru (1992) for the details of the definitions of Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles.
2. MOFA= Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.
3. MEXT= Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan

