

# A Critical Analysis of an Approved English Textbook for Lower Secondary School Students in Japan: Embedded Cultural Values and Ideologies

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Rationale

This research attempts to reveal cultural values and ideologies embedded in an English textbook for lower secondary school students in Japan, by critically analyzing it. The English textbook in question is *Columbus 21 English Course (C21)* (Togo et al., 2006), which was approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2005, and is currently used in Japan.

There are two reasons why I have chosen this research topic. The first reason is closely connected to my strong interest in the relationship between language, language education, power and ideologies. More specifically, I am concerned about the issue of whether English Language Teaching (ELT) at school in Japan reproduces social relations of power, particular cultural values and ideologies as well as reflects them under “the *discourse of English as an International Language (EIL)*” (Pennycook, 1994, p. 6). According to some critics in Japan (eg., Nakamura, 1989, 1993, 2004; Oishi, 1990; Tsuda, 1990, 1993, 1996, 2003), Japanese people have adopted native English speakers’ (particularly Anglo-Saxon) viewpoint of the world through ELT owing to the dominance of

English, and the internalization of their viewpoint has reinforced Japanese people's perception of other Asians as the inferior "Other". This sense of superiority over other Asians is defined as "Orientalism transferred" by Kang (1996, p. 201), who is a Korean poststructuralist researcher of politics living in Japan, through the application of the discourse of "Orientalism" explored by Said (1978).

It is significant to note, however, that the arguments presented by the critics such as Nakamura, Oishi and Tsuda might be slightly simplistic. The reason for this is that there is neither one single Anglo-Saxon viewpoint of the world nor one single process of Japanese people's adoption of it. Additionally, their arguments might be "intuitive rather than empirical" (Kubota, 1998, p. 298). As Kubota continues to argue, "[t]he relation between learning English and the formation of learners' particular world views can only be speculated" at this stage of their research. Therefore, it seems to me well worth while to closely investigate the following issues:

- What kinds of viewpoints of the world have Japanese people acquired through learning English?
- What processes have they gone through for acquiring these viewpoints of the world?
- Whether Japanese people's viewpoints of the world acquired through learning English really have something in common with those of Anglo-Saxon people, or broadly speaking, of European people (eg., the discourse of "Orientalism")?

- Whether Japanese people's viewpoints of the world acquired through learning English really reinforce their construction of "Orientalism transferred" toward other Asians?

If there is, in fact, an interrelationship between Japanese people's learning of English, their construction of particular viewpoints of the world and their sense of superiority over other Asians, teachers of English in Japan, including myself, need to challenge this.

In the fields of TESOL and applied linguistics, however, as Pennycook (2000) argues, the major research topics have to do with the ways in which learners learn to communicate. The same tendency is witnessed in Japan as well. For example, as Nakamura (2004) points out, analyses of English textbooks in Japan have been made mainly in terms of methodologies of ELT with apolitical chronological descriptions. This argument does not indicate that, as Pennycook continues to state, research questions regarding methodologies do not matter. Rather, I would like to stress that it is also necessary to discuss ELT in Japan in broader socio-political and cultural-political contexts. The discussion about ELT from these perspectives will encourage teachers of English to have a critical viewpoint about language, power and ideologies, which will, in turn, lead to the development of students' critical awareness of these issues. The first step for this, I believe, is critical analysis of approved English textbooks used in Japan.

The second reason why I have chosen this research topic is related to my job as one of the editors of another approved English textbook, *New Crown English Series (NC)* (Takahashi et al.,

2006). In addition to working as a teacher at a lower and upper secondary school in Japan, I have been a member of the editorial committee for *NC* since 1998. Although this research has focused on *C21* on the grounds that I will mention later, critically analyzing one of the six approved English textbooks used at lower secondary schools in Japan has provided me with a good opportunity to reflect upon my work as an editor as well as a teacher. This point is essential because, as Pennycook (2001) stresses, “critical work should always be self-reflexive” (p. 1). Simultaneously, I hope that this research will also help to create English textbooks in the near future that challenge existing dominant cultural values and ideologies, contributing to the field of ELT in Japan.

I will conclude this part by giving the grounds on which I have selected *C21* in this research. This has to do with my interest in its name “Columbus”, which is closely associated with Christopher Columbus. Christopher Columbus, on the one hand, is widely known as the first European who arrived at the Americas; on the other hand, his voyage to the continents has been receiving more and more critical attention from the perspective of the history of European colonization. Nevertheless, the English textbook was named after him.

According to the telephone interview with the *C21* editorial department conducted by Nakamura (2004), they have two reasons for naming it after Christopher Columbus. The first reason is that they thought “Columbus” was easy to remember; the second is that they desired to create an image of the departure for the 21st century by applying the former voyager’s name to their English textbook. Considering these two reasons, as Nakamura continues

to argue, they seem to be indifferent to the social, political and cultural implications of Columbus's voyage in world history. *C27's* relatively apolitical viewpoint about history such as this motivated me to carefully examine the cultural values and ideologies embedded in the English textbook itself.

## **1.2. Broader Contexts of the Research**

Although they may be in a minority in the fields of TESOL and applied linguistics, various researchers have pointed out the politics of language education, specifically that of ELT (eg., Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 2001; Phillipson, 1992; Reagan, 2006; Tollefson, 1991, 2000). It is true that there are some differences in their detailed arguments, but they are in accordance with one another in that language education or ELT can act as a great agent of conveying particular ideologies and of reproducing social inequalities. Regarding language education in general, for example, Clark and Ivanič (1997) argue:

Schooling is not ideology-free, and language and language/literacy education is, in our view, the prime carrier of the dominant ideologies and cultural values in which school practices are consciously or unconsciously embedded. (p. 49)

Likewise, with regard to ELT, Reagan (2006) stresses:

it is very important that we keep in mind the incredible

power of the English language as an agent of imperial (over)reach and domination. Neither the English language itself nor efforts to teach and promote English internationally are neutral, of course. (p. 10)

It has also been maintained that textbooks used in education play a crucial role in not only reflecting but also reproducing the social relations of power which exist outside the classrooms (eg., Blaut, 1993; Luke, de Castell & Luke, 1989; Dendrinos, 1992; Gray, 2001). According to Dendrinos (1992), textbooks “constitute an authorized medium that conveys to pupils ‘legitimate’ knowledge” (p. 26), serving “the social reproduction of cultural domination” (p. 154). Blaut (1993) similarly points out:

Textbooks are an important window into a culture; more than just books, they are semiofficial statements of exactly what the opinion-forming elite of the culture want the educated youth of that culture to believe to be true about the past and present world. (p. 6 in Nakamura, 2004, p. 120)

These arguments as to the politics of both language education and textbooks imply that close investigations of language textbooks would help to reveal what kinds of cultural and ideological messages are carried in them and to where the users are oriented.

It can also be said, however, that research on language textbooks is not sufficient without addressing the ways in which they are used in real classrooms. This is because, as Sunderland et al. (2000) point out, teacher behavior or classroom discourse in rela-

tion to textbooks has the great possibility of exerting more decisive effects on learners than the textbooks themselves. For example, “[t]he most non-sexist textbook can become sexist in the hands of a teacher with sexist attitudes” (Sunderland, 1994, p. 64 in Sunderland et al., 2000, p. 260). Consequently, exploration of “teacher talk around the text” (p. 251), which can be regarded as “the discursive practice of consumption” (p. 259) of the text, is another essential part of critical work. Admitting the considerable significance of examining classroom discourse around textbooks, this research, as its prerequisite step, has focused on critical analysis of a textbook itself.

## **2. Research Questions and Research Method**

### **2.1. Research Questions**

As mentioned in the previous section, the purpose of this research is to reveal cultural values and ideologies embedded in *C21*. In order to accomplish this research purpose, I have addressed the following two subordinate research questions.

#### (1) What Characters Appear in *C21*?

All of the six approved English textbooks for lower secondary school students in Japan including *C21* have plural fictitious characters, who usually play the role of lower secondary school students. Every lesson in the textbooks is designed in the form of these fictitious characters’ introducing a subject matter. Moreover, it is typical of the approved English textbooks that the same characters appear throughout the three volumes, namely, from Book 1

for Year 7 to Book 3 for Year 9, growing older as the actual students do. In other words, lower secondary school students in Japan learn English with their fictitious “friends” for three years, which implies that the existence of these “friends” has the possibility of explicitly or implicitly influencing the formation of the students’ particular viewpoints of the world. Thus, the fictitious characters play an important role in the approved English textbooks, and analyzing the features of these characters in *C21* has helped to uncover what kinds of cultural values and ideologies are conveyed in it and to where the students are oriented.

## (2) What Subject Matters are Dealt with in *C21*?

In addition to fictitious characters, subject matter also plays a leading role in the textbooks. According to Nakamura (1993), who is a former representative author of *NC*, the decision on what to write, namely, what subject matters to deal with constitutes one of the most significant parts in editing English textbooks. The reason for this is that, as he argues, messages are most directly reflected in subject matter. Dendrinos (1992) similarly points out that social values are conveyed by topics in textbooks. Referring to Kress (1989) and Fairclough (1989), however, she adds that they are carried “not merely by the theme being dealt with in the text, but by the language used to deal with the theme” (p. 21). This implies that, in addition to subject matter itself, the vocabulary, grammar and text structure chosen in the texts should also be analyzed, in order to reveal embedded social and cultural values. As Dendrinos continues to argue, language itself is “pervasively bound to ideology” (p. 21). In other words, “power operates through lan-



guage” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 80) and “power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse” (Wodak, 1996, p. 18). Following Kress, Fairclough, Dendrinos, Pennycook and Wodak, this research has paid attention to language use as well as subject matter in *C21*.

## **2.2. Research Method**

This research was conducted through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the aim of which is, as Fairclough (1995) points out, to denaturalize ideologies that have become naturalized. However, what theoretical paradigm CDA relies on varies from one analyst to another. In this research, I have drawn on the interpretive/constructivist paradigm. The first reason for this is that discourses conveyed by language in a textbook themselves are “the multiple social construction of meaning and knowledge” (Mertens, 1998, p. 11) and their complexity cannot be understood in the same way as natural sciences. In order to reveal cultural values and ideologies embedded in a textbook, the qualitative approach, which usually provides verbally captured “holistic pictures” (Mertens, 1998, p. 3), is more appropriate than the quantitative approach.

The second reason is inevitability about my subjectivity (or subjectivities) of this research. As interpretation in ethnography is influenced by the ethnographer’s experiences (Denscombe, 1999), analysis in CDA is also affected by the analyst’s. My analysis of the English textbook is one of plural interpretations from “a certain standpoint” (Mertens, 1998, p. 11) and the outcomes cannot be independent of my personal experiences, beliefs and social val-

ues. Silverman (2000) argues that the research which adopts the qualitative approach reflects the researcher's political values. Thus, my way of analyzing *C21* in this research has been necessarily shaped by me and I am also socially constructed by language, culture and discourse. Drawing on the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, however, does not indicate that I have not applied the quantitative approach to my research. As Nunan (1992) points out, a dichotomy between the qualitative and quantitative approaches is "simplistic and naïve" (p. 3). Therefore, I have occasionally combined both approaches.

As a methodology for data analysis, I made reference to the framework Pennycook (2005) had devised for critical analysis of texts, which suggested four perspectives: "extratextual and pretextual relations", "intratextual relations", "intertextual relations" and "posttextual and subtextual relations" (See Appendix). This framework, however, is very elaborate and it would have taken enormous time to analyze three volumes of the English textbook through the application of every item in it. Consequently, I have made good use of some essential items of the framework. For example, although my analysis and discussion in this research focus on *C21*, I have also referred to the other five approved textbooks if necessary. By so doing, "intertextual relations" between the six approved English textbooks for lower secondary school students in Japan can be partly studied. The other five are *NC*, *New Horizon English Course (NH)* (Kasajima et al., 2006), *One World English Course (OW)* (Higuchi et al., 2006), *Sunshine English Course (S)* (Aoki et al., 2006) and *Total English (TE)* (Horiguchi et al., 2006).

### **3. Background and Previous Studies**

The main purpose of this section is to present a review of three studies of English textbooks in Japan analyzed by such researchers as Nakamura (2004), Erikawa (1995) and Matsuda (2002a). However, I will begin by providing a brief explanation as to the system of official approval for school textbooks in Japan. This is because the Japanese Government applies this system to all of the textbooks used in elementary and secondary schools, and what is said and what is not said in the textbooks is greatly influenced by this institutional power. With no reference to the system, English textbooks in Japan cannot be investigated thoroughly. It is true that, in CDA, the concept of politics indicates “the workings of power” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 27) rather than the actual political fields. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the relationship between the latter form of politics and English textbooks in Japan cannot be overlooked. In addition, the reference to the system constitutes part of the discussion regarding “extratextual and pretextual relations”, which helps to analyze *C21* “in social, cultural, historical contexts” (Pennycook, 2005).

#### **3.1. The System of Official Approval for School Textbooks in Japan**

English textbooks in Japan firstly have to be created on the basis of the Course of Study designed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The finished textbooks, then, need to be approved by the Ministry. The most notable problem with this system is that the administrators often

require the publishers and authors to rewrite “inappropriate” parts of textbooks, which “they think” are often “inappropriate”. According to Nakamura (2004), the system of official approval is one of the significant reasons for the lack of English textbooks which profoundly deal with serious social issues such as wars, invasions, and racial and sexual discrimination. These issues, the administrators believe, are not relevant to English textbooks with which secondary school students learn English. The administrators do not consider that learning language, in a sense, means learning the relationship between language and society, language and power, and language and gender. For them, language is separated from the broader socio-political and cultural-political contexts.

Therefore, as Nakamura continues to argue, the Nanjing Massacre, for example, will never appear in English textbooks as a subject matter to provide students with an opportunity to think about peace. One of the reasons for this is that, as mentioned above, the administrators do not regard this issue as appropriate for the teaching and learning of English. Additionally, what is more important in Nakamura’s argument is that the publishers and authors, who are aware of what the administrators think is inappropriate for English textbooks, control themselves voluntarily and they are not willing to write about historical incidents such as the Nanjing Massacre. As a result of this, they come to judge that these historical incidents are not necessary for English textbooks. Thus, the assumption made by the administrators that wars, invasions, and racial and sexual discrimination are not relevant to English textbooks is shared by the publishers and authors, leading to its perpetuation and reproduction.

In brief, power not only comes from the top but also is maintained by the non-rulers. As Janks and Ivanič (1992) argue, the more values are regarded as uncontested established facts, the less coercion is required to sustain them. Hegemony, which is considered “as absolute reality” (Tollefson, 2000, p. 16) and preserved by obtaining “active consent for the policies and decisions” (Clark & Ivanič, 1997, p. 22), operates here. Consequently, as Nakamura (1993) stresses, English textbooks used in Japan continue to offer students more and more trivial subject matters. He even points out that “English language textbooks used in junior high schools in Japan are not simple or easy: they are only childish” (p. 48).

### 3.2. Previous Studies of English Textbook Analysis in Japan

As mentioned in 1.1, most analyses of approved English textbooks in Japan have been made from the perspective of methodologies of ELT, on the basis of chronological descriptions. One of the representative works among them is *Eigo Kyokasho Meichosenshu* (Selected Masterpieces of English Textbooks) (1994) written by Takanashi et al. In the book, they focus on 18 English textbooks published from 1837 to 1947 and describe their features mainly through looking back over social backgrounds and dominant approaches of ELT of those days such as H. E. Palmer’s Oral Method. However, Nakamura (2004) points out that, although the analysis made by Takanashi et al. is a great achievement, it is also essential to investigate textbooks in an alternative way, in order to uncover embedded cultural values and ideologies.

Following the critique of descriptive and methodology-oriented

analyses, Nakamura himself critically explores a wide variety of English textbooks which have been published in Japan from the perspectives of the politics of English itself and ELT. His analyses consist of two parts. Firstly, he examines the 18 textbooks which Takanashi et al. have already analyzed. Secondly, he investigates 72 approved textbooks for upper secondary school students in Japan that were published in 1999. Through these two analyses, Nakamura concludes that the discourses of Eurocentric colonialism and of EIL have appeared in the English textbooks and these two discourses have not only reflected but also reproduced cultural and social relations of power.

### **3.2.1. The Discourse of Eurocentric Colonialism**

Nakamura uses *Robinson Crusoe* as one of the examples of the discourse of Eurocentric colonialism. He states that *Robinson Crusoe* was a very popular subject matter simply as an adventure story among the above-mentioned 18 textbooks and this tendency also continued after the Second World War. Referring to the arguments developed by Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1998), Nakamura firstly points out that the conversation between Crusoe and Friday represents the beginning of English colonialism. Secondly, the fact that many English textbooks in Japan have dealt with such a problematic story eagerly implies that the discourse of colonialism promoted mainly by English-speaking people has been reproduced in Japan as well. Thirdly, it is not surprising that Japanese people studying English with this story have developed a Eurocentric colonialist viewpoint of the world. In other words, as colonialism appearing in *Robinson Crusoe* has “produced images of

both the Self and Other” (Pennycook, 1998, p. 15) in English-speaking countries, the story in English textbooks in Japan has also helped Japanese people to form almost the same viewpoint about the “Self” and “Other”.

Nakamura states that these illusory images of the “Self” and “Other” have led to unconcern and disdain toward non-English-speaking people, particularly other Asians. As mentioned in 1.1, the correlation between Japanese people’s development of a Eurocentric colonialist viewpoint of the world through learning English and their sense of superiority over non-English-speaking people should be examined more closely. However, Nakamura’s argument that English textbooks in Japan have reflected and reproduced the discourse of Eurocentric colonialism cannot be denied.

Like Nakamura, Erikawa (1995) also argues that the discourse of Eurocentric colonialism appears in many previously used English textbooks in Japan. Concentrating on illustrations in textbooks published from the Meiji Era (1868–1912) up to today, he points out the white-oriented features of these textbooks. Firstly, making reference to textbooks that were imported from English-speaking countries and widely used in Japan in the late 19th century, Erikawa stresses that many of them have racially-biased descriptions along with illustrations which reinforce the prejudice. For example, one of the textbooks, *Mitchell’s New School Geography* (1872) divides people into five groups: “Savage”, “Barbarous”, “Half-Civilized”, “Civilized”, and “Civilized and Enlightened”. The features of these groups, according to Erikawa, are explained not only by verbal descriptions but also by visual images which

demonstrate that, for example, European people belong to the “Civilized and Enlightened” group whereas Aboriginal people are in the “Savage” group. This categorization is closely connected to the dichotomy between the superior “Self” and the inferior “Other”. Considering that all of these imported textbooks including *Mitchell’s New School Geography* were written by English-speaking people, it may be natural that they directly reflect images of both the “Self” and “Other” promoted mainly in English-speaking countries. However, the problem here is that, by importing and using these textbooks without questioning the contents, ELT at school in Japan in those days reproduced as well as reflected the discourse of Eurocentric colonialism consciously or unconsciously.

Erikawa also points out that these imported textbooks, in fact, have had a great impact on Japanese people’s editing of their own English textbooks. He argues that, in the textbooks created by Japanese people and used until the early 1970s, African people and indigenous people in the USA are frequently depicted (1) as servants of the white, (2) as objects saved by the white and (3) as savages attacking the white without any special reasons, reflecting the discourse of Eurocentric colonialism. Furthermore, what is interesting, as Erikawa continues to imply, is that, since the end of the Second World War, the discourse of Eurocentric colonialism in English textbooks used in Japan has been gradually replaced by that of EIL, which stresses the significance of English itself. As an example of this phenomenon, he uses *Standard Jack and Betty 3* (1956). Together with a world map which visually shows that English is widely spoken, the textbook releases a statement such as the following:



Some of them [languages] are less important, for there are not many people who speak them. English is one of the most important languages because many people use it.

(Erikawa, 1995, p. 19)

According to Erikawa, this statement based on pragmatism, on the one hand, has motivated Japanese people to learn English eagerly; on the other hand, it has also encouraged them to overlook persecuted minor languages and cultures under the dominance of English.

### **3.2.2. The Discourse of EIL**

As for the discourse of EIL, Nakamura (2004) points out ideological viewpoints about the terms of “foreign language” and “foreign people” which appear in the 72 English textbooks published in 1999. He suggests that most of the English textbooks define English as an international language mainly because it is widespread, and in order to encourage students to study English, such statements as the following are often provided:

- A foreigner is in trouble in front of a ticket-vending machine at station. Let's say something to him/her in English.
- Seeing a foreigner nearby, I sometimes feel like talking to him/her in English.
- Let's form a friendship with people in the world through the use of English.
- English is a common language in the world.

- English is useful! We have had more and more opportunities to go to overseas countries and to communicate with people there through the use of a common language, English.... (p. 174)

According to Nakamura, from these statements, it is clear that there is a tendency for the publishers and authors in Japan to edit English textbooks as if English was the only foreign language and almost all foreigners were English-speaking people under the discourse of EIL (or the discourse of “English as a common language in the world”) although there are, in fact, many foreign languages and many foreign people who do not speak English. He also points out that promoting English as an international language in English textbooks often results in making other foreign languages become invisible to students. In other words, the discourse of EIL in English textbooks creates a reality where, for students in Japan, the terms of “foreign language” and “foreign people” are actually equal to English and English-speaking people, contributing to overlooking other languages and non-English-speaking people. Nakamura concludes that the ideological descriptions regarding the terms of “foreign language” and “foreign people” under the discourse of EIL in English textbooks have greatly influenced the formation of students’ biased viewpoints of the world.

Matsuda (2002b) stresses that, in fact, Japanese secondary school students have a biased viewpoint about the terms of “foreign countries” and “abroad”. Her argument is based on the outcomes of her “qualitative case study of Japanese secondary school students’ attitudes toward English” (Matsuda, 2000 in p. 436).

According to Matsuda, one of the salient findings in her case study is that “the participating students held a distinctly western-centered view of the world” (p. 436). For example, the terms of “foreign countries” and “abroad” are, for many students, synonymous with “the West”, in particular, North America and Western Europe. Moreover, foreign countries in which the students take an interest are usually the USA, Western European countries and Canada; countries in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America are less often mentioned. She continues to state:

It was as though other Asian countries were too close to Japan geographically—and culturally, in their mind—and thus not *foreign* enough, while other areas such as Africa and South America, were too far from Japan and beyond their sense of reality. (pp. 436–437)

Matsuda also suggests that the participating students’ Western orientation is obvious in “their awareness—or lack thereof—and attitudes toward different English varieties” (p. 437). According to her, although the students know the existence of different English varieties, they have little detailed idea about them. On the other hand, they recognize American or British English as the Standard English and desire to acquire either of these. Regarding these outcomes as problematic, Matsuda stresses:

Not only the students’ awareness of the world was limited, to say the least, but they also seemed to have internalized some stereotypes and prejudices against parts of the world

that they were not even familiar with. (p. 437)

Provoked by the result of this case study, she next makes a critical analysis of seven approved English textbooks for Year 7 students in Japan published in 1997, for the purpose of investigating “the representation of English users and uses” (Matsuda, 2002a in Matsuda, 2002b, p. 437) in them. Making reference to the three concentric circles provided by Kachru (1992), she summarizes her findings as the following. Firstly, the representation of English in the seven textbooks “focuses almost exclusively on the Inner Circle” (p. 437). Secondly, the majority of the 74 leading characters in these textbooks are either from Japan or the Inner Circle whereas the number of characters from countries in the Outer and Expanding Circles except Japan is comparatively limited. Thirdly, the Inner Circle characters have a tendency to speak more words than those from the other Circles, implying that they are “assigned ‘bigger roles’ in dialogues than others” (p. 438). Hesitating to assert a causal relationship readily without any confirmation, she points out:

the English representation found in this study—the dominance of English uses and users from the Inner Circle and the absence of others, especially the Outer Circle—and the perception of English shared by Japanese high school students suggest a striking similarity. (p. 438)

With the results of both the case study and the critical analysis of English textbooks, Matsuda questions whether ELT at school in

Japan, which considers English as an international language that can help to promote international understanding, does the work. She argues that “English classes could serve as a starting point for international understanding” (p. 436) in EFL contexts whereas they also have the possibility of students’ internalizing a viewpoint of the world “created through colonial discourses of English” (Pennycook, 1998 in p. 436). She finishes by making the following two recommendations on approved English textbooks in Japan. The first is that they should include more leading characters from the Outer and Expanding Circles, assigning them more important roles in dialogues. The second is that they should “address the colonial past—and possibly present—of the English language” (p. 438). Matsuda stresses that the improvement of approved English textbooks from these perspectives will truly foster international understanding.

Nakamura’s, Erikawa’s and Matsuda’s studies of English textbooks used in Japan analyze respective data and concentrate on different matters. However, they have in common with one another the purpose of their research which is to reveal cultural values and ideologies underpinning the textbooks in question from the perspectives of the politics of English itself and ELT. My research has a similar purpose. In the following section, I will provide my analysis and discussion of *C21*, referring particularly to Nakamura’s and Matsuda’s studies.

#### **4. Critical Analysis of *C21***

The analysis and discussion here focus on the characters and

subject matters in *C21*. Characters and subject matters, I believe, are reciprocal issues rather than independent of each other; that is, they work together in interrelated ways to carry cultural and ideological messages. This section, therefore, does not view findings on the characters and those on the subject matters separately, but attempts to discuss them by connecting the former with the latter. The analysis and discussion in terms of the nationality of the characters will be made in 4.1 while those, in terms of their personality in 4.2. I will begin by providing the features of the main characters appearing in *C21* (See Table 1). The main characters here indicate the ones who are almost always seen in the lessons throughout the three volumes of the textbook.

**Table 1. The Features of the Main Characters in *C21***

Name	Status	Sex	Nationality
Hiro	Student	Male	Japanese
Jenny	Student	Female	American

#### **4.1. Nationality**

As Table 1 shows, *C21* sets up two main characters (Hiro and Jenny). One of the most notable features of these characters is that they represent only two nationalities: Japanese and American. It is interesting and crucial to note that this representation of only Japanese and American nationalities is also reinforced by the existence of supporting characters. In *C21*, there are seven supporting characters who often appear in the lessons from Book 1 to 3 although they do not play as big a role as Hiro and Jenny. However, even if these supporting characters are taken into account, the limited variety of the characters' nationalities in *C21*

does not change; all of the supporting characters come from Japan and the USA as well (See Table 2).

**Table 2. The Features of the Supporting Characters in *C21***

Name	Relationship with Hiro and Jenny	Sex	Nationality
Mrs. Yamada	Hiro's mother	Female	Japanese
Sanae	Hiro's younger sister	Female	Japanese
Daisuke	Hiro and Jenny's classmate	Male	Japanese
Kazu	Hiro and Jenny's classmate	Male	Japanese
Yumi	Hiro and Jenny's classmate	Female	Japanese
Mr. White	Jenny's grandfather	Male	American
Sarah	Jenny's best friend	Female	American

As mentioned in 3.2.2, Matsuda's analysis of seven English textbooks published in 1997 (2002a in Matsuda, 2002b) shows that the key characters in those textbooks are mostly from the Inner Circle except Japan and she regards that Western orientation as problematic. The reason for this is that "[i]f students are exposed only to a limited section of the world, their awareness and understanding of the world may also become limited, too" (p. 438). As for the main and supporting characters in *C21*, however, the orientation is not so much toward Western countries as toward the USA only. This implies that there is the great possibility of *C21*'s supplying the students with exposure to a more limited part of the world, which may also help them to develop a more biased viewpoint.

This USA-only orientation in establishing the main and supporting characters interrelates with the situation where the subject matters in *C21* also focus on issues with regard to Japan and the

USA throughout the three volumes. It is true that 3 out of 28 regular lessons in *C21* deal with Brazil and Cambodia, leading to the appearance of some minor characters who come from these two countries. Therefore, it cannot be denied that the three lessons contribute to giving the students an opportunity to learn about Brazil and Cambodia, and people living there. However, all of the other 25, which constitute 89.2% of the total regular lessons, are somehow related to Japan and the USA. This tendency also seems to promote the students' exposure to a very limited section of the world.

The USA-only orientation does matter in terms of the quality as well as the quantity. In *C21*, the most typical topics as to Japan and the USA are their major traditional events. For example, Jenny participates in a Japanese summer festival wearing a *yukata* (an informal cotton kimono), spends the New Year holidays in Kyoto (a very "Japan-like" city) and experiences rice planting in the countryside. On the other hand, Hiro's family celebrates "American-style" Halloween and Christmas with Jenny. Particularly for Halloween and Christmas, photographs depicting scenes from these festivals are provided on the front cover of the two volumes. Furthermore, on one of the same covers, photographs that introduce other festivals in the USA such as Easter, Independence Day and Thanksgiving are also given although they are not dealt with as subject matters in the regular lessons. What is significant here is that most of the events are connected to Christianity and the photographs provided appear to concentrate on a culture of the "white middle class varieties" (Kubota, 2001, p. 22) in the USA.



This focus on Christian events and a white middle class culture results in representing only a superficial part of the USA, dropping reference to a reality (or realities) of the complicated US society where there are many people who do not believe in Christianity or do not belong to that class. In fact, *C21* does not deal with minority groups such as indigenous people and African Americans as a subject matter although it has a passing mention of Latinos and Asians on a single page. Based on her analyses of two major coursebooks used in Australia (*Headway/Intermediate* (1986) and *The Australian English Course* (1991)), Wajnryb (1996 in Gray, 2001) points out that the coursebooks supply learners with a “very, very thin slice of a clean, affluent social environment” (p. 161). It seems that this criticism holds true for *C21*.

Additionally, as a result of this USA-only orientation in the characters and subject matters, even other countries in the so-called Inner Circle such as the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are rarely referred to in *C21*. When these countries are mentioned, they have a tendency to be passively talked about; characters from these countries are seldom assigned a role to talk about themselves. For example, a woman from New Zealand, who is an English teacher at Hiro and Jenny’s school, appears in the lesson where Hiro guides Jenny on her first day at school:

Jenny: Who’s that woman over there?

Hiro: That’s Ms. Brown. She’s an English teacher. Her class is fun.

Jenny: Is she from America?

Hiro: No, she isn’t. She’s from New Zealand.

Although Ms. Brown becomes the topic of Hiro and Jenny's dialogue in this lesson, she herself has no opportunity to utter words; not only in this lesson but also in all of the following regular lessons, is she never assigned a role to talk about New Zealand or herself. It seems as if she existed in *C21* only for the purpose of introducing new grammatical items, namely, how to create an interrogative sentence with an auxiliary verb "be" and how to answer it in a negative way ("Is she from America?" — "No, she isn't"). In order for Hiro to produce a negative answer, Ms. Brown needs to be non-American. However, as long as she satisfies the requirement that she is not American, she does not necessarily need to be a New Zealander here. If Hiro were to say, for example, "She's from Australia", she would become an Australian without causing any crucial problems for *C21*. In brief, merely through Hiro's discursive practice ("She is from New Zealand"), Ms. Brown becomes a New Zealander here, leading to her being actually recognized so by the students.

It is also important to note, however, that Ms. Brown as an English teacher is not from South Africa, Jamaica or Singapore, for example. According to the statistics kept by the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme (2006), which recruits "young people from abroad to assist foreign language teachers in public schools" (Kubota, 2001, p. 20), there were 68 Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) from South Africa, 48 from Jamaica and 23 from Singapore in 2005. Considering this, Ms. Brown could have been from one of these countries. Nevertheless, by establishing Ms.

Brown as an English teacher from New Zealand, *C21* consciously or unconsciously reflects another reality that 96.4% of the 5,170 ALTs in 2005 were from the Inner Circle (JET, 2006). Although Ms. Brown does not utter any words, her existence as a New Zealander with a picture that depicts her as a “white woman” may not only perpetuate but also reproduce “the idealization of a native speaker as someone who has perfect, innate knowledge of the language and culture and thus is the best teacher of English” (Kubota, 2001, p. 21).

The question of “Is she from America?” in the dialogue also reinforces the above-mentioned USA-only orientation in *C21*. What is more interesting and meaningful here, however, is to address this question in relation to the other five approved English textbooks. Like *C21*, all of them offer a lesson where students learn the ways in which an interrogative sentence with “be” should be made and answered. The five dialogues in question and some explanation about them are provided below:

*NC* (Book 1, Lesson 1, pp. 16–17)

Ken: Hello. I’m Ken.

Emma: Hi. I’m Emma.

Ken: Are you from Australia?

Emma: Yes, I am. My friend, Ratna.

Ken: Hello, Ratna.

Ratna: Hello, Ken. I’m from India.

- Ken, Emma and Ratna introduce themselves to one another.
- Emma has a bag with a map of Australia on it.

*TE* (Book 1, Lesson 4, p. 44)

Aki: Are you from America?

Jim: Yes, I am.

Aki: Are you a basketball fan?

Jim: No, I'm not. I'm a baseball fan. I watch baseball on TV every day.

- Aki visits a festival held at a nearby international school.
- Jim sells hotdogs at a stall, on the wall of which a calendar with the Statue of Liberty and a poster of NBA are posted.

*NH* (Book 1, Unit 1, pp. 12–13)

Shin: Are you Ms. Green?

Ms. Green: Yes, I am.

Shin: I'm Shin.

Ms. Green: Nice to meet you, Shin.

Shin: Nice to meet you, too. Are you from America?

Ms. Green: No, I'm not. I'm from Canada.

- Shin meets Ms. Green, an English teacher at his school for the first time.

*OW* (Book 1, Lesson 1, pp. 18–19)

Aki: Are you from America, Ms. King?

Ms. King: No, I'm not. I'm from Canada.

Aki: Oh, are you?

Ms. King: Yes. From Toronto.

- Aki attends the first lesson given by Ms. King, an English

teacher at her school.

*S* (Book 1, Program 1, pp. 16–17)

Andy: Are you a junior high school student?

Yuki: Yes, I am.

Andy: Are you a student at the same school, Mike?

Mike: No, I'm not. I'm an international school student.

- Yuki participates in a party with her friend, Mike.
- Yuki and Mike meet Andy at the party for the first time.

The dialogues indicate that, like *C21*, four textbooks (*NC*, *TE*, *NH* and *OW*) use the nationality as a topic for the purpose of introducing how to create and answer an interrogative sentence with “be”; *S* is the only exception. Among the four, *NC* and *TE* provide a reason for which one interlocutor asks the other a question about his/her nationality (“a bag with a map of Australia on it”, and “a calendar with the Statue of Liberty and a poster of NBA”). Even in this situation, asking somebody his/her nationality can be a sensitive action. To begin with, a person who, for example, has a bag with a map of Australia on it does not necessarily come from Australia. In addition, there are many people whose nationalities cannot be determined so readily. Nevertheless, in *NH* and *OW*, the students “abruptly” ask the teachers whether or not they are from “America”. To say nothing of the lack of ethics in this question, the problem here is why “America” is favored and chosen so frequently in the textbooks.

Taking a previously used product of *NH* as an example, whose

first lesson deals with Japan and the USA along with statements such as “This is Japan. This is Tokyo. This is America. This is New York”, Nakamura (1993) points out:

If the USA is chosen in the very first lesson for the purpose of letting students be keenly aware of this country, the statements of “This is America. This is New York.” will carry a particular ideology. If the USA is unconsciously chosen, they will convey another ideology. (p. 57)

Nakamura’s argument seems to be relevant to the questions of “Is she from America?” and “Are you from America?” Whether “America” is selected consciously or unconsciously, the situation where most of the approved English textbooks including *C21* create the questions such as these reflects the discourse existing in Japan that a “foreign country” is almost equated with the USA. More importantly, given that textbooks are “written in order to be read aloud” (Halliday and Hasan, 1989, p. 14) and to be “spoken—by one or more, to one or more classroom participants” (Sunderland et al., 2000, p. 253), the discourse as to the USA is simultaneously reproduced through the classroom discursive practice. In fact, together with these dialogues, most of the English textbooks in question have exercises which encourage the students to practice them by taking turns in playing the roles of the characters. Such discursive practice has the great possibility of helping the discourse to become “naturalized” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 92) to the extent that the students believe a “foreign country” refers almost exclusively to the USA. Wodak (1996, p. 18) points out

that discourses are not only constituted by society and culture but also constitute them. Thus, it can be argued that language use in the English textbooks is also constitutive of society.

#### 4.2. Personality

The personality of the main characters is another feature to which I would like to pay attention. In *C21*, Hiro and Jenny appear to be described as having contrastive personalities. For example, at the beginning of Unit 2 in Book 1, where he meets her for the first time, there is an introductory statement made by him such as the following. As this statement is written in Japanese, I have translated it into English:

At the end of March, Jenny came to Japan by herself. I think she is very selfish for being pushing in getting her host family, but at the same time, I think she is brave enough to come to an unfamiliar country and to live with an unfamiliar family. I'm sure I couldn't. I feel miserable about that.

(Book 1, Unit 2, p. 21)

In addition to this statement, there are several lessons that similarly indicate the contrast between their personalities. Summaries of these lessons are provided below:

Recently, boys in Hiro and Jenny's class have felt awkward around her and she has gradually stood out because she always clearly articulates what she wants to say. Hiro follows his classmates by ignoring her in order not to be made

fun of by the boys about his relationship with her.

(Book 1, Unit 12, pp. 93-97)

At the beginning of the new school year, Jenny made a speech to her new class. After introducing herself, she talked about the cultural differences between Japan and the USA. She also clearly told her classmates that, because of those cultural differences, she had stood out in her classroom and had been regarded as a troublemaker by boys.

(Book 2, Unit 1, pp. 5-10)

Hiro's friend, Daisuke is not getting along with his classmates nowadays. Hiro is beginning to stay away from him as well. This is because Hiro is afraid that he will also be spoken ill of by other boys if he is friendly with Daisuke. Knowing this situation, Jenny lectures Hiro for having that attitude.

(Book 2, Unit 7, pp. 52-58)

Hiro's dream is to be a social worker. However, he cannot tell others this because one of his friends said it was a silly idea. When Hiro was asked by his mother about his dream, he lost his temper. Seeing this, Jenny advised him that, if he had a dream, he should tell it to his mother.

(Book 3, Unit 5, pp. 43-48)

From these lessons, it can be inferred that Hiro is described as being passive and poor at self-expression whereas Jenny as being active and good at self-expression. Moreover, while he has a ten-



dency to emphasize harmony, she tends to fight for justice. Such a contrast between their personalities is also reinforced by illustrations. For example, in most of the above lessons, Jenny is depicted as standing straight with a smiling face and with her arm(s) opened, giving the impression that she majestically expresses her ideas; on the other hand, Hiro is depicted as sitting down on the chair with a puzzled look and with his chin or head on his hand(s), conveying the impression that he does not like Jenny's behavior. In addition, as mentioned above, Jenny herself refers to the cultural differences between Japan and the USA in Unit 1 in Book 2:

Hello, everyone. My name is Jennifer White. I'm from Los Angeles. I came to Japan last year. Life in Japan is interesting. For example, here boys play with boys and girls are always with girls. But in America, we all mix with each other. We say our opinions freely in class, too. Here in Japan, it's different. So I stand out. (Book 2, Unit 1, p. 6)

What is significant here is that both the representation of contrastive personalities of the two main characters and the description of the difference between Japan and the USA in Jenny's speech are very similar to "the cultural dichotomization of the West versus the East" (Kubota, 1999, p. 15) which is often constructed in the fields of TESOL and applied linguistics. According to Kubota, researchers in these fields frequently label Japanese culture as "traditional, homogeneous, and group oriented with a strong emphasis on harmony" (p. 11) whereas they describe the US culture and Western culture in general by using such words as

*“individualism, self-expression, and critical thinking”* (p. 12). Kubota criticizes these dichotomic representations of culture. The reason for this is that they are based on cultural determinism or essentialism, which leads to viewing a culture not as “a dynamic organism” but as “a monolithic, fixed, neutral, or objective category” (p. 11). Pennycook (2001) similarly problematizes a dichotomic construction of cultural difference such as this, stressing that “identities and differences are multiple, diverse, and interrelated” (p. 146). Furthermore, he points out that such a construction of cultural difference needs to be opposed because this has to do with the construction of “the Other” which “is tied to a history of colonial and racist relations” (p. 146).

Making reference to Foucault, who suggests that “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (1978, p. 100), Kubota also argues that cultural dichotomies are constructed by discourses. Taking this argument into consideration, it can be said that contrasting Japanese and American personalities in an English textbook contributes to constructing and reproducing the cultural dichotomic labeling, which reinforces “the Othering, stereotyping, misrepresenting, and essentializing” (p. 15) of both cultures. At the same time, such a cultural label in *C21* also has the possibility of being legitimized as particular knowledge and truth through classroom discursive practice, encouraging the students to regard them as natural.

Finally, another feature of Hiro’s and Jenny’s personalities is discussed briefly. The feature is that Hiro gradually grows up to be active and self-expressive by living with and learning from Jenny. The following lesson shows part of his growth:

(Hiro and Jenny are in the bus.)

Jenny: Look at that man. He's taking up two seats. Unbelievable!

Hiro: Yes, but he looks really mean.

Jenny: And look. There's a woman with a baby. Someone should tell him to move over.

Hiro: Not me.

Jenny: OK, then I will. He's so selfish.

Hiro: All right. All right. I'll talk to him.

(Later)

Jenny: Thank you, Hiro. I knew you could do it.

Hiro: Oh, stop it! My heart is still pounding.

Jenny: Is it?

Hiro: Yes, and I was really nervous.

Jenny: But you talked to him. That's great.

Hiro: I didn't feel confident at all, though.

Jenny: Well, you did the right thing, Hiro. I'm proud of you.

Hiro: Thanks.

(Book 3, Unit 1, pp. 7-8)

In this lesson, Hiro, who is not usually good at expressing what he wants to say, manages to talk to a young man who has no manners, influenced by Jenny. However, it is interesting to note that, despite Hiro's growth, there are no descriptions regarding Jenny's change in *C21*. Although, as mentioned in 4.1, she enjoys experiencing very "symbolic" Japanese events such as a summer festival, the New Year holidays in Kyoto and rice planting, Jenny's person-

ality does not appear to change. Throughout the three volumes, Hiro almost always plays the role of learning something, particularly a so-called Western way of thinking from Jenny and gradually changes into being active and self-expressive. Jenny, on the other hand, does not learn anything special from Hiro and is almost always in a position of advising, admonishing, encouraging and reasoning with him on the basis of her own cultural values. Her language use in the above lesson, “Well, you did the right thing, Hiro. I’m proud of you.” is one example.

Although both Hiro and Jenny are the same lower secondary school students, their relations of power appear to be unbalanced. In brief, Jenny is described as if she was a model for Hiro. According to Kubota (1998), in Japan, there is “the discourse which regards English and Anglo-speakers of English as developed, civilized, and superior” (p. 303). It seems to me that the descriptions of Hiro and Jenny’s unbalanced relationship in *C21* not only reflect but also reproduce that discourse. Furthermore, the reflection and reproduction of the discourse in *C21* may foster the construction of “Japanese people’s particular knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about English *vis-à-vis* other languages” (p. 303) and about Anglo-speakers of English *vis-à-vis* speakers of other languages.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to reveal cultural values and ideologies embedded in *C21*, which is one of the six approved English textbooks for lower secondary school students in Japan.

In order to accomplish this research purpose, I made use of CDA and investigated two subordinate questions: (1) What characters appear in *C21*? and (2) What subject matters are dealt with in *C21*? On the basis of the notion that the characters and subject matters are interrelated to carry cultural and ideological messages, I did not view the findings on the characters and those on the subject matters separately, but analyzed and discussed them by connecting the former with the latter. The analysis and discussion were made in terms of the nationality and personality of the main characters. In that process, I also referred to the other five approved English textbooks so that *C21* could be examined in “intertextual relations” to them. The major findings with regard to the two subordinate research questions are summarized below:

(1) What Characters Appear in *C21*?

1) Nationality

- The main characters represent only two nationalities: Japanese and American.
- The supporting characters reinforce the representation of only Japanese and American nationalities.
- One of the minor characters (an English teacher) comes from New Zealand, a country in the Inner Circle.

2) Personality

- The Japanese main character (Hiro) is described as being passive, poor at self-expression and tends to emphasize harmony.
- The American main character (Jenny) is described

as being active, good at self-expression and tends to fight for justice.

(2) What Subject Matters are Dealt with in *C21*?

1) Nationality

- Nearly 90% of the subject matters concern issues in Japan and the USA.
- Among the issues regarding the USA, Christian events and a white middle class culture are focused on.

2) Personality

- There are some lessons where Hiro gradually grows up to be active and self-expressive by living with and learning from Jenny.
- There are no lessons where Jenny learns something from Hiro or her personality changes.

From these major findings, it was pointed out that the following discourses and dichotomy might be reproduced as well as reflected in *C21*:

- The discourse that a “foreign country” is almost equated with the USA,
- The discourse that a white native speaker is the best teacher of English,
- The cultural dichotomy between the East (Japan) and the West (the USA),
- The discourse which regards English and Anglo-speakers

of English as developed, civilized and superior.

The crucial point here is that the reproduction of these discourses and cultural dichotomy in *C21* results in their being legitimized as particular truth and knowledge. Especially, taking into consideration that textbooks including *C21* are written to be spoken by and to classroom participants, the possibility that classroom discursive practice may also reinforce the legitimization of that truth and knowledge cannot be denied.

However, it can also be argued that there is another possibility in the classrooms. These discourses and cultural dichotomy may be challenged and resisted by teachers' questioning them and providing their students with an opportunity to criticize them. As mentioned in the introduction of this research, Sunderland (1994) argues that, for example, "[t]he most non-sexist textbook can become sexist in the hands of a teacher with sexist attitudes" (p. 64 in Sunderland et al., 2001, p. 260). Conversely, "the most sexist" textbook can become "non-sexist" in the hands of a teacher with "non-sexist" attitudes. Considering this, *C21*, which carries the discourses regarding the USA, English, native speakers of English and cultural differences between Japan and the USA, can also be used in an alternative way. This possibility as well as Sunderland's argument inspires me to conduct the future research which aims to explore teacher talk around *C21* in real classrooms in Japan.

# Appendix

Ways into texts: Questions to frame an approach to critical textual analysis

## *Extratextual and pretextual relations*

- (Texts exist in social, cultural, historical contexts)
- What can you say about the text from its physical form and location?
  - Where does the text come from?
  - How and why has it been produced?
  - Who or what is the author?
  - What kind of text is this?
  - What is its history as text or text type (genre)?
  - What can you predict about its content?
  - Who is likely to read it?
  - What other clues indicate its origins, purpose, function etc?

## *Intratextual relations*

- (Texts are put together in particular ways)
- Topic What is the text about?
  - Vocabulary
  - What key words seem significant?
  - What pairs/ contrasts between words are there?
  - What metaphors or phrases seem important?
  - What particular word choices seem to have been made?
  - Grammar
  - What grammatical relations are of importance?
  - What use of pronouns, active/passive sentences, questions, statements etc are important in the construction of meaning?
  - Who is doing what?
  - Text structure
  - What makes the text coherent?
  - How is it structured?
  - What genres or text types are there?

## *Posttextual and subtextual relations*

- (Texts are parts of chains of meanings; they are interpreted, resisted, appropriated)
- What picture of the world does it appear to develop?
  - What discourses (ideologies) does the text draw on?
  - Is there evidence of similar discourses in other texts?
  - What is a 'preferred reading' of the text?
  - What subject positions are assumed or created?
  - What things are not said? What absences are there?
  - Whose interests does it appear to serve?
  - What different possible readings are there?
  - How do readers react? Do they acquiesce? Do they resist?
  - Why do people read this in different ways?
  - What types of discourse, cultural knowledge or ideology appear to interact as different people read?

## *Intertextual relations*

- (Texts exist relative to other texts)
- How does the text relate to other texts?
  - What other texts does it overtly refer to?
  - Are there covert references or echoes of other texts?
  - Whose voices (quotes, references) appear in the text?
  - What roles are given to different voices?
  - Are there pictures or other such features?
  - How do they relate to the text?
  - Do pictures or other features echo other pictures etc?
  - Does the text appear to enter into a dialogue with other assumed texts?
  - What similarities and differences are there with other texts on the same topic?

This framework for textual analysis pulls together the work of a number of critical text analysts, including Fanchouh, Gee, Walton and Lanshien. This is a revised version of a model originally developed by Alastair Pennycook & Rosie Mackest for the Critical Literacies course at the University of Technology Sydney. © Alastair Pennycook 2005



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