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## DRAWING LINKS BETWEEN TEXTS AND INSTITUTIONS: POLARISATION AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN EFL TEXTBOOKS IN JAPAN

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### **Abstract**

Recent research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Japan has pointed out inconsistencies between the reforms implemented by the Ministry of Education (MEXT) and the textbooks it prescribes. However, if we take a step back and look at the bigger picture, we can see that behind this contradiction, the textbooks at issue are implicitly relaying and reinforcing the government's ideologies, possibly affecting young learners' identities. In order to provide a clearer view on this subject, a corpus of foreign language textbooks was collected and analysed through discourse analysis approaches such as Hyland's framework for the analysis of stance and engagement. The findings hint at a deep connection between the ideas the authors foster through discourse and Japanese fundamental education laws and teaching culture. English textbooks can be perceived as highly ideological, pressuring students to fit the "good international citizen" image promoted by the Japanese government.

**Keywords:** Textbook analysis, discourse analysis, ideology, foreign language teaching, Japan

### **INTRODUCTION**

Due to globalisation and the ever-growing importance of mastering foreign languages, the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) has been implementing reforms to improve the national average results in English proficiency tests for a few decades now. However, even the coexistence of an "unusual [political] consensus [on the importance of EFL], combined as it was with the huge demand for English from all sections of the Japanese population did not bring about a clear improvement in the quality of English" teaching and learning (Aspinall, 2006: 270). In fact, according to annual surveys, Japan ranks within the "Low Proficiency" countries of the world, 53<sup>rd</sup> out of 100, right after Bolivia and Vietnam (EF Education First, 2019: 7). The negative trend underlined by these results has been at the centre of debates, raising a number of questions both within the public sphere and in the academic world. "Don't freeze English education reform" (The Japan Times [Editorial], 2019), and "Why Japan's English education is a fiasco" (Miyake, 2019) are just two of the many alarming headlines emphasising the critical importance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the public discussion. Naturally, the lack of improvement despite the apparently favourable conditions and financing of the government has also generated interest in the academic field. Here, research has shown inconsistencies between MEXT's policies (altogether claiming the importance of communicative approaches) and decisions in approving textbooks with scarce communicative activities (Humphries,

2013; Glasgow & Paller, 2014). While these studies have clearly established that there are flaws in the implementation of communicative approaches in EFL textbooks, they have not provided an answer to the main problem, which is why these contradictions exist in the first place. To gain a better understanding of the issue at hand, it might be worth examining a wider range of theoretical backgrounds. For instance, the ethnographic and sociological approaches mentioned by Aspinall in his studies (2006, 2013) provide a valuable insight on the matter, as do the analysis of anthropologist McVeigh (2000, 2004) and the contemporary ethnography by Hardy (2015). The way in which the fields of sociology and anthropology reflect some of the findings that will be presented in this study will be discussed in more details in the following sections. The claim of this article is that behind the didactic contradictions underlined by research in the teaching field, Japanese high-school textbooks tend to be closely linked to Japanese laws on education and, on the whole, to some specific ideologies. The notion of ideology suggested in this article is the one presented by van Dijk as follows:

a type of belief shared by social groups and their cognitive and discourse structures as polarized between *Us* and *Them*, between ingroups and out-groups, and involving the shared representation of social identities, goals, norms and discourse values, resources, and interests. (2015: 7)

It is important to underline the conception of ideology as something that is learned – not innate –, “acquired, (re)produced, and communicated by situated text and talk” (*Ibid.*: 1). The present paper will try to clarify the ways in which some very specific ideological ideas are (re)presented and (re)produced in the textbooks’ discourse, showing how, despite their incongruities, they actually tend to be consistent with Japanese teaching culture. The way in which they may influence the students’ identities will also be discussed.

## **Corpus and methodology**

### ***Corpus design***

When investigating EFL teaching in Japan, multiple choices appear, as this language is taught from primary school until university, in public and private schools as well as the well-known *gakushū juku* (cram schools). Learning supports also come in a variety of forms, ranging from school textbooks to self-learning volumes, websites, television and radio programmes, as well as digital applications as could be found in many other countries.

Since the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between identities, texts and institutions, a choice was made to focus on compulsory education. This decision was motivated by the fact that university teachers can often enjoy more freedom in the choice of their supports and that a case study would not have been the most adequate choice when trying to find representative patterns. Moreover, textbooks for primary,

junior high and senior high school have to be approved by MEXT, meaning that their link to institutions and government policies could be deemed as stronger than other publications.

In order to analyse whether the results depended only on one specific language (English) or on a more general pattern of behaviour and discourse practices, the analysis was extended to encompass another foreign language as a means of comparison. This choice meant singling out senior high schools (grades ten to twelve), the cases of foreign languages other than English being taught in lower grades being extremely rare.

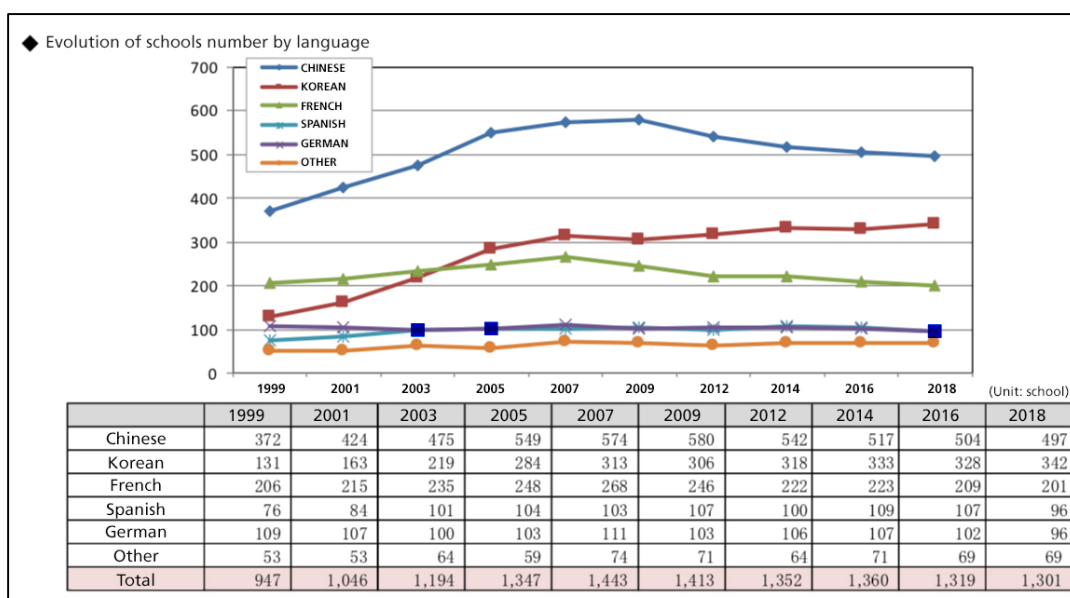


Figure 1 shows that, when it comes to Indo-European languages, French is the second most popular one, making it an eligible choice for a contrastive analysis.

Figure 1 Evolution of schools number by language (MEXT, 2017; my translation)

The selection of textbooks for the construction of the corpus was handled in two different ways. It is important to point out that all the supports were published in Japan by Japanese authors or by a group of authors of mixed origins working in Japan (i.e. none of the textbooks were translated from another version).

As previously stated, English textbooks need to be approved by MEXT, which provides a list of possible choices from different publishing companies for every compulsory subject. Before the introduction of the New Course of Study for Foreign Languages in 2009, textbooks of EFL were divided into four categories: English I, II; Oral communication I, II; Reading; Writing (Glasgow & Paller, 2014: 116). They are currently divided into: basic English communication; English communication I, II, III; English expression I, II; English conversation (MEXT, 2019). In choosing some textbooks for the corpus, the following criteria were taken into account: their popularity, the representation of each category (communication, expression and conversation),

of different levels (I, II and III), and finally of multiple publishing companies. The final selection is presented in Table 1.

Category	Title	Publishing Company
English Communication I	MY WAY (New Edition)	Sanseidō
English Communication I	CROWN (New Edition)	Sanseidō
English Communication II	NEW ONE WORLD (Revised Edition)	Kyōiku
English Communication II	PROMINENCE	Tōkyō Shoseki
English Communication II	CROWN (New Edition)	Sanseidō
English Communication III	Unicorn	Bun-Eido
English Expression I	Vision Quest Standard (Revised Edition)	Keirinkan
English Conversation I	My Passport	Bun-Eido

Table 1 EFL textbooks in the corpus

MEXT's list seems to suggest a less significant role being attributed to Conversation English (as opposed to Communication I, II and III) in the whole panorama of EFL textbooks, hence the choice of a single title representing said category. As for English Expression I, the titles linked to a main textbook already chosen for the Communication English category were also excluded. In order to properly tell apart occurrences that depend on the level of proficiency from those who do not, different levels of the same title were included in the corpus (here, *CROWN* for English Communication I and II). The same choice can be seen in Table 2, when we look at the corpus of textbooks written for French as a Foreign Language (FLE, *Français Langue Étrangère*).

Title	Publishing Company
En Scène I	Sanshūsha
En Scène II	Sanshūsha
Mon premier vol Tokyo-Paris (Nouvelle édition)	Surugadai
Amélie et Kenzo	Asahi
Moi, je...	Alma
Navi.fr	Asahi
Destination Francophonie	Surugadai
À la découverte	Daisan Shobō

Table 2 FLE textbooks in the corpus

It can be easily noticed that French textbooks are not divided into categories. In fact, they do not appear at all in the Ministry's list, which does not include any recommendation for foreign languages other than English. Teachers and assistants teaching FLE classes in Japanese senior high schools in 2017-2018 suggested (via private exchanges) the list of titles upon which this part of the corpus is based. Although the comparison of textbooks of English and French as foreign languages was crucial to observe common traits and differences, this paper will mostly focus on

the results of the former, as the connection to Japanese laws and education culture is more evident in EFL textbooks.

### ***Theoretical background and methodology***

The present article stems from a PhD research in Linguistics, conducted within the theoretical and methodological framework of Discourse Analysis. Observations from French authors specialised in the relation between texts and discourse (Adam, 2015; Rabatel, 2008) or texts and institutions (Krieg-Planque, 2012) were essential to the development of a framework of analysis for the corpus. However, the results presented in this article were mostly achieved through a personal adaptation of Hyland's model for the analysis of stance and engagement (2008).

In his research, Hyland discusses the nature of persuasion in academic discourse and the ways in which writers position themselves in their writing through stance devices – described as “the writer's textual ‘voice’” (*Ibid.*: 5) – as well as different forms of engagement with the readers. These categories encompass a large variety of linguistic notions: for instance, the notion of ‘stance’ tends to include those of ‘evaluation’, ‘evaluative language’, ‘appraisal’ and ‘affect’ on which focus authors such as Martin and White (2005) or Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2014). In the same way, the concepts of ‘hedges’ and ‘boosters’ can be partially linked to the epistemic modalities studied by Le Querler (2004) or Gosselin (2010). Hyland's definition of ‘engagement’ needs to be adapted when analysing textbooks because of the different nature of the dialogical relationship between writer and reader. In academic writing, the expression of the ‘self’ and of the author's position is essential; the reader is often a peer and the structure of an article is one that allows for explanations, questions and conclusions. Textbooks have writers and readers as well, but the author often needs to figuratively disappear in order to present an organic collection of texts, questions and exercises, with a discourse that has to be easy to understand for students and convincing for teachers (or other members of the academic world). Overall, the model suggested by Hyland provides a comprehensive view on linguistic items that can be easily adapted into a framework of analysis for foreign language textbooks.

For the sake of brevity, I will not dwell into details of each and every category analysed in this research. In short, the methodological framework focuses on the large notions of stance, mention and engagement. Unlike Hyland, I separated the mentions from the categories of stance (self-mention) and engagement (reader-mention) after a first reading of the corpus. Indeed, notions of ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ (van Dijk, 2015: 7) – explained in the following section – were clearly expressed in the textbooks and needed to be analysed more keenly. In the next chapter, I will present some of the results through the lenses of ‘polarisation’ and ‘intertextuality’.

## **Results**

### ***Polarisation***

The opposition between in-groups and out-groups discussed by van Dijk is expressed through a phenomenon called ‘polarisation’, where the contrast between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ (or ‘I’ and ‘You’) becomes a central item in discourse. In the EFL textbooks, this opposition appears to be rather pronounced and occurrences can be



found in different forms. Let's take some examples from *CROWN I* (CR1), *My Passport* (PAS) and *NEW ONE WORLD* (NOW):

- (1) Japan is a rich country. We are the third largest economy in the world. We have enough money to build dams and the maglev. Why can't we help poor people? We don't need NPO's. [CR1 71]
- (2) Today, I will show you how to make *okonomiyaki*, a Japanese pancake. It's fun to make and eat them with your family and friends! Now, let's make *onokomiyaki* together! [PAS 64]
- (3) Who grew the product? Where was it grown? What kinds of chemicals were used, and how often? Being able to access such information certainly brings a sense of safety to consumers. [NOW 140]

These are just a few of the occurrences from the corpus that show how the authors tend to create an inclusive relationship with their readers through pronouns (1), adverbs (2) and designational paradigms (3). The repetition of these items throughout the corpus and the utter lack of this phenomenon in FLE textbooks hints to a pattern more typical of English textbooks. What makes it even stronger is the consistent use of elements which refer to shared knowledge:

- (4) In 1991 I was a university exchange student living in a part of Tokyo where there were many day laborers. When the economy went down, they could not find jobs. [CR1 63]
- (5) Traditionally, Japanese farmers have grown products unique to their local area, and have offered the delights of the season to the local consumers. This idea of "local production for local consumption" is once again getting more and more popular through various kinds of farmers markets such as those at Michi-no-Eki. [NOW 142]
- (6) Today, the world is becoming smaller. Due to globalization, what Japanese people eat has changed. [MW1 78]

Here, the appeals to shared knowledge are not as explicit as the ones presented by Hyland, who mostly quotes adverbs such as "well known" or "obviously" (2008: 11). Instead, the recognition of the aforementioned items is often implicit, as in the definition of 'common meaning' (*sens commun*) provided by Marie-Anne Paveau (2001, 2003). The economic crisis that hit Japan in the early '90s, after the blast of the asset price bubble, led to what is usually known as the 'lost decade' (Fukao, 2007). To this day, the everyday lives of Japanese people are influenced by its consequences, which is why the sentence in the textbook can be this elusive and concise (4) without it losing any of its meaning for the readers. The same can be said for examples such as (5), where an element of Japanese culture is introduced without any further explanation. For foreign readers to fully comprehend the reference, they would need to know that *Michi-no-Eki* are stations that can be found on trunk roads and that their popularity has grown in the last 20 years.

In order to see how the last example (6), from the textbook *MY WAY*, appeals to shared knowledge, a more detailed explanation ought to be provided. First, the

sentence uses the adverb ‘today’, engaging directly with the reader, who lives in today’s society. Then, when added to the cause-consequence relationship conveyed by ‘due to’ and ‘smaller’ (which, here, has a negative meaning in terms of appreciation), it acquires a particular meaning: globalisation has a negative impact on Japanese people’s lives. It could be argued that this sentence does not have to be interpreted this way and that it could be more neutral; however, when presented with its immediate co-text (Figure 2), its meaning becomes much clearer.

<p>Today, the world is becoming smaller. Due to globalization, what Japanese people eat has changed.</p> <p>First, Japan imports much of its food. In other words, what you usually eat may come from foreign countries. For example, in a typical Japanese breakfast, the piece of salmon might be from Norway. The miso in the miso soup could be made from American soy beans. Second, many dishes which are popular among Japanese people have roots outside Japan. <i>Yakiniku</i> comes from Korea and curry comes from India.</p> <p>Some people regard these changes as good. For them, the changes show a rich cultural exchange.</p>	<p>In the world, there are people who are worried about changes in their food cultures. These people want to save their traditional dishes somehow.</p> <p>One way is to keep traditional food cultures from foreign influence. For example, a town in Italy has a law which prohibits new fast-food restaurants from opening. Another way is to teach the importance of traditional food cultures to younger generations. In Japan many schools teach students how to cook traditional dishes.</p> <p>Once a food culture begins to change, it is hard to stop. Food is at the heart of culture. So <i>washoku</i> should be preserved for future generations.</p>
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Figure 2 My Way (78-80)

Reading this text, we can see the juxtaposition of elements such as warnings (foreign ingredients in the readers’ food), the idea of “saving” (implying the presence of some sort of danger) or “keeping” the “important traditions” from “foreign influence” (that can be read as negative). Last but not least, the moral of the story is explicitly stated at the end of the text. When put together, all these elements portray a polarisation between Japan and other countries that can be found throughout the English textbooks (the aforementioned examples are only some of the many occurrences found in the corpus). It needs to be said that the idea of an out-group (here, foreign countries – represented through their food) threatening the in-group (Japan and the Japanese culture, food, traditions) is mostly conveyed implicitly. This could suggest that this idea is well accepted and does not need to be stated explicitly, like a ‘doxa’ (Amossy, 2002). The concept of polarisation between Japan and foreign countries has also been pointed out by sociological and anthropological research. For instance, in his studies on foreign language education in Japan, Brian McVeigh (2002, 2004) has often claimed that one of the reasons behind the poor results of EFL students could be the strong influence of *nihonjin-ron* (a nationalistic ideology shared by part of the elite) on Japanese society. In his papers, he presents some of the characteristics of this ideology, such as the supposed uniqueness of Japan as a country, with her history and geography, Japanese people, their ethnicity, culture and language (*Idem*). He also argues that from a nationalistic point of view, “acquiring English means becoming contaminated by non-Japaneseness” (2004: 215) and that English should be a tool at the service of the nation, “to teach the world about Japanese culture in English” (2004: 217). His position has been criticised (Bouchard, 2013) or softened – for example by



stating that the Ministry of Education is an actor and not an all-powerful institution (Aspinall, 2013: 31-33). Nonetheless, the previous examples and others that can be found in the corpus of this study tend to prove that, even if the nationalistic ideology that opposes Japan to others is not shared by the entire society, some traces of nationalistic discourse can still be found in contemporary high school textbooks.

### ***Intertextuality***

The examples that will be presented in this section can be placed between the notion of 'intertextuality' and the one of 'interdiscourse' (in French, *interdiscours*). The fact that both these notions have multiple definitions and that their meaning is not quite the same in English and French can lead to blurred borders and confusion.

In the English-speaking world, drawing from Fairclough's interpretation of Kristeva's operatory concept, intertextuality can be "understood at two levels: on one level it is the presence in my discourse of the specific words of the other mixed with my words" and, on another, "it is the combination in discourse of different genres or [...] different discourses" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999: 49). For the latter, the authors chose the term 'interdiscourse'. However, it should be noted that Fairclough's use of 'interdiscursivity' is not a simple translation of the French term *interdiscours*. As Fairclough clarifies himself, he uses interdiscursivity to translate Authier's *hétérogénéité constitutive* (or 'constitutive intertextuality' in his words), as opposed to *hétérogénéité montrée*, 'manifest intertextuality' (1992: 271). The author clearly states that he uses intertextuality as a general term and that 'interdiscursivity' is related to "« interdiscursive » analysis" and "orders of discourse" (2005: 78) meaning, in a broad sense, the articulation and relationship between different genres, practices and systems within Critical Discourse Analysis.

It is not wrong of Fairclough to translate *hétérogénéité constitutive* with interdiscursivity, since the former was introduced by Authier while working on interdiscourse, but it should be noted that the origins of *interdiscours* in French are deeply linked to philosophy and psychoanalysis (Paveau, 2008). The subconscious plays an important role into the definition of French *interdiscours*, which is why it cannot be easily or totally replaced by the notion of intertextuality. In the light of what has been explained, I will draw upon the French tradition and meaning of *interdiscours* when talking about interdiscourse (and not Fairclough's meaning).

That being said, when analysing the way ideology is (re)produced in the textbooks' discourse, it is possible to find echoes of Japanese laws for education and education culture that could be both interpreted as some sort of voluntary quote (the editors of the publishing company being supposed to know what the MEXT wants to see in a textbook) and as a pattern so deeply rooted in Japanese education practices that the authors cannot help but give examples of (much like using proverbs without giving it much thought). Some of those practices, like the importance of group harmony and cooperation stressed in most textbooks' guides, serve a very specific purpose: using the sociological paradigm of 'risk society', Aspinall suggests that globalisation's effects on educational institutions nowadays are provoking a rise of individualisation that needs to be counter-balanced, especially considering the way 'individualism' has been perceived and interpreted in Japan (2013: 21-24). Terms such as 'creativity' that bear

a very specific meaning when read from a teacher's perspective are actually "in large measure demands from business and industry for workers who are more innovative, efficient, open-minded, and skilled in the latest technology needed for Japan's economic nation-statism" (McVeigh, 2000: 87).

Beside these examples, one of the most striking illustrations of intertextuality or interdiscourse that can be found through a meticulous analysis of the corpus is the link between the textbooks and the Japanese Basic Act on Education (MEXT, 2006). In the document, the Ministry clearly lays out the objectives of education in these terms:

(A) having students acquire wide-ranging knowledge and culture, fostering the value of seeking the truth, and cultivating a rich sensibility and sense of morality as well as building the health of the body;

(B) developing individuals' abilities, cultivating creativity, and fostering a spirit of autonomy and independence by respecting the value of the individual, as well as emphasizing the relationship between one's career and one's everyday life and fostering the value of respect for hard work;

(C) fostering the values of respect for justice, responsibility, equality between men and women, and mutual respect and cooperation, as well as the value of actively participating in building our society and contributing to its development, in the public spirit;

(D) fostering the values of respecting life, caring about nature, and desiring to contribute to the preservation of the environment; and

(E) fostering the value of respect for tradition and culture and love of the country and regions that have nurtured us, as well as the value of respect for other countries and the desire to contribute to world peace and the development of the international community.

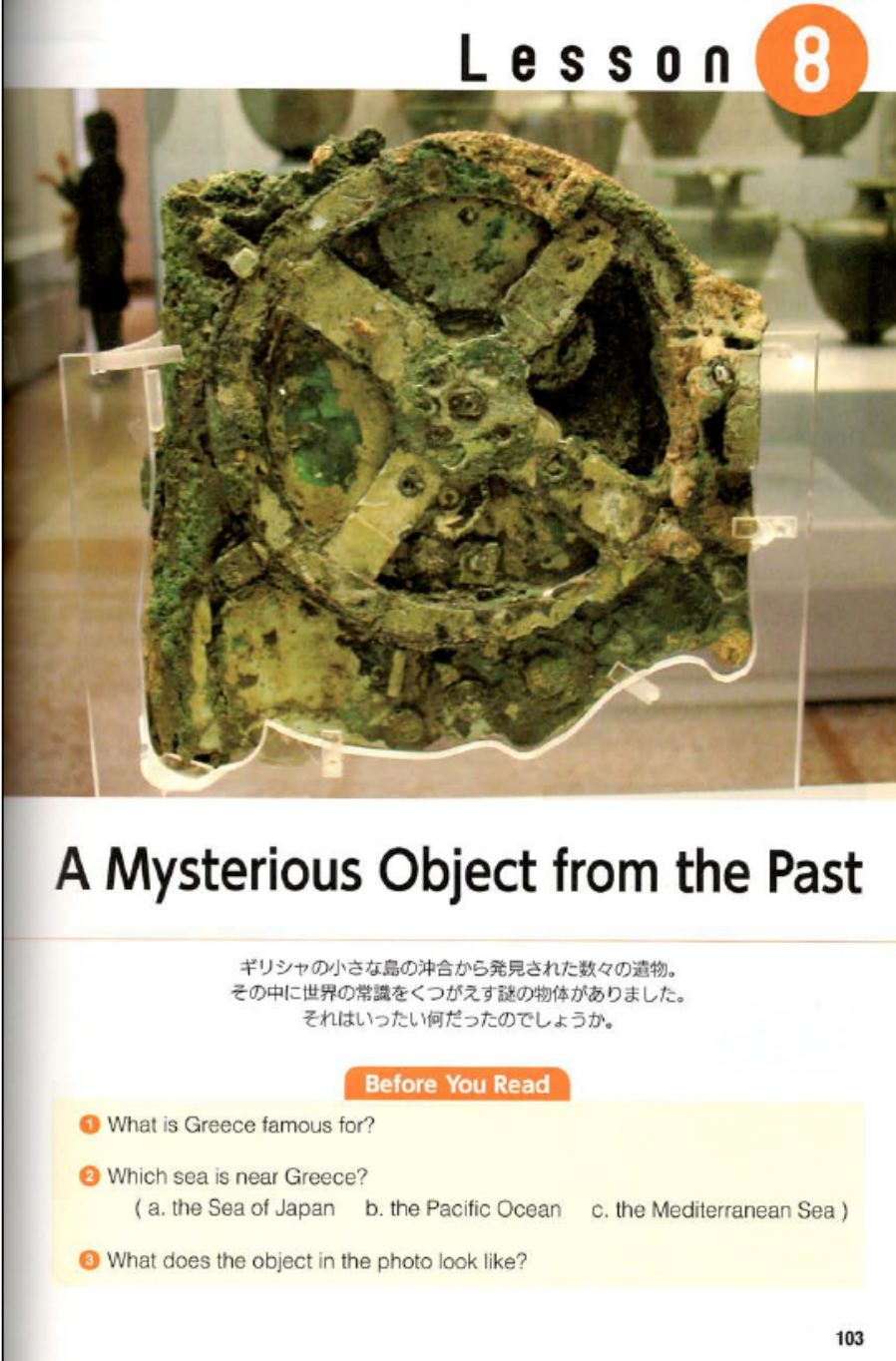
(To avoid confusion, letters were used instead of numbers, which mark examples from the corpus alone.)

What I argue and what the textbooks show is that these objectives can be found in scattered but consistent occurrences in the entire corpus. Let's take for instance objective (A) and, more specifically, the aim of "fostering the value of seeking the truth". When it comes to subjects such as EFL, a practical application of this specific suggestion could be hard to picture. Yet textbooks like *Prominence* provide fairly pragmatic examples (7) of such instances:

(7) Read the following sentences to see if they are facts or opinions. Mark F if it is a fact. Mark O if it is an opinion [PRO 14]

This kind of instruction, repeated throughout the whole book, can foster critical thinking. Most of the time, however, echoes of the Japanese laws are remarkably subtler and therefore require to be framed in a larger co-text, lest they be completely

overlooked. This is the case in textbooks such as *MY WAY* (among others), where the idea of 'seeking the truth' is spread over multiple pages. Given the limitations of an article, I present in Figure 3 the cover of one lesson and in Figure 4 a collage of the most notable occurrences found between pages 104 and 114 (the content of said lesson).



**Lesson 8**

**A Mysterious Object from the Past**

ギリシャの小さな島の沖合から発見された数々の遺物。  
その中に世界の常識をくつがえす謎の物体がありました。  
それはいったい何だったのでしょうか。

**Before You Read**

- 1 What is Greece famous for?
- 2 Which sea is near Greece?  
( a. the Sea of Japan   b. the Pacific Ocean   c. the Mediterranean Sea )
- 3 What does the object in the photo look like?

103


Figure 3 My Way (103)

Instead of providing a presentation of the mechanism shown in the picture or writing its name, the first page starts by defining the item as something “mysterious”; then, the authors ask the students what the object looks like (Q.3), thus pushing them to make hypothesis. This pattern is followed in the whole chapter, where the authors insist on the “surprise” of this discovery, on the unusual and “amazing” skills that lead the creators of the mechanism to come up with such a “complex” item that puzzled scientists for decades and asking students questions about it (Figure 4, underlining is mine).

1950. It was the time when research methods were not so developed. So no one could find out what it was. It was a mystery.

discovered on them. The size and number of teeth on  
5 each gear were different. This mechanism looked just like a clock. It was a surprising discovery. These gears looked much more complex than other gears made in the same period.

He was surprised that ancient technology was so advanced. After the Antikythera Mechanism, no similar object was invented until the  
15 1600s. How could ancient people make such a mechanism?



10 Games which were held every four years. It is amazing that ancient people invented such a complex mechanism.  
What was the last gear for? No one knows yet.  
Perhaps there were more functions. Now the Antikythera Mechanism is displayed in the National  
15 Museum in Athens. It is waiting  
for the day when you solve all of its mysteries.




Figure 4 My Way (104-112)

The last part of the lesson explicitly invites the reader (student) to solve the mysteries behind this item, as does the optional reading presented right after this chapter in the



same textbook (Figure 5). Indeed, the whole *raison d'être* of this additional text is to reiterate the message found in the previous lesson: our world is still full of mysteries for curious and brilliant people to solve, so we should always carry on wondering, with an inquisitive mind, and seeking the truth. The introduction of the foreign element in Figure 5 echoes what the authors did for the Antikythera in Figure 4, writing about a “strange” item that was found in a faraway place (from Japan’s point of view). A few hypothesis are then submitted, only to be immediately undermined: in Figure 4, we can see that the item is presented “just like a clock”, but the following statements give a different perspective (“these gears looked much more complex than other gears made in the same period”); in Figure 5, the same thing happens, when the authors write that the object “looked like a modern airplane”, which is inconsistent with the time of discovery. The repetition of keywords such as ‘mystery’, ‘strange’ as well as the juxtaposition of contradictory hypothesis and facts keep fostering the importance of asking questions and discovering the truth hidden behind these modern puzzles.

**OPTIONAL READING**


### What Is This?

コロンビアの遺跡から見つかった不思議な金細工について、読んでみましょう。

One day in 1929, a small, strange, gold object was found in Colombia, South America. It was more than 1000 years old, and yet it looked like a modern airplane. Of course, it is difficult to believe that airplanes existed at that time. Some scientists think it could be the shape of a fish. In fact, this object looks like a fish called pleco. Plecos live in the rivers of South America.

Other scientists said that this shape was more like an airplane than a fish. When a designer made a model airplane of the same shape, it actually flew! So, some people believe that airplanes probably existed in those days.

Is this object a fish or an airplane? The answer is still a mystery.



コロンビア国立  
銀行付真鍮史博  
物館所蔵

1 gold 金(色)の    2 Colombia コロンビア    2 South America 南アメリカ  
2 and yet それでも    3 airplane 飛行機    4 exist 存在する    5 pleco プレコ  
7-8 be more like ~ than ... …というより~のようだ    9 model 模型の

**Q&A**

- 1 What was found in Colombia?
- 2 Where do plecos live?
- 3 What do you think the object is? Why do you think so?

114

Figure 5 My Way (114)

These statements can also be read as a hymn to technology and advanced skills, which is another important theme in the English textbooks (mainly addressed to the skills of Japanese people). In short, this example is just one of many that contribute to the creation of a larger discourse that is very close to the one of the MEXT.

## Discussion

The results of the study suggest a close relationship between the ideas fostered in the EFL textbooks and MEXT's ones. Whether this (re)production of ideologies is intentional or whether it depends on a more subconscious level, cannot be decided by solely analysing the discourse materiality of the textbooks; nevertheless, its presence is undeniable. There are multiple reasons why it seems important to focus on the (re)production of said ideologies in the textbooks when examining the influence texts may have on individual identities. For instance, the role of the "school, a powerful state institution guiding the construction of identity" (Hardy, 2015: 36). The role of the textbook itself, in a compulsory curriculum and a list of chosen supports, also appears to be critical. Finally, the link between ideology and attitude, as underlined by van Dijk in his studies: "once such ideological models of specific events are created by the recipients, repeated communication may lead to the formation of socially shared ideological attitudes" (2015: 5). This idea echoes Aspinall's definition of what happens when "individuals internalize national norms and [use them] to justify patterns of behaviour" (2006: 271). In this article, I argue that the presence of ideology in EFL textbooks is undoubtedly tangible (whether it is more closely linked to the nationalist *nihonjin-ron* or simply the one at the basis of education laws) and that it could influence the development of the learners' identities. While the purpose of FLE textbooks seems to be training future tourists, the aim of EFL supports is more deeply linked to the moulding of a future citizen. Students are encouraged to develop a strong sense of morality, autonomy, and appraisal for hard-work, to think about the way in which they can contribute to society, going as far as to be ambassadors of international peace and, of course, ambassadors of their own country (whose traditions they ought to respect, love and spread). They are already seen as productive members of society, as McVeigh suggests in his analysis on the calls for creativity and individuality (2000: 87).

I would like to end this discussion with a last exemplary question from one of the most popular textbooks I examined:

(8) What sort of volunteer work do you do, or would you like to do? [CR1 62]

This question, typed at the beginning of a lesson, is the perfect example to show how readers are encouraged to answer in a certain way and thus to define themselves. The way the question is phrased prevents any negative answers to be given: the good student (and citizen) has to either do volunteer work or to, at least, 'want to' do it. Considering the need expressed by EFL teachers of having "specific and limited



outcomes” in terms of answers to questions and exercises (Hardy, 2015: 40), the stakes behind this kind of phrasing in school textbooks become easy to understand.

## Conclusion

When looking at foreign language teaching, a majority of studies focus on a didactic point of view. However, linguistic, sociological, and anthropological approaches hint to a deeper connection between these practices and ideology, as can be seen in this article. The results of these studies should be taken into account on multiple levels: first, on a class level, where the role of the teacher as a mediator between the contents of the textbook and the learners is crucial. Then, on a larger scale, the research conducted on these different fields could provide practical implications for both the authors of school textbooks and publishing companies. Further sociolinguistic studies could help understand the nature of the relationship between the authors and previous texts (so as to clarify the distinction between intertextuality and interdiscourse in this specific case) and more detailed linguistic analysis would provide wider and more detailed patterns’ recognitions.

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