

“Communication” and “Culture” in English Education for Junior -High Schools -Analyses of English Textbooks-

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Abstract

In April 2012, the Course of Study for junior-high schools revised in 2008 will be implemented in Japan. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the institution that makes the Course of Study, has decided to increase the total number of classes by about 10 % from 2012. The number of English classes will also be increased. In the new Course of Study, the words such as “communication” and “culture” are seen heretofore, however, the meaning of these words is not made clear. In this presentation, I will discuss how these two words are used in the Course of Study with an analysis of the Course of Study and the approved textbooks. The terms of “communication” and “culture” are explained in the Course of Study. “Communication” appears in the section called “Overall Objectives”. According to this section, the word has two meanings: communication language ability, and communication as interactive ability. As for “culture”, the word is used in “Overall Objective” as, “deepening their understanding of language and culture”. In the Course of Study, there are five cultural elements: “daily life, manners and customs”, “story”, “geography and history”, “traditional culture” and “natural science”. In reality, there are two types of culture: implicit culture and explicit culture as Suzuki describes (1973). However, it can be said that MEXT requires English teachers to teach only explicit culture. The authorized school textbooks are made in accordance with the Course of Study, because they cannot be approved by MEXT. As the Course of Study only provides five elements of “culture”, this means that the textbook writers are responsible to include all these cultural elements in their books. It also means that it is important for teachers of English to teach such elements of culture treated in the textbooks. The analysis of textbooks shows that they treat only the stereotypical culture. In this globalized world, it is not adequate to teach only stereotypical culture of a country. To conclude, MEXT requires students to acquire communication ability in English. In terms of “culture”, it suggests that students learn explicit culture. However, it does not explain how teachers should treat or teach “communication” and “culture”.

Selected References

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