

**PRESENTATION OF CULTURE IN
ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)
READING TEXTBOOKS IN JAPAN**

by

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**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

In the midst of debate over the treatment of culture in foreign language education and the increased exposure to culture in the global economy, the knowledge of other cultures is more significant than ever. In order to improve teaching culture, materials have been examined and revised. The purpose of this exploratory study is to describe how culture is addressed in the fourteen high school EFL reading textbooks in Japan, that were approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) at the time of this study.

In previous studies on EFL textbooks in Japan by Kitao (1979, 1988) and Iwata, Ogawa, Wen, Sakamoto, Takarada, Horio, Muto, and Mogi (2001) among others, the findings included the cultural elements categorized by various criteria, defining topics and types of reading texts and illustrations, classifying the student activities regarding culture, the descriptions of societies represented, the unnatural use of the English language that are edited for grammatical correctness, and the lack of elements that are usually present in the natural course of conversations or in the authentic passages.

This study of the reading passages and pre- and post-reading activities was guided by several theories and studies: First, the authentic use of a language reflects the writer's culture (Brown, 1987; Byrnes, 1990; Gilmore, 2004; Honeyfield, 1977; Kramersch, 1993; Lamie, 1998; McKay, 1982; Shrum & Glisan, 2005; Swaffar, 1985), and the culture is reflected in the vocabulary (Sapir, 1949). Second, the readers' own cultural knowledge (C1) should be activated in understanding the culture of others (C2), comparing and contrasting C1 and C2 so that the differences and similarities will be more evident (Byrnes, 1990; Kolb, 1984; Kramersch, 1993; National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 2005).

The results show 1) that the reading passages were edited mostly by deleting and altering portions of the originals, and thus the culture was not present as in the original passages, and 2) pre-reading and post-reading activities/questions were literal and not designed to foster cultural understanding.

DEDICATION

To my grandparents,
Tsuruju and Fukumi Oguro and
Minoru and Miyoko Masuyama
for their unconditional love

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