

Exploring the impact of the introduction of new EFL textbooks on teachers' practices and attitudes at a technical college in Japan.

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Synopsis

Although the Japanese government has introduced policies to try to encourage communicative learning in Japanese schools (MEXT, 2002, 2003), studies have shown that English teachers have tended to continue the traditional *yakudoku* (grammar-translation) style of education (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; O'Donnell, 2005; Sato, 2002; Wada, 2002). The pressure to prepare students for the grammatically oriented university entrance tests has often been cited as the cause for this phenomenon (Gorsuch, 2001; Sakui, 2004; Watanabe, 2004). The influence of the government-authorised textbooks seems to have been under-researched. Therefore, this study explores the effects of ELT textbooks on teaching attitudes and practices in a Japanese *Kosen* (engineering college).

After studying the equivalent of three high school and two tertiary-level years at a *Kosen*, the students can transfer into the third year of a university course without taking an English test. This situation creates the opportunity to implement learner-centred communicative approaches. To maximise this opportunity, the author's college replaced some of the traditional textbooks with learner-centred conversation course books. However, well-meaning policy change does not automatically equal shared ownership and adoption by practitioners (Fullan, 2007).

The author analysed the textbooks using an approach described by Littlejohn (1998). Subsequently, he observed and interviewed four teachers, who used both the traditional transmission-style and new learner-centred conversation textbooks, to analyse the degrees of implementation and acceptance.

The researcher analysed the observation and interview data using constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Two main areas of interest arose from the data: (1) the teachers' control of the activities; and (2) the students' low levels of participation.

This study indicated that teacher and student freedom led to a culture of uncertainty in the *Kosen* that the researcher termed *the driftwood effect*. A culture of collaborative professional development ought to be developed to facilitate the capacity for change.

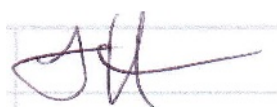
Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled *Exploring the impact of the introduction of new EFL textbooks on teachers' practices and attitudes at a technical college in Japan* has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number: HE22FEB2008-D056 on 17 March 2008 (see Appendix A).

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'SCH', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Simon Christopher Humphries (Student number: 40741599)

10 March 2011

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