

A Comparative Study of the Metadiscourse Analysis in EFL Textbooks in Japan and China

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The purpose of this study is to examine the use of metadiscourse in seventh-grade English textbooks in Japan and China in the context of calls for more learner-friendly textbooks. Four textbooks were selected for metadiscourse analysis to determine what kinds of metadiscourse are used to facilitate or affect learner understanding of propositional content. Focusing on metadiscourse's pedagogical function, Crismore's (1983) metadiscourse typology for textbooks and other relevant elements were taken into account. The findings imply that although both Japan and China are categorized as EFL countries, their English textbooks display different characteristics in terms of metadiscourse usage, reflecting the different ways in which learning materials are designed and developed. In order to interpret these findings, the impacts of national curricula are discussed.

Keywords: EFL textbook, textbook analysis, metadiscourse analysis, national curriculum

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中日英語教科書之元話語分析

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本研究旨在從元話語 (metadiscourse) 的觀點來分析中日英語教科書中編者是如何向學習者傳達與學習有關的資訊。本研究基於 Crismore (1983) 元話語的分析框架對中日四個出版社的國中一年級英語教科書進行分析, 進而展示出教科書中的元話語是如何幫助和影響學習者對學習內容以及對學習要求的理解。分析方法主要是從資訊元話語、態度元話語、母語與目的語的使用、附錄以及中小學連結五個方面來展開。分析結果表明, 雖然中日英語教科書同屬於英語作為外國語的教科書範疇, 但是二者在元對話的使用方面呈現出不同風格與特徵, 從而揭示出二者在教科書設計理念方面的不同價值取向。在對教科書元話語分析結果的闡釋中, 本文參照了中日兩國國家英語課程標準的有關方面來展開論述。

關鍵詞：英語作為外國語的教科書、教科書分析、元話語分析、國家英語課程標準

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1. Introduction: Interaction between Learner and Textbook

School textbooks should be interesting and engaging for children, to help them to learn the content of subjects, develop a positive attitude towards study, and learn how to learn as well. Yet, reality has not always corresponded to this. As a result, in recent years there has been a move toward purposely enhancing the rhetorical characteristics of textbooks, in order to aid students in their learning. This approach derives from speech communication studies, wherein certain characteristics of effective speech (such as explaining a goal, how to emphasize, etc.) have been found to help learners in acquiring a critical attitude toward the material, implying that rhetorics would result in a deeper understanding and more positive attitude on the students' side (Crismore, 1985). Supposing that such spoken rhetorics may also be used in written texts, their study became somewhat of a trend, reflecting a growing interest on the interaction between readers and writers, parallel to the interactive process between reader and content.

Among the related studies within this trend, the use of metadiscourse is one aspect that scholars have focused on. Besides the descriptive and contrastive perspectives, metadiscourse has been studied as an important interactive feature that is believed to facilitate the reading process (Camiciottoli, 2003). A text is composed of two parts: propositional content and metadiscourse features. Metadiscourse is defined by Vande Kopple (1997: 2) as "discourse that people use not to expand referential material, but to help their readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate and develop attitudes towards that material." In other words, metadiscourse refers to facets which make the text explicit and accessible to the reader, and engage the reader in the interaction.

Metadiscourse has been traditionally considered as an instantiation of metalanguage (Aguilar, 2008); yet, there are different approaches to viewing metadiscourse. Etymologically, it is defined as discourse about discourse; however, the difficulty in categorizing metadiscourse items caused early studies on metadiscourse to lack taxonomy and elaboration of its deeper aspects. Although researchers have studied it for different purposes, much attention has been given to the role of metadiscourse in interaction. Within

the mainstream of metadiscourse research, most of it is inspired by the same rationale: that it is defined as discourse detached from and subordinate to propositional discourse. A functional classification on two planes has been proposed, and research about the role of metadiscourse in writing and reading comprehension, as well as the use of metadiscourse in different genres, has been conducted (Aguilar, 2008).

In a textual context, the positive effects of metadiscourse on reading comprehension have been discussed in several studies by Crismore (1989), showing that it can guide and help readers to organize content, thus fostering further comprehension. Moreover, these studies suggest that it can promote critical thinking, further inspiring readers' opinions. Since its main function is rhetorical, metadiscourse is used to produce a desired effect, by meeting readers' expectations through the use of explanatory and persuasive elements (Hyland, 2000). In other words, metadiscourse can be helpful in convincing readers to accept and understand what the text is aiming for, which can also influence readers' reaction to the text.

Additionally, metadiscourse can help the reader get a clear idea about goals, topics, text structure and organization, not only easing the reader's entry into a text, but also providing them with background information. Readers need ways to symbolically represent and encode the content into long-term memory. Metadiscourse can be considered as an inputting device or strategy that facilitates this representing and encoding, by providing a context in which the primary discourse can be embedded—a context for the text, in other words (Crismore, 1983).

When it comes to EFL instructional contexts, metadiscourse has proven to be useful in assisting non-native speakers of English, who often have difficulties in grasping the writer's stance when reading challenging authentic materials. It has been demonstrated that metadiscourse can benefit non-native learners dealing with argumentative texts (Bruce, 1989); also, the specific instructions of metadiscourse can be helpful for L2 readers in distinguishing factual content from the writer's commentary (Vande Kopple, 1997). Furthermore, the results of action research indicate that L2 readers are able to better understand a text containing more metadiscourse than one with less (Camiciottoli, 2003).

Overall, metadiscourse can be viewed as the direction or guidance that the author uses to help readers understand and comprehend the text. In school education, textbooks are still the main teaching and learning materials used in class, and metadiscourse can play an important role in making textbooks more efficient and understandable for learners. This pedagogical function of metadiscourse is emphasized in this paper, which looks at how English textbooks make use of the various types of metadiscourse. The results suggest that there are considerable differences between English textbooks in Japan and China regarding metadiscourse usage, which may be due in part to differences in national curricula standards.

2. Metadiscourse Analysis of Textbooks

Several other studies have been undertaken to analyze textbooks, regarding metadiscourse as a prominent feature (Crismore, 1983, 1989; Hyland, 2000); moreover, the differences in usage across cultures have been compared as well (Mauranen, 1993; Valero-Garcés, 1996). An analysis of informational and attitudinal metadiscourse instances in textbooks, representing levels from elementary school through college, was undertaken by Crismore (1983), wherein she attempted to investigate different usages of metadiscourse in social studies textbooks, as well as non-textbooks. In her findings, metadiscourse is presented as playing a facilitating role in improving comprehension; it helps students anticipate context, goals, text organization, and author perspective, resulting in texts that readers find interesting and easy to remember (Crismore, 1983). The quantity and styles of metadiscourse can be designated as “stylistic variables” (Crismore, 1983), which have implications for texts, and might also have an influence on the pedagogical beliefs and values of language studies.

The “stylistic variables” category has been questioned as being inconsistent or ambiguous, for the borderline between primary discourse and metadiscourse is blurred; however, this category is based on two main metadiscourse functions: one is informational function, and the other is attitudinal function. The former serves to help readers understand the author’s purposes and goals, while the latter serves to help them grasp the

author's perspective or stance towards the primary discourse (Crismore, 1984). Research related to metadiscourse can be traced back to Crismore (1982, 1983, 1984, 1989), who was the first to address metadiscourse's pedagogical function; furthermore, she reported on its role in facilitating comprehension by demonstrating how textual cues are helpful in reading and writing. She also began to examine its use in school textbooks, in an attempt to make more reader-friendly social studies textbooks that make use of appropriate metadiscourse; another of her studies (1985) states that one of its most important functions is providing as textual relevance cues. Finally, she raised a theoretical issue within the study of metadiscourse: that it is important to integrate the characteristics of discourse that is "content-less" (such as metadiscourse) with other kinds of discourse.

Given Crismore's contribution to metadiscourse studies in terms of pedagogical function, the typology adopted in this study follows Crismore's classification (Crismore, 1983), which is based on the functions of language and rhetorical techniques within school textbooks. It includes informational and attitudinal categories, and their associated subtypes. In addition, three other aspects which represent characteristics of English textbooks were taken into consideration: ratio of target-native language used throughout the textbook, which is considered to have an impact on the language use of both teachers and learners; extra material attached as complementary resources, which allows the student to expand on the knowledge obtained from the main book; and the transition zone prior to the formal lesson, presented as a preparation or starter phase, which can be taken as a specific feature only existing in grade 7. The typology can be summarized as shown in Table 1.

3. Selection of Subject Materials

English is considered as a foreign language in both Japan and China, which indicates similar contexts in English learning and teaching. In a broad sense, the Japanese and Chinese languages bear one similarity, in that they both employ Chinese characters; this is different from English, which makes use of phonograms (whereas Chinese characters evolved from logograms). Thus from this point of view, it is meaningful to build up a comparison of English

textbook designs between Japan and China.

Four English textbooks currently used (until April 2012) in the seventh grade (or grade one in junior high school) were selected from authorized textbooks used in schools in Japan and China for analysis in this study. They are: *New Crown* (issued in February 2009), *New Horizon* (issued in February 2009), *Go for It* (issued in July 2009) and *Beishi English* (issued in May 2009). The first two were produced in Japan, and the other two in China. The subject materials were limited to these four textbooks mainly in order to build and test this framework, before conducting a more wide-ranging study. However, two other factors also influenced the selection of the subject materials.

In the Chinese context, *Go for It* and *Beishi English* were selected due to concerns regarding publishers. Nowadays, since any publisher is allowed to produce textbooks, an increasing number have been introduced into the market. In addition, although local governments are in charge of choosing textbooks, their mechanisms are subject to fluctuation according to electoral

Table 1. The Typology of Metadiscourse Analysis for Textbooks

Categories	Subtypes
Informational metadiscourse	Goals: Global goal and statements (both preliminary and review)
	Pre-plans: Global preliminary statements about content and structure
	Post-plans: Global review statements about content and structure
Attitudinal metadiscourse	Saliency: importance of idea
	Emphatics: degree of certainty of assertion
	Hedges: uncertainty
	Evaluative: attitude towards a fact or idea
Ratio of target-native language	Use of target language: title; goal; instruction of practice context introduction; interpretation

Source: Crismore (1983: 8-11).

terms; thus, they lack a uniform standard when selecting textbooks, which explains the difficulty in calculating each textbook's market share ratio. Nevertheless, there are two main publisher groups who are active in textbook compiling; one is People's Education Press, the publisher of *Go for It*. This publisher was the first and only textbook publisher before the decentralization reform took place in 1986, and therefore enjoys a high prestige in textbook compiling. The other is the publisher of *Beishi English*, Beijing Normal University Press, which is a representative case of publishers attached to university research centers. Due to local research resources, the university press has professional teams dedicated to textbook compiling, which broadcasts an image of reliability among the public. Therefore, *Go for It* and *Beishi English* were chosen as potentially representatives of all textbooks. As for the Japanese context, *New Crown* and *New Horizon* were selected, due to their high market share among the six English textbooks that are authorized for middle school.

4. Analysis of the Materials

In accordance with the typology adopted from Crismore (1983), four seventh grade English books were analyzed, based on the five categories shown in Table 1. It is necessary to state clearly that the focus of this study is not to explore how to manipulate metadiscourse, or to analyze its effects; it is to examine how metadiscourse is used in English textbooks, and how it is presented in different contexts related to English education in China and Japan. It attempts to find differences between these two countries, and explore the reasons underpinning the findings, by referring to national curricula.

4.1 Informational Metadiscourse Analysis

Goals: Goal statements can usually be found in prefaces, introductions or concluding sections of a book, theme, or chapter. In the present study, the goal statements used to introduce the lesson objectives were collected from the heading parts of each lesson or unit. It was found that no lesson objective was stated in the selected Japanese textbooks, while there were lesson

objective statements at the beginning of the books titled “Language Goals” and “In Unit (...) you will learn” in *Go for It* and *Beishi English*, respectively.

Clear goal statements at the beginning of lessons function to answer learners’ inquiries and foster curiosity about what they are about to learn. They can also encourage learners’ engagement in study, if goals can trigger learners’ desires. Although there is no fixed column for introducing goals in each unit in the selected Japanese textbooks, this does not mean these publications do not have goals. Summary sections, including those summarizing grammar and different themes, were found in the textbooks. This suggests that the Japanese textbooks have not realized the necessity of stating goals in each unit and lesson.

Pre-plans: The pre-plan statement is concerned with the introduction of content or structure. It can be divided into an integral statement and an individual statement. The integral pre-plan statement refers to the introduction of the content or structure of the entire textbook, whereas the individual pre-plan statement refers to the introduction of the content or structure of each individual lesson. An integral pre-plan statement was found in three of the four subject textbooks, but was absent in *New Crown*. It was included in the “Introduction” of *Go for It*, and in sections titled “A letter from the authors” in *Beishi English*, and “To users” in *New Horizon*. All of these statements included an introduction of the content and structure of the textbooks. *Go for It* also mentioned the authors’ principles regarding textbook compiling, which are rooted in task-based language teaching; and *Beishi English* listed habits of good learners of English.

As for the individual pre-plan statement, it was found only in the Japanese textbooks. The statement was presented as a background statement, which interpreted the context or situation in which the following conversation or communication was taking place. However, such background statements were not found in the Chinese textbooks; in these, every learning item was introduced by a direct instruction.

The greatest difference between the Japanese and Chinese textbooks in terms of the pre-plan statements lay in the individual pre-plan statements. A context or situation introduction is helpful for learners to understand how dialogues get started and developed in the way they are presented. Apart from that, it also plays an essential role in the memorizing and retrieval

process, in which learners organize materials in their mind by matching the contents with corresponding contexts. The significance of context introduction seems to be neglected in these Chinese textbooks.

Post-plans: The post-plan statement refers to the assessment or evaluation sections included in the lessons. Since the post-plan statement is limited to the boundary of the lesson, other assessment or evaluation sections beyond each lesson, such as workbooks, were not included. Due to this consideration, no post-plan statements could be found within the Japanese textbooks. In *Go for It*, there was a self-check section in each unit, which aimed to summarize the key content which should be learned from the text. The self-check section consisted of four items, namely: checking key words, writing new words, doing a practical task, and enjoying a short cartoon comic section at the end of each unit. In *Beishi English*, a roundup section was included in each unit in order to assess what learners had retained from the previous lesson. This roundup section also had four items, namely: review list, relative practices, project and reflection. The review list was a review from the perspectives of language, pronunciation and vocabulary; the project was an assignment related to the unit's title; and the reflection was a questionnaire checklist asking learners to evaluate their own learning achievements within that particular unit.

Compared to the large proportion of post-plan statements in Chinese textbooks, their Japanese counterparts did not provide a review section to evaluate what and how much learners had learned from the lesson. It is known that review is an indispensable step in effective foreign language learning. The Chinese textbooks put the review section immediately after the content presentation in each unit, while the Japanese textbooks did not draw too much attention to it.

In summary, neither of the Chinese textbooks used individual pre-plan statements, but they did use goals and post-plans; on the other hand, none of the Japanese textbooks used goals or post-plans but did feature individual pre-plan statements. These examples show that the differences in the types of informational metadiscourse used in both the Chinese and Japanese textbooks were not quantitative, but qualitative. Apart from that, differences also existed in the use of "voice," which represents the degree of author presence in the text (Crismore, 1985). The Chinese textbooks used

third-person formulaic expressions, and concentrated subject matter contents on the goal and post-plan sections. The Japanese textbooks used the third-person viewpoint in pre-plans too, but changed to first-person for the conversations within the text, and when using directives inside the learning activities sections. The use of the first-person viewpoint may be more effective in engaging with readers and encouraging them to learn in a more active way.

In terms of the question of whether there were differences in the types of informational metadiscourse used in the Chinese and Japanese textbooks, the comparative data showed that they differed in type rather than in amount. This relates to how the textbooks showcased their own ideas for helping learners grasp primary contents. In the case of the two Chinese textbooks, they preferred to support learners' learning by setting clear goals at the beginning of each lesson; as for the Japanese textbooks, they chose to assist learners with contents by presenting pre-plan statements in each lesson. Although their common objective is to refer to the primary contents, they end up using different tools; this implies that textbooks reveal their tendencies on a certain issue through their use of metadiscourse. Because the sample size is small, it is not possible to reach any definitive conclusions, but the tentative results in terms of informational metadiscourse provide a background against which attitudinal metadiscourse can be appraised.

4.2 Attitudinal Metadiscourse Analysis

Salience: The salience statement is used to address the importance of an idea. In textbook analysis, this includes all kinds of accounts aiming to draw learners' attention to what authors think it is important to gain from a lesson. All four subject textbooks were found to use salience metadiscourse; however, none of them used explicit words like "important" or "primary" to indicate greater relevance of a specific part. The types they used were quite similar, in the sense that they all picked up or pointed out key information within each unit or lesson. In *New Crown*, two types of salience statements titled "Point" and "Words" were found in each lesson. "Point" showed the important sentences or patterns which learners were required to master; "Words" illustrated the new vocabulary that appeared in the lesson. In *New*

Horizon, a section titled “To Memorize” was set up in each unit; it exhibited words and sentences which learners were required to remember. In *Go for It*, a “Grammar Focus” section included in each unit, summarized grammar sentence patterns. As for *Beishi English*, there were three sections concerning salience metadiscourse in each unit: the first was called “Work It Out,” and displayed all important sentences or patterns, with some cloze test exercises; the second one was called “Language Contrast,” and was designed to elicit discussion of the differences between English and Chinese; the final one was called “Learning to Learn,” and presented learning strategies related to English learning.

Besides salience, there are three other categories in attitudinal metadiscourse: emphatics, hedges and evaluation. The emphatics metadiscourse indicates how certain the textbook content is; it is seen as characteristic of persuasive and argumentative writing. Authors use emphatics such as “of course,” “indeed,” “actually,” or “it is a fact” to emphasize that what they are propounding should be believed (Crismore, 1989). Hedges are used to refer to what someone else thought about a situation or fact directly and attributively. This category makes greater use of modals (may, might) and certain verbs (suggest, appears) and qualifiers (almost, generally). Evaluation allows authors to intrude, and comment on the content of primary discourse propositions, with expressions such as “fortunately” or “oddly enough” (Crismore, 1989). Nevertheless, none of these three attitudinal metadiscourse types could be identified in the subject textbooks; it could be argued that a textbook cannot use emphatics, hedges and evaluative statements, if its potential readers have no idea about these senior figures of speech. The four textbooks involved in this study are intended for English beginners, which might be one of the potential reasons for the lack of the above-mentioned metadiscourse types. Yet, from another point of view, it also suggests that English textbooks are inclined to show facts, rather than to arouse personal opinions on contextual topics.

4.3 Target-native Language Use

As one of the features that only exist in foreign language teaching textbooks, the language used in writing the textbooks was examined by investigating

the ratio of target-native language in each textbook. The written language in textbooks is considered not only to have an impact on teachers' language use in the class, but also to influence the students' independent learning style. The use of target-native language in the textbooks was accounted for by subdividing one entire lesson into five parts, namely: title, goal, instruction of practice, context introduction, and interpretation. The Japanese textbooks used Japanese to introduce practices, contexts and explanations related to learning contexts. In contrast, the Chinese textbooks used English in most of the parts; Chinese and English were both used in descriptions of goals and interpretations.

The target-native language use in the textbooks may have an influence on language use in the classroom. Classroom observation has shown that Chinese teachers are likely to use English, while Japanese teachers prefer to use Japanese in English classes, regardless of relative policy. The textbooks may reinforce these tendencies and thus have an impact on the learning process.

4.4 Extra Materials

Extra materials refer to complementary materials beyond each unit and lesson; they are designed to increase learners' access to knowledge. The provision of extra materials is based on the assumption that the more pieces of knowledge are provided, the more likely it is that learners will achieve more. The common component parts of extra materials in English textbooks include: word lists, vocabulary indices, grammar review, content review and language summaries. Apart from these, entertainment elements like songs and tongue-twisters are also considered to be extra materials. All of the textbooks examined in the present study had listening practices, but type-scripts were only available in the Chinese textbooks. In *Beishi English*, apart from the common extra materials mentioned previously, a section titled "Pair Work Activities" was included to reinforce the key points of each lesson through group work. A students' workbook was also included at the end of the textbook.

Unlike their Chinese counterparts, each Japanese textbook seemed to have its own particular set of extra materials. As complementary materials

assisting formal lessons, “Do it” was provided in *New Crown*; “Plus” and “Let’s Read” were provided in *New Horizon*. Besides a general word list, both Japanese textbooks also organized words by themes. In addition, *New Crown* introduced various ways to communicate with people by showing photos, and also illustrated countries from all over the world with their respective languages. *New Horizon* explained how to say “Hello” and “Thank you” in different languages, and it also described what kind of country Canada is.

4.5 Transition Zone Prior to Formal Lessons

All of the subject textbooks contained a transition zone before the formal lesson began, which can be seen as a specific feature of textbooks for the seventh grade. In other words, each textbook began with a preparatory section. The transition zone was created with the intent of helping learners with different competences to be better prepared for the formal lesson. Each textbook had its own approach to assisting learners in transitioning to the main lesson in a smooth way. The Japanese textbooks generally began with a series of introductions, including greetings, regular daily life words, alphabet learning and classroom English. On the other hand, the Chinese textbooks provided the following sections: “Words around You,” “Colors,” “Weather and Numbers,” in a similar way to the formal lessons.

Being both a review of elementary school contents and preparation of what to learn, the transition zone was given emphasis in all selected textbooks. The differences in content in the transition zone indicate differences in the level elementary learners are required to achieve. In other words, the achievement goal for elementary learners seems to be different in the two countries.

5. Discussion of Results

This section discusses the results of the textbook analysis presented above from five perspectives: informational metadiscourse, attitudinal metadiscourse, language use, extra materials and transition zone. It can be said

that the latter three elements all provide auxiliary knowledge to learners, contextually enriching it. Recent theory suggests that students are better at applying their own knowledge when that knowledge is contextually rich (Britton, Woodward, & Binkley, 1993); the acquisition and use of contextually rich knowledge often parallels the outcomes of “higher-order” thinking and learning. It is argued that students should leave school not only with a meaningful understanding of academic content, but also the capacity to engage in critical thinking, problem solving, and creative efforts around that content, which are subsumed under the heading of “higher-order” learning or thinking. When it is said that knowledge about a topic is contextually rich, this means that it is related to a variety of situations or types of problems where such knowledge is applicable; thus, learners may have an explicit understanding about a situation, which enables them to make appropriate decisions from a number of possible outcomes. This would be more effective with advanced learners, as beginning learners focus more on basic language use rather than contextual contents. Nevertheless, it reveals the importance of contextual and auxiliary information in textbooks.

With regard to informational metadiscourse, the Chinese textbooks were objective-oriented textbooks; this can be discerned from their goal statements and post-plan statements. Both of the Chinese textbooks introduced language objectives at the very beginning of each unit and instructed learners. This objective-oriented tendency was further reinforced by their post-plan statements. In order to evaluate the extent to which learners had accomplished the language objectives, assessment sections were included at the end of each unit. These were designed to be manageable for both class-group check and individual check. In particular, the reflection check list in *Beishi English* aimed to assist individual learners’ self-evaluation. On the other hand, the Japanese textbooks were to some degree situational-oriented textbooks; they focused more attention on creating contexts for each lesson. This can be gathered from their pre-plan statements: a context interpretation was provided before each conversation, so as to make learners aware of the situation in which it took place.

With regard to attitudinal metadiscourse, only salience metadiscourse will be discussed here, because none of the other attitudinal types were found in the subject textbooks. All four subject textbooks showed an interest

in using salience metadiscourse to emphasize important information featured in each lesson or unit; this information was mostly focused on grammar and words. However, the sections “Language Contrast” and “Learning to Learn” in *Beishi English* showed a new approach toward selecting potentially important information. “Language Contrast” provided learners with a comparative method for realizing the differences between English and their native language, and “Learning to Learn” was designed to serve as a guide on how to learn English in a more strategic way.

The results of the target-native language use analysis show that the Chinese textbooks were mostly written in English, although some Chinese instructions were provided along with English instructions in the practice sections in *Go for It*. In the Japanese textbooks, however, besides language input, Japanese was used in most sections, including instruction, interpretation and translation of words. To some degree, this can reflect the current language use reality in classroom practice.

In terms of extra materials, the Chinese textbooks provided only such common extra materials as word lists, grammar reviews and workbooks, whereas the Japanese textbooks included a wider variety of extra materials, besides the direct information related to each lesson. The use of extra materials assists learners in obtaining a broader point of view, ranging from cross-cultural understanding to specific language skills. As an entertainment element, the Japanese textbooks added English songs and tongue-twisters; moreover, in order to provide a better understanding of cultural diversity, they introduced not only English but also other foreign languages, and even gestures by means of vivid photos. Most importantly, the Japanese textbooks displayed a truly international attitude towards communication among people, in the sense that they showed that such communication goes beyond communicating only in English.

As for transition zones, all the subject textbooks included preparative phases leading up to the formal study lesson, but they were organized in different ways. On the one hand, the Chinese textbooks organized the transition zone in a similar way to the formal unit (i.e. they had the same structure); on the other hand, the Japanese textbooks designed their transition zones in a casual way, in contrast to the formal lessons. In other words, although it is described as a starting stage, the transition zone in the Chinese

textbooks seems like an expansion of the formal unit, while the Japanese textbooks present the transition zone in a soft and learner-friendly way.

6. Discussion from the Perspective of National Curriculum

The results of the previous descriptive analyses suggest that Chinese and Japanese textbooks have their own specific features. Although the small number of textbooks analyzed means that no definitive conclusions can be made, the findings do reveal the implications of both countries' English education specifications.

In both Japan and China only government authorized textbooks are allowed to be used in schools; in China, a committee affiliated with the government is formed to evaluate if a textbook can be employed in schools or not. Under this system for issuing textbooks, any individual or community is literally free to apply, by compiling a textbook and submitting it for approval; it is for this reason that a considerable number of textbooks are issued on the market. Although the fact that individuals are being encouraged to develop a diverse set of textbooks should be seen in a positive way, it is important to take a look at the tendencies in their design on both global and local contexts, for the purpose of gauging their quality and providing insights for future development. The metadiscourse analysis conducted in this study is one possible method for investigating textbook designs.

In both countries, all school textbooks are required to follow the guidance of national curricula, namely the "National English Curriculum Standard" revised in 2003 in China, and the "Course of Study for Foreign Languages (English)," issued in 2008 in Japan. The specific features of the Chinese textbooks, which display an objective-oriented tendency and introduce learning strategies in textbooks, are consistent with the overall objectives of the "National English Curriculum Standard" in China. Moreover, the most notable characteristic of the Japanese textbooks, namely placing emphasis on the diversity of foreign cultures, reflects the content description of "Course of Study for Foreign Languages."

6.1 Regarding Overall Objectives of English Education

The reason why Chinese textbooks show a preference for objective-oriented design can be explained by the objectives stipulated in the “National English Curriculum Standard.” This states that the fundamental aim of English education is to develop students’ comprehensive language competence (Ministry of Education PRC., 2001; 2003). This competence is to be achieved through five general objectives: language knowledge, language skills, learning strategies, affection and attitudes, and culture awareness. Each objective is associated with subtypes that illustrate its contents.

As the brief description above shows, the objectives are depicted in a comprehensive way; furthermore, they are not merely stated in a general way, but also classified into different levels with corresponding grades. One remarkable characteristic of the Chinese curriculum is that it follows the international practice of dividing general objectives into different ability levels. Also, in order to provide a clear map as to what learners are expected to achieve, the descriptions of each level are defined in a specific way.

On the other hand, in Japan, the overall objective is to develop students’ basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude towards communication through foreign languages (MEXT, 2008). In contrast to the Chinese objectives, four of the aforementioned five general objectives (language skills, attitudes to learning, cultural awareness, and language knowledge) are mentioned in the description of language elements in the “Course of Study.” In other words, while having a common orientation in overall objectives, the Chinese curriculum places a greater focus on learning strategies, of which a clear demonstration can be found on the “Learning How to Learn” section in *Beishi English*. It should be mentioned, however, that *Go for It*, as well as the Japanese textbooks, does not attempt to introduce any learning strategies.

6.2 Regarding Content

A possible interpretation regarding diversity of foreign cultures can be made from consulting the contents of both national curricula. The “Course of

Study for Foreign Languages” is designed for all foreign languages, although it resorts exclusively to examples in English in order to illustrate its general guidelines. As a matter of fact, the number of schools teaching foreign languages other than English in Japan reached 2042 in 2006, up from 363 schools in 1993; these other foreign languages include Chinese, Korean, French, German, and Spanish. (MEXT, 2008)

Comparatively, the “National English Curriculum Standard” in China only applies to English education. It is taken for granted that foreign language learning means English learning, for these two terms are used interchangeably even among English teachers. However, Russian and Japanese as foreign languages are also offered at middle schools in China, which have their own separate language curriculum. Although English is the most widely learned foreign language in China, it is reported that approximately 0.35 million and 0.12 million students chose to learn Russian and Japanese respectively by the end of 1999 (Liu & Gong, 2001). These students are mostly from Northeast China and Inner Mongolia, due to historical factors.

Overall, based on the results of the metadiscourse analysis, the objective-oriented tendency within the two Chinese textbook designs can be explained by the relatively high number of specifications and requirements regarding overall objectives and ability-level grading in the national curriculum. As for the introduction of learning strategies to students, which is clearly required by the curriculum, only one of the Chinese textbooks in this limited sample fully complies; therefore, a wider range of Chinese textbooks must be analyzed, before making any conclusive claims on this matter. Regarding the understanding of foreign affairs, while at first sight the objectives of the “National English Curriculum Standard” and “Course of Study for Foreign Languages” look similar, their practical application has turned out to be different, which can be seen by the Japanese textbooks’ focus on cross-cultural understanding, as well as a less rigid set of demands.

To conclude, this paper examined the use of metadiscourse in four selected English textbooks in China and Japan; differences were found in the contexts of both countries, underpinned by the overall objectives and contents of English education as described in national curricula. More specifically, the findings indicate that textbooks apply metadiscourse in order to support learners’ learning, although their methods differ by placing greater

focus on certain objectives to the detriment of others. It is also noticeable that metadiscourse use in textbooks was restricted, especially attitudinal metadiscourse, as few examples of it were found. Given its significant function in facilitating learners' reading, metadiscourse should be more widely used in textbooks; this study promotes the identification and development of more metadiscourse forms within these materials, so as to make them more efficient. In the meantime, it is expected that the definition of metadiscourse itself and its typological classification, as well as its appropriate use will be further refined, as we learn more about it.

Further studies using larger sample sizes are necessary to verify the results obtained in the present research. Moreover, textbooks for different grades need to be taken into consideration to discover changes in metadiscourse use as learners' language capabilities develop. Last but not least, a follow-up research question worthwhile exploring would be how teachers deal with the lack of attitudinal metadiscourse in classrooms.

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