

Analysis of ‘Spoken Interactions’ in Junior High School English Textbooks

Keiko Nakamura
Sophia University

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology revised the Course of Study (2017) to promote learners’ practical communication skills. In accordance with the new guidelines laid down by the Ministry, new junior high school English textbooks were published in 2021. Learning language expressions that can facilitate continuation and development of dialogues is extremely useful for the promotion of practical conversations in English, as it enables learners to deepen their mutual understanding and enjoy communication even more. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how English textbooks foster learners’ communicative competence.

Much research has been conducted on junior high school English textbooks produced. For instance, Nakai (2022) looked at six English textbooks published for 3rd grade, by six different publishers in 2021. The focus was on learners’ debating skill, based on the theory of ‘the Uses of Argument Updated Edition’ which was put forwarded by Toulmin (2003). It was found that new English textbooks tend not to offer sufficient number of activities which foster learners’ ability to construct their thoughts in a logical way. Yamamori, Fujita, Takechi, Hata, & Ito (2003) examined the situation-setting of model dialogues in older textbooks. They learned that many of these dialogues are set in learners’ daily life. However, few studies have analysed how newly published textbooks deal with language expressions used for continuation or development of improvised conversations.

In this study, three popular junior high school English textbooks for 3rd grade published in 2021 by three publishers were examined. The older textbooks published by the same publishers were also examined to compare them with the newly published ones. The number of times that ‘spoken interactions’ appeared in the main unit dialogues in each of the six textbooks was recorded. Although results varied by textbook, it was found that in newly published textbooks, expressions used in ‘spoken interactions’ to continue and develop impromptu dialogue occurred more frequently than in older textbooks, indicating that new textbooks provide more materials for learners to practice to enhance learners’ practical communication skills.