A Comparison of Elementary School English Textbooks
Used in Japan, South Korea and China (Shanghai)

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1. Introduction

Although *Hi, friends! 1*, an English textbook published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), to Japanese elementary schools was distributed four years ago, there has not been much research focused solely on this textbook. The fact that *Hi, friends! 1* is used in approximately 95% of elementary schools in Japan shows how the future of English language lessons in Japanese elementary schools relies heavily on this textbook (MEXT, 2014). Hence, to improve the current English language education in Japanese elementary schools, there is certainly a need to investigate and evaluate *Hi, friends! 1*. This paper will examine this textbook and compare it to English textbooks that are used in the first year of English language lessons in elementary schools in South Korea and China (Shanghai). Specifically, two features will be looked into detail. The first feature will be how the three textbooks try to promote awareness of foreign culture as well as their own culture. The second feature will be how they deal with improving the students’ English speaking skills. My overall aim for this study is to find ways to improve the English textbook used in Japanese elementary schools from the similarities and differences between the three English textbooks.

2. The Three Textbooks

In this study, *Hi, friends! 1*, which is the textbook for fifth grade students will be examined. Fifth grade students have English language lesson once a week (a total of thirty-five hours) (MEXT, 2015). For the English textbook used for third grade students in South Korea, *Elementary School English 3* published by Chunjae Education Inc. will be examined. Third grade students have English language lesson two times a week (a total of forty-five hours)(MEXT, 2015). For the English textbook used in China, *English First Grade 1&2*, which is published by Shanghai Education Press and Oxford University Press will be examined. In Shanghai, English language lessons are conducted at least four times a week (MEXT, 2015). *Elementary School English 3* and *English First Grade 1&2* are both included in the government-approved list of English textbooks and are used in some elementary schools in South Korea and Shanghai, respectively.

3. Methodology

This paper will be comparing how Japan’s *Hi, friends! 1*, China’s *English First Grade 1&2* and South Korea’s *Elementary School English 3* deal with the two features that are mentioned in the overall objectives of all three countries’ national guidelines that is, the study of foreign cultures together with the promotion of the country’s own culture, and the development of speaking skills in English. With regard to the first feature, in the Course of Study for English language lessons in Japanese elementary schools, the overall objective is written as “to form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences…”
In the latest Basic Act of Education, which was enacted in December 2006, one of the main aims is to “foster an attitude of respecting our traditions and culture, love the country and region that nurtured them, respect other countries and contributing to world peace and the development of the international community” (MEXT, 2011, p.2). In the Chinese guidelines, the objective of English education is described as “instilling in students as respect for meritorious cultural traditions of other nations and an understanding of, as well as love for, the Chinese culture” (Hu, 2002, p.26). In South Korea’s national curriculum for English education, the objective about culture is mentioned in the fourth part and is described as “understand foreign customs and cultures through English education” (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Korea, 2008, p.43-44). Also, one of the general objectives listed in the national curriculum for South Korea’s elementary school education is to, “inherit and appreciate Korean cultural heritage and traditions” (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Korea, 2008, p.6).

To see how each textbook deals with their own culture as well as foreign culture, the names and ethnicity of the main characters in each textbook will be examined. Since there are different sections in each chapter of the English textbooks, I will also look for different sections in the textbooks that try to promote the awareness of foreign cultures and their own cultures.

The second feature will be how each textbook deals with developing students’ English speaking skills. In the objectives for the English language education in the three countries, there are references to the improvement of students’ English speaking skills. For instance, the objective for English language education in Japanese elementary schools is “to form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities…fostering a positive attitude toward communication…”(MEXT, 2008, p.1). One of the objectives for Chinese English education is “to provide students with a basic knowledge of English and developing basic communicative competence through training in listening, speaking, reading and writing” (Hu, 2002, p.24). In South Korea’s elementary school national curriculum, one objective is listed as “to build a foundation for basic communication in English in everyday life” (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Korea, 2008, p.43-44). Although Japan and South Korea do not specifically write that the objective for their English language lessons is to improve the students’ speaking skills, it can be interpreted that they both value speaking since it is a vital aspect of English communication.

Specifically, the sections of the textbooks that require students to speak English during class will be examined. Recently, it has been common to include such activities as pair work and group work during English language lessons. Hence, sections that promote active participation during class will also be examined.

4. Description of Data and Analysis

4.1. General Information about Each Textbook

i) Japan’s Hi, friends! 1

Hi, friends! 1 has a total of fifty-six pages and it consists of nine lessons. The main language of instruction in the textbook is Japanese. In every lesson there are five main sections, which are the “Let’s Listen” section, the “Let’s Play” section, the “Let’s Sing” section, the “Let’s Chant” section and the “Activity” section.
ii) South Korea’s Elementary School English 3

In Elementary School English 3, there are one hundred and fifty-three pages for the textbook part and sixty pages for the bonus part. In the bonus part, there are some worksheets which students can use to practice new words from each lesson. The instructions in the textbook are mainly written in Korean. The textbook part consists of fourteen lessons. In each lesson, there are sections such as the “Look & Listen” section, the “Chant & Dance” section, the “Listen & Play” section, the “Listen & Speak” section, the “Speak & Act” section, the “Sing & Dance” section, the “Speak & Play” section, the “Read & Write” section, the “Role-Play” section, the “Into the World” section and the “Join & Play” section.

iii) China’s English First Grade 1&2

English First Grade has two parts. The first textbook is for the first semester of their first grade curriculum and the second textbook is for the second semester of their first grade curriculum. The first textbook has fifty-three pages and it consists of four modules. The second textbook also has fifty-three pages and it consists of four modules. Each module consists of three units. In each unit, there are different sections. The seven main sections are the “Look and learn” section, the “Say and act” section, the “Ask and answer” section, the “Play a game” section, the “Look and say” section, the “Do a survey” section and the “Listen and enjoy” section. The instructions in the textbook are written mainly in English.

4.2 Feature 1: How each textbook deals with culture

i) Japan’s Hi, friends! 1

According to the teaching manual for this textbook, the main aim for “Let’s Listen” and “Let’s Play” is for the fifth graders to learn about culture as well as getting used to common English phrases (MEXT, 2012). Most of passages that the students listen in the “Let’s Listen” sections are mainly about foreign culture but a few of them are about Japanese culture. After listening to the passage, students are expected to answer questions regarding what they have heard. In many “Let’s Play” sections, students are instructed to play a game alone or with their classmates. In some “Let’s Play” sections, there is some sort of reference to foreign culture or Japanese culture. Some “Activity” sections, which make students to communicate with other classmates, also deal with foreign culture and Japanese culture. Out of the nine lessons, five lessons involve sections that discuss foreign culture and Japanese culture in some way.

ii) South Korea’s Elementary School English 3

The main sections, which deal with culture, are the “Role-Play” sections and the “Into the World” sections. The “Role-play” sections appear in all fourteen lessons and the “Into the World” sections are included in every lesson other than the last one. Hence, in every lesson, there are one or two sections that handle culture. The “Role-Play” section of each lesson deals with either a Western story or a Korean story and students would need to act out that story in English. The “Into the World” sections are written in Korean and they consist of a short comic strip, which deals with Korean culture and foreign culture.
iii) China’s *English First Grade 1 & 2*

Unlike *Hi, friends!1*, and *Elementary School English 3*, in *English First Grade 1&2*, there is no specific section that deals with foreign culture as well as Chinese culture.

**4.3 Feature 1: Similarities and Differences**

This section will discuss the similarities and differences of how Japan’s *Hi, friends!1*, South Korea’s *Elementary School English 3* and China’s *English First Grade 1&2* handle foreign culture as well as their own country’s culture. Specifically focusing on the names and ethnicities of the main characters, the different stories and the foreign countries that appear in the three textbooks, the similarities and differences between the three English textbooks will be described. At the end of this section, the best English textbook that handles foreign culture as well as their own country’s culture will be stated.

**i) Names of the Characters**

As shown in Table 1 of Appendix, *Elementary School English 3* has the most foreign characters. On the other hand, *English First Grade 1&2* has the most characters with foreign names. *Hi, Friends 1* and *English First Grade 1&2* have the same number of characters from their own country and they include more characters from their own country than *Elementary School English 3*. *Elementary School English 3* and *Hi, Friends 1* both have a mixture of both foreign characters as well as characters from their own countries.

**ii) Learning Culture Through Stories**

From Table 2 of Appendix, it can be easily seen that *Elementary School English 3* includes many stories, which are well known to the students. It includes two Korean folktales, which allow students to get a chance to read the Korean stories in English. It also includes eleven stories written by Western authors, many of which have been turned into Disney films. There is also a story that is adapted to a Korean version but it is originally based on a Western story. *Hi, friends!1* does not include any Western stories or Japanese stories and *English First Grade 1&2* only includes one western story. South Korea seems to be trying to promote their own culture as well as foreign culture by exposing the students to Korean and Western stories in the “Role-play” section of each lesson.

**iii) Foreign Countries mentioned in the Textbooks**

Table 3 of Appendix shows the foreign countries that are mentioned in each textbook, together with the number of times each country is mentioned. For instance, in *Hi, Friends 1*, the United States of America is mentioned three separate times. In *Elementary School English 3*, fourteen countries are mentioned. *Hi, Friends 1* includes eleven countries. *English First Grade 1&2* does not mention any countries. From this table, it is possible to see how *Hi, Friends 1* and *Elementary School English 3* are both trying to provide information about many different foreign countries.
iv) Educational Objectives and Textbooks

One of the educational objectives for English language education in the three countries is for the students to develop awareness of foreign cultures as well as their own culture. *Hi, friends! 1* has numerous sections that introduce foreign culture with foreign characters and by making the students learn briefly about foreign culture in the listening sections. However, *Hi, friends! 1* seems to lack information about Japanese culture. Therefore, it seems that *Hi, friends! 1* does not entirely follow the educational objective since it mainly only focuses on foreign culture. *Elementary School English 3* tries to introduce foreign culture as well as South Korean culture with the use of stories written by both foreign authors and Korean authors. It also makes the students learn about foreign culture and their own culture through the use of a short comic strip in every lesson, which is written in Korean. On the other hand, *English First Grade 1&2*, this textbook does not include much information about foreign cultures or Chinese culture. This textbook only includes one story and a few words to describe their own food. It is possible to say that *English First Grade 1&2* has not followed their national guideline to aim to promote foreign culture and their own culture to their students. Overall, it seems that since *Elementary School English 3* includes an adequate number of foreign characters and Korean characters, deals with the most Western and Korean stories and includes the most foreign countries, it is the best textbook for students to use in order to achieve this educational objective about culture.

4.4 Feature 2: How each textbook tries to improve the students’ English speaking skills

i) Japan’s *Hi, friends! 1*

The main sections that try to improve the students’ speaking skills are the “Let’s Sing”, “Let’s Chant”, “Activity” and “Let’s Play” sections. According to the teaching manual, the “Activity” section mainly aims to make students communicate with their classmates using the phrases that they have learnt in each lesson (MEXT, 2012, p.1). In the “Let’s Sing” section, students are expected to sing songs using the each lesson’s key phrases and words. In the “Let’s Chant” section, students are instructed to chant rhythmic phrases that include each lesson’s key phrases and words. In the “Let’s Chant” section, students are instructed to chant rhythmic phrases that include each lesson’s key phrases and words.

ii) South Korea’s *Elementary School English 3*

In each lesson in *Elementary School English 3*, there are six sections that aim to improve students’ speaking skills. The main sections are the “Listen & Repeat” section, the “Chant & Dance” section, the “Listen & Speak” section, the “Speak & Act” section, the “Sing & Dance” section, the “Speak & Play” section and the “Join & Play”. In the “Listen & Repeat” sections, students hear a passage relating to the two drawings in the textbook. They then repeat the passage they hear. In the “Chant & Dance” section, students chant the rhythmic phrases that include the key phrases of each lesson. In the “Listen & Speak” sections, students listen to a passage that is about the four drawings in the textbook. After listening to the passage, the teacher makes the students answer a question relating to the passage that they hear. In the “Speak & Act” section, students work in pair to practice the key phrases of each lesson together. Similar to the “Chant &
Dance” section, in the “Sing & Dance” section, students sing a song using the key phrases. In the “Speak & Play” section and the “Join & Play” section, students play a game which requires them to interact with each other using the key phrases.

iii) China’s English First Grade

There are six main sections that aim to improve students’ speaking skills in *English First Grade*. The number of sections included in each unit varies. The six main sections are the “Look and say” section, the “Play a game” section, the “Say and act” section, the “Ask and answer” section, the “Do a survey” section and the “Listen and enjoy” section. In the “Look and say” section, students will practice saying the key phrase of each module. The students listen to a conversation using the key phrase and they repeat what the people are saying. In the “Play a game” section, students play a game that makes the students to interact with their classmates. They play some sort of game that makes the students use the key phrase. In the “Say and act” section, students practice saying the key phrases using the tape. Students will first hear an example conversation and then they need to apply the same rule to the following conversation. In other words, unlike the “Look and Say” section, where students are expected to repeat exactly what is written in the textbook, students need to think what to say themselves. In the “Ask and answer” section, students work in pairs to practice using the key phrases. They ask each other questions and answer them using the key phrases. In the “Do a survey” section, students interview their classmates to conduct a small survey. In the “Listen and enjoy” section, students sing a song that is related to the topic of the lesson.

4.5 Feature 2: Similarities and Differences

Japan, South Korea and China all have a common objective for their English language lessons to improve their students’ English speaking skills. From looking at the sections that make the students to speak in English in the three textbooks, it is possible to say that all three textbooks are trying to follow their national guidelines to improve the students’ English speaking skills. That is, they are all making some sort of effort to improve their students’ English speaking skills. Japan’s *Hi, friends 1*, has four sections in each lesson that make students actually speak in English. *Hi, friends 1* seems to be trying to improve the students’ English speaking abilities by making them sing English songs, chant English rhythmic phrases, answer questions about the passages that they hear, play games in pair and groups and interview their classmates.

South Korea’s *Elementary School English 3* also has similar sections that aim to help improve the students’ English speaking skills. *Elementary School English 3* has seven main sections in each lesson that make the students practice speaking in English. Like *Hi, friends 1*, *Elementary School English 3* tries to improve the students’ English speaking skills by making the students sing English songs and chant English rhythmic phrases. Students also play games in groups that make them practice the phrases and words they have learnt in each lesson. Moreover, students listen to a passage and answer questions about the passage. As can be seen from Table 4 of Appendix, compared to *Hi, friends 1*, in *Elementary School English 3*, there are far more sections that initiate pair work. *Elementary School English 3* has the “Speak & Act”
section where students do pair work to practice using the phrases and words they learnt in each lesson. This
textbook also has the “Listen & Repeat” section where students need to repeat exactly what they hear.
Unlike *Hi, friends! 1*, *Elementary School English 3* does not include activities that make the students to
interview their classmates. *English First Grade 1&2* has similar sections that try to improve the students’
English speaking skills. Like *Hi, friends! 1*, there are sections that make the students to sing English songs,
play games and do interviews. Like *Elementary School English 3*, *English First Grade 1&2* includes many
activities that make the students to work in pairs to practice the phrases and words that they have learnt in
each lesson. *English First Grade 1&2* also makes the students to repeat the passages that they hear in the
“Look and say” sections and the “Say and act” sections. From Table 4 of Appendix, it is possible to see
how compared to *Hi, friends! 1* and *Elementary School English 3*, *English First Grade 1&2* has the least
amount of activities that make the students to work in groups.

All three English textbooks include a variety of tasks in each lesson to improve the students’
English speaking skills. Individual work such as repeating and singing English songs, pair work such as
practicing phrases that they have learnt in each lesson in pairs and group work such as interviewing
classmates are important for successfully improving the students’ English speaking ability. Table 4 of
Appendix shows how *Hi, friends! 1* does not have enough sections that initiate pair work and how *English
First Grade 1&2* includes an adequate number of individual work and pair work but not enough group
work. Since every lesson of *Elementary School English 3* includes individual work, pair work and group
work that try to develop the students’ speaking skills, it seems that *Elementary School English 3* is the best
textbook out of three English textbooks, in terms of achieving the educational objective, that is the
development of speaking skills in English. To improve the *Hi, friends! 1*, there should be more sections that
initiate pair works where students can practice using the phrases and words they have learnt in each lesson.
*English First Grade 1&2* can also be improved by including more sections that initiate group work such as
playing English games in groups.

5. Suggestions

The underlying reason for comparing the three English textbooks was to think of ways to improve
*Hi, friends! 1*. From comparing the three textbooks and looking how they deal with the two features,
several issues of *Hi, friends! 1* were revealed. The simplistic and naive portrayal of some foreign culture,
the lack of sections dealing with Japanese traditional culture, the lack of sections including pair work and
role play and the main language of instruction seem to be the weaknesses of *Hi, friends! 1*. In this section,
based on the similarities and differences between the three English textbooks, suggestions will be made to
improve *Hi, friends! 1*.

*Hi, friends! 1* seems to be making some sort of effort to promote awareness of foreign culture
since it includes three main characters from foreign countries and information about eleven different
countries. However, one of the issues is the way it describes some of the foreign countries. The descriptions
of some foreign countries may be too simplistic and naive. This simplistic and naïve description of the
foreign country may lead the students to create stereotypes and misconceptions about those countries. For
instance, in Lesson 1, there is a picture of a savannah desert with two giraffes next to a Kenyan boy saying “gambo”, which is the Kenyan way to greet. This picture of a savannah desert can lead the students to have a stereotypical view that Kenya is an undeveloped African country with deserts and wild animals such as giraffes and lions. Kenya does indeed have deserts but there are also cities such as Nairobi with many tall buildings similar to any other megacities such as Tokyo. This example is just one of the many simplistic portrayal of foreign countries in *Hi, friends! 1*. As Sherlock (2015) argues, the learner's conscious and subconscious view of the culture can be affected by the simple biases expressed in stereotypical depictions in textbooks. It seems that the simplistic and stereotypical portrayal of the foreign countries and cultures in *Hi, friends! 1* can have a negative impact on the Japanese students’ views of other foreign countries and cultures.

Although it may be difficult to be fully sure if the way that the foreign countries and cultures are presented non-stereotypically in the textbooks, it seems that the way that *Hi, friends! 1* presents them can be improved. Perhaps including foreign stories in the textbooks like South Korea's *Elementary School English 3* may be a way to introduce information about foreign countries and cultures. *Elementary School English 3* includes many stories, particularly folktales in the “Role-play” section of each lesson. Taylor (2000) claims that the various special characteristics of folktales make them useful for language teaching. He explains that the frequent repetition of folktales allows the students to easily acquire new vocabulary and grammar. He also writes, “folktales provide a natural context for discussing cultural similarities and cultural differences, which is essential for understanding the thoughts and people that lie behind any language.” (p.16). For instance, the story of *Snow White* appears in *Elementary School English 3*. The famous scene where Snow White eats an apple without cutting it, may make the Japanese students to realise that it is common to eat an apple without peeling it in some countries, which can be surprising for some of the students. *Cinderella* and *Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland*, which are also included in *Elementary School English 3*, can help show the typical food of some European countries. That is, they may learn how the characters from the folktales are eating bread for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Since rice is an essential part of Japanese meals, Japanese students may learn that bread is an important part of the meals for Western people. Due to the usefulness of folktales for students learning about culture, *Hi, friends! 1* should include folktales from different countries. Unlike *Elementary School English 3*, which mainly included Western folktales, *Hi, friend! 1* should include folktales not only from Western countries but also from various countries around the world so that they can learn about various different countries.

Another issue of *Hi, friends! 1* is that it lacks information about Japanese culture. Besides having Japanese main characters and sections that are about Japanese elementary school life, the textbook does not deal with Japanese traditional culture. Folktales can also help with this issue. Including Japanese folktales such as *Peach Boy* (“Momotaro”) and *One-Inch Boy* (“Issun-Boshi”) in *Hi, friends! 1* will let the students to read the well-known folktales in English, which may make them become more aware of and respectful towards their own culture. It can also allow the students to learn words that describe Japanese culture. Although China’s *English First Grade 1&2* did not include much about their own culture, there was a section where students learn such words as “rice”, “egg” and “noodles”, which are important words to
describe their own Chinese food. Perhaps, by reading about Japanese folktales in their English textbook, students can pick up words that are vital to describe their own culture. The students will be able to explain about their Japanese culture in English.

Moreover, *Hi, friends! 1* can learn from the “Into the World” sections in *Elementary School English 3* that deal with foreign culture as well as their own culture through the use of comic strips. The characters in the comic strip usually discuss the difference between foreign culture and their own Korean culture. Although the comic strips are written in Korean and not in English, it still is an effective way of making the students learn about different cultures as well as their own. Since the target students for this English textbook are beginners, who have just started learning English, using their first language to explain foreign culture and their own culture is understandable. Using the student’s first language to promote awareness of foreign culture and their own culture can help prevent the students from creating misconceptions of foreign culture since the explanations would not be constrained to easy English vocabulary. That is, if the explanations are written only in English, the content must necessarily be simple, which may lead the students to create stereotypes of the foreign countries. Thus, *Hi, friends! 1* should have a similar section to the “Into the World” section, where the students can learn about foreign culture as well as their own in Japanese.

From looking at how *Hi, friends! 1* tries to improve the speaking skills of the students in comparison to *Elementary School English 3* and *English First Grade 1&2*, *Hi friends! 1* has an adequate amount of sections that aim to improve the speaking skill of the students. However, it seems that there are not enough sections that make students to work in pairs in each lesson. *Elementary School English 3* seems to place an importance on pair work since in each lesson, students are instructed to do pair work in the “Speak and Act” sections, where students practice using the phrases they learnt in each lesson. *English First Grade 1&2* also includes pair work in the “Ask and answer” sections and the “Play a game” sections. There are strong pedagogical and theoretical arguments for the use of small group and pair work (Storch, 2007). From the research conducted by Storch (2007), it was found that pair work in language learning is beneficial since students learning a language will be provided with opportunities to use the target language for a range of functions. She explains how pair work should be encouraged in language classrooms since the learners will be provided with an opportunity to engage in language learning processes that are said to facilitate second language learning. Considering these benefits of pair work, *Hi, friends! 1* could be improved by placing more importance on pair work and by including more sections that initiate students to work in pairs. Like the “Speak and Act” section in *Elementary School English 3*, it should have a section that makes the students practice the phrases and grammar that they learn in each lesson with their partner.

In addition, there should be a role-play section in *Hi, friends! 1*. At the moment, out of the three English textbooks, *Elementary School English 3* is the only textbook that has a role-play section. In *Elementary School English 3*, students are instructed to act out Western stories and Korean stories in each lesson. Schellin (2006) argues that despite the usefulness of role-play, simulation and drama for EFL/ESL learning, they are underused in language classrooms. Moreover, Haruyama (2010) shows the numerous advantages of drama activities. She claims that students can practice speaking and improve their
pronunciation through the use of drama activities. They can also naturally learn the gestures and facial expressions that go along with the language. Further, she explains how they can acquire a positive and living language attitude and naturally master the ways of thinking in another language, along with learning the culture (p.22). It is possible to see how role-playing in language learning can bring various positive effects, especially to the learners’ speaking skills and cultural awareness. Thus, there should be a role-play section in each lesson of Hi, friends! 1. From taking the idea from Elementary School English, the role-play sections should include foreign and Japanese folktales, which will help the students to achieve the two educational objectives of English language lessons in Japan.

In Hi, friends! 1, there is a reliance on visual aids and Japanese instructions rather than English words. Although the current Japanese guidelines for English language lessons is not focused on English writing and reading, it may be beneficial for the students as well as the teachers to include instructions written in English in the textbook, like in English First Grade 1&2. Although the students may not be able to read everything that is written in English, having more English writing in the textbook, may allow the students to become more familiar with English writing. As the students get older, they will eventually use English textbooks that are mainly written in English. Thus, including both English as well as Japanese instructions in Hi, friends! 1 will allow the students to get used to English writing. If the instructions are written in English, it will also help the teachers who are not confident about teaching English. If the instructions in the textbook are written in English, the teachers can simply read the instructions that are written in English, which will allow them to smoothly conduct their English language lessons.

6. Conclusion

This paper compared and analysed three English elementary school textbooks used in Japan, South Korea and China. From the comparison of how the three English textbooks tries to promote awareness of foreign culture as well as their own culture and improve the students’ English speaking skills, several issues of Hi, friends! 1 were highlighted. Overall, it seems that South Korea’s Elementary School English 3 was the best English textbook that dealt with the two features. Learning from Elementary School English 3, Hi, friends! 1 should introduce a “role-play” section, where students can act out scenes from foreign and Japanese folktales. The collaboration of role-playing and different kinds of folktales may help the students to effectively achieve the two Japanese English educational objectives that focus on the students learning foreign culture and their own culture, and improving the students’ English speaking skills. Although China’s English First Grade 1&2 had many weaknesses, there were useful insights such as the main instruction of language was written in English. By taking these suggestions into consideration, Hi, friends! 1 will become an English textbook that will enable students to successfully achieve the objectives.

At the moment, some English teachers who teach in Japanese elementary schools are the homeroom teachers who teach other core subjects. In other words, the reality of some English language lessons is that they are conducted by English teachers who lack the capability of teaching English. Whilst ideally English teachers in elementary schools should not rely merely on Hi, friends! 1, due to factors such as large classroom sizes and an insufficient number of competent English teachers, many English language lessons seem to heavily rely on it. Despite the heavy reliance on Hi, friends! 1, there has not been much research on
this textbook. Therefore, there is an urgency to improve and develop the current English textbook so that all English teachers can smoothly conduct English language lessons that place an importance on the students’ active participation. Since my study has only focused on the textbook itself, there is a need for more research on other aspects of *Hi, friends! 1*. That is, to fully understand the situation of *Hi, friends! 1*, there needs to be an investigation on such areas as how *Hi, friends! 1* is used in an actual English language lesson, the English teachers’ and students’ views on *Hi, friends! 1* and the overall benefits and the outcomes of the students who used *Hi, friends! 1*. Hopefully my findings and suggestions will contribute towards improving the current textbook in some way.
References:


Appendix

Table 1. Names and Ethnicity of the Characters in the Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Characters</th>
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<th>English First Grade 1&amp;2</th>
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<td>2. Jake</td>
<td>2. Eddie</td>
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<td>Names of Characters</td>
<td>5. Ueda Hikaru</td>
<td>5. Kelly</td>
<td>5. Alice</td>
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<td>Names of Characters</td>
<td>7. Yamoto Ken</td>
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<td>7. Miss Fang</td>
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<td>Names of Characters</td>
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<td>Names of Characters</td>
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<td>Names of Characters</td>
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Table 2: Stories that Appear in the Textbooks

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hi, Friends 1</th>
<th>Elementary School English 3</th>
<th>English First Grade 1&amp;2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean folktales:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Western Stories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Heaungbu and Nolbu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shim Chung Jeon</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. A Boy and a Wolf (Adaptation of A Boy who Cried Wolf)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Stories:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Peter Pan</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Three Little Pigs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Snow White</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The Jungle Book</td>
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<td>5. The Tortoise and the Hare</td>
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<td>6. The Ant and the Grasshopper</td>
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<td>7. Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland</td>
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<td>8. Beauty and the Beast</td>
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<td>9. The Adventure of Pinocchio</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Gulliver Travels</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Cinderella</td>
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Adaptation:
1. *The Seoul Mouse and the Country Mouse* (Adaptation of *The Country Mouse and the City Mouse*)

### Table 3: Foreign Countries mentioned in the Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>4. India: 2</td>
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<td>4. United States of America: 4</td>
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<td>5. Russia: 1</td>
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<td>5. Japan: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. China: 3</td>
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<td>6. Italy: 1</td>
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<td>7. South Korea: 4</td>
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<td>7. Turkey: 1</td>
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<td>8. United States of America: 3</td>
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<td>8. France: 1</td>
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<td>10. Australia: 2</td>
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<td>10. Thailand: 2</td>
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<td>11. Spain: 1</td>
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<td>11. Peru: 1</td>
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<td>12. Australia: 1</td>
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<td>13. Algeria: 1</td>
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### Table 4: Number of pair work and group work sections included in the textbooks

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pair work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of group work</td>
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