

Images of Northeast Asia (Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia) in North Korean English Textbooks

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Abstract

Previous research (Kim & Chol, 1999; Baik, 1995) on North Korean English textbooks has tended to focus on the negative portrayal of Western countries, especially the US. However, few studies have concentrated on how North Korea sees itself with respect to the East Asian community, and how its neighbors in East Asia are depicted, especially South Korea and Japan. Lee (2010) discusses the image of Non-North Koreans in Korean language (mother-tongue) textbooks; similarly, the present study focuses on the images of North Korea's closest neighbors in Northeast Asia (China, Russia, South Korea, and Japan) in a 1999-2002 series of 6 North Korean English textbooks. It was found that Russia is depicted as a former socialist country, and Japan as a former imperialist country. South Korea is not even recognized as a separate country, but as an area of Korea which is under siege by Americans, where the working class suffers greatly at the hand of capitalists. China appears only marginally as a country which formerly hosted Kim Il Sung. In short, the former three countries are presented not as close neighbors but rather as examples of poverty and desperation under capitalist systems and imperialist rule, serving to unite the North Korean people behind the benevolent, enlightened socialist state. China, on the other hand, is downplayed, perhaps because of the *Juche* spirit of independence.

1. Introduction

The overall goals of education can often be seen through textbooks. In the case of North Korea, there is very little opportunity to observe education firsthand, so

textbook analysis becomes even more important. Especially, textbook analysis can provide a window on what Mahboob (2012) calls “identity management”, which he defines as “any institutionalized or localized effort to shape or direct individual or group identities.” He describes the cover of a Maoist era English textbook in China, with a picture of people holding up the “red book” in a revolutionary stance, and an English textbook in Pakistan with a Christian poem in the context of Islam, forcing a full reinterpretation of the term “steeple”. These are examples of how identities are shaped through semiotics in textbooks. The present study analyzes a set of six English textbooks from North Korea which were published around the year 2000 for junior middle school students (ages around 10-15 years), with special focus on North Korean identity management with respect to its nearest neighbors: South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia.

Yoo (2002) calls the period from 1980-present the era of “human remodeling education” in North Korea, the meaning of which is summed up in the Socialist constitution, Article 9, “A country implements Socialist education and principles and fosters the next generation to be revolutionaries and fight for society and the people” (p.132). In North Korea, “the ultimate goal of education is to train students to become revolutionists and communists” (Kim & Chol, 1999, p.181). Several studies (Choi, 1996; Kim, 1998; Lee, 2006, 2010; Park, 1999; Yu, 1999) discuss how textbooks in North Korea focus on promoting the political agenda of the North Korean government. In this light, we would expect that most of the content of English textbooks would be centered around North Korea itself rather than any other country, and this is indeed the case in the textbooks of the present study.

Foreign language study makes up 7.5% of North Korean secondary school education (Yoo, 2002, p.134) with a total of 591/6742 hours per year (p.249). It also accounted for 7.5%, 9.0% and 8.8% (in 1983, 1986 and 1988 respectively) of North Korean textbook material (Yoo, 2002, p.254, 266). Although “foreign language” education does not necessarily refer to English, the English language can be assumed to be a must for college bound students, as “Political Ideology, English and Military Training are required of all college students regardless of their fields of study” (Yoo, 2002, p.133). Moreover, as English is now recognized as a *de facto* global language, it is impossible to avoid the introduction of the outside world.

Yoo (2002, p.243) shows the contents of North Korean (mother tongue) language textbooks according to theme. He labels 8% and 13% of the People’s school (1-4) and Senior-middle school (1-3) textbooks as dealing with “hatred of the U.S.,

Japan and S. Korea". However, he adds a quote on p.244 from Han (1999) that says:

Teachers used to tell us that there are many robbers, beggars and unemployed in South Korea, and that South Korean people are experiencing the harshness of hunger, so unification should be as fast as possible so that South Korean people can live comfortably under the leadership of our father, and I just used to believe it so. (Han, 1999, p.50)

This quote seems to intimate more pity than hatred, at least for South Koreans.

Kim & Chol (1999, cf. Table 2) analyzed the 2nd and 6th year English textbooks (*Yong-o 2* and 6) from 1990, and found that "the school education in North Korea has placed a primary importance on three elements: installation of the *Juche* idea, science/technology education and physical education" (p.181). In the 6th year book, 7 of the 13 lessons deal with *Juche* and patriotism, 4 with science and 2 with physical strength (p.187). These findings echo those of Yoo (2002), who says:

In the English textbook contents for the 6th grade, of the 13 chapters, the parts devoted purely to language account for only four, while the other nine chapters are composed of political ideology. (Yoo, 2002, p.134)

The discrepancies in the two accounts of the same textbook indicate that Yoo (2002) probably used different criteria for categorizing the non-political lessons. At any rate, the political lessons account for the majority in both sources.

Lee (2010) reviews the historical development of North Korean Education. According to him, the USSR provided North Korea with educational support for teachers and professionals after World War II. However, in the late 1950s, Kim Il Sung established the concept of *Juche* [self-reliance] to eliminate both Soviet and pro-China influence. By 1974, all books and literary works were screened and the ones damaging Kim's standing were removed by the Kim Il Sung's regime. In 1977, *Juche* ideology was promoted through education to foster communist intellectuals and produce students who were loyal to their leaders and dedicated to being communists. The ideology of *Juche* has several related concepts: *Urisik-sahoejuuri* [North Korean-style Socialism], *Minjok-jeiljuui* [The Superiority of the Korean Race], *Pulengisasang* [Red Flag Ideology], *Yuhun-jeongchi* [Governing North Korea according to the Deceased Kim Il Sung's Will], and *Kangseong-daegugron* [A Strong Economy and

Military] (Lee, 2010, p. 351). In addition to *Juche*, the present study finds the concept of *Minjok-jeiljuui* especially useful in the analysis of North Korea's treatment of South Korea.

2. The 1999-2002 *Yong-o* Series

Comparing Kim & Chol's 1999 analysis above of the 1990 *Yong-o* 6 textbook with the revised 2002 version, 12 years later, we see a quite different focus. First of all, the 13 lessons of the 1990 book have been expanded to 19 lessons in the new edition, which are divided into 9 basic and 10 supplementary readings. The reasons for such a division are unclear, but it is possible that the supplementary readings are meant to be taught to the country's elite; with the regular readings being regarded as sufficient for the masses. This difference is mirrored in all of the texts except the first, and the number of supplementary lessons rises gradually from 2 (2nd year) to 11 (5th year) (see Table 1, Fig. 1).

Table 2 compares the readings in the 1990 vs. 2002 *Yong-o* 6 (1990 data from Kim & Chol 1999). Six of the 19 readings in the revised version have the same title

Text	Year Pub	Main	Sup	Total
1	2001	19	0	19
2	2001	16	2	18
3	2002	17	6	23
4	2001	15	6	21
5	2002	16	11	27
6	1999	9	10	19

Table 1. Year of publication, number of main vs. supplementary lessons in *Yong-o* 1-6 (1999-2002)

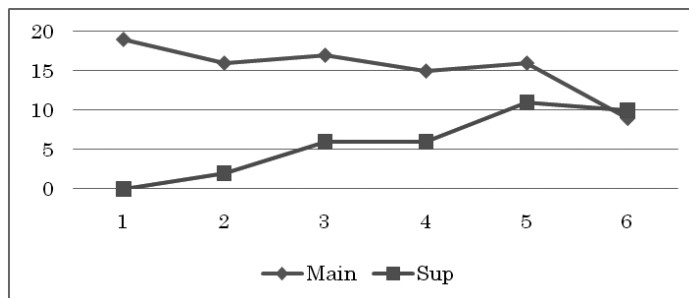


Fig. 1 Comparison of main vs. supplementary texts in *Yong-o* 1-6 (1999-2002)

as readings in the 1999 book, and it is assumed that they have the same or similar content. The focus of the 13 new articles, however, is found to be quite different from the ones they replaced—many of them are fables or stories from foreign countries. With these changes, the percentage of articles focusing on *Juche* and Patriotism declined from 54% to 42%, articles on Science shrunk from 31% to 21%, and those promoting physical strength went from 15% to 0%. On the other hand, the newer articles deal mainly with (anti-)capitalism (21%) or teach morals through fables (16%).

Kim & Chol (1999) do not discuss the sources of the 1990 textbook readings, but the (assumedly same) six that appear in the revised edition are all most likely to have been originally written inside North Korea. On the other hand, the new edition features stories based on foreign sources such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Jane Eyre, and two of the three fables can be traced back to Aesop. The third of the fables (The

2002 <i>Yong-o</i> contents	Theme	1990 version	Source
1. Our School	patriotism	1	nk
2. Let’s go together	patriotism	3	nk
3. The olympic games	patriotism	5	nk
4. The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing	Fable (Aesop)	new	foreign
5. At an Arithmetic Lesson	patriotism	new	nk
6. Pyongyang	patriotism	8	nk
7. Jane Eyre at School	anticapitalism	new	foreign
8. Hero Ri Su Bok	patriotism	new	nk
9. On the <i>Juche</i> idea	patriotism	13	nk
S1. Eliza Runs Away	anticapitalism	new	foreign
S2. Sambo’s Death	anticapitalism	new	foreign
S3. How to Make Things	science	new	nk
S4. The Birds, the Beasts, and the Bat	Fable (Aesop)	new	foreign
S5. The Bear Hill and the Hare Hill	Fable (original)	new	nk
S6. Tol Soe and Landlord Hwang	anticapitalism	new	nk
S7. I’ve Found It !	science	10	foreign
S8. Isaac Newton	science	new	foreign
S9. Crusoe Makes a Home	science	new	foreign
S10. Reminiscences of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung	patriotism	new	nk

Table 2. Comparison of contents of *Yong-o* 6, 1990→2002 (1990 data from Kim and Chol 1999)

Bear Hill and the Hare Hill) seems to be original.

This trend seems to be mirrored in the other higher level books of this series as well. In *Yong-o* 4 and 5, 6 of 8 fables and 10 of 11 fables are based on foreign sources, respectively. In this respect, we can see a tendency towards internationalization that seems to have been previously lacking. The lower levels, however, tend to concentrate more on introducing the language itself, using both functions and grammar. The first 5 characters introduced in *Yong-o* 1 (2001) are Korean (including Kim Jong Il on the first page), and it is only from Lesson 6 that we begin to see foreign names (Tom and Mary). Lesson 12 (“We live in Korea”, pp.158-175) is the first lesson that introduces foreign countries, but even this lesson begins with the Korean students themselves:

I live in Pyongyang.
 You live in Pyongyang.
 We live in Korea.
 We are Korean boys and girls.
 We are very happy. (p.159)

As discussed in Tsutsui & Yoneoka (2012), North Korea is promoted as a “happy” country where all students are devoted children of Kim Jong Il. They love their country, family and teachers, and demonstrate this by studying hard and helping one another. This serves to ground the students in a safe, all-Korean environment before they explore the world outside the Korean walls.

Fig. 2 shows that of the foreign countries mentioned in *Yong-o* 1-6, America and England receive the bulk of attention. However, the most frequently discussed East

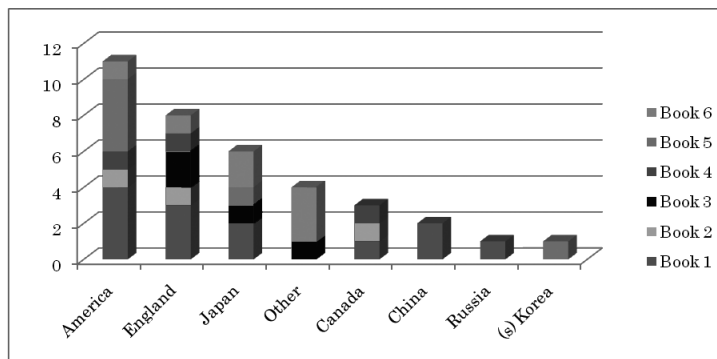


Fig. 2 Foreign countries mentioned/treated in *Yong-o* 1-6 (1999-2001 series)

Asian country is Japan, whereas North Korea's neighbors China and South Korea receive very little attention. Although China is mentioned 3 times, not one article in the series focuses topically on China. Russia is not mentioned by name (nor is South Korea for that matter, at least by its official name with the initial "s" capitalized), but these latter countries are both clearly the focus of one reading each.

Lesson 12 includes the first mention of a foreign language other than English, which is Russian. French is also mentioned, and we find two more English names (John and Jane). Japan is first mentioned on page 167 with the sentence "She is Japanese. She is from Japan." Students from (North) Korea, China, and Russia are similarly introduced. Pictures of students from these four countries can be found on page 170 as follows:

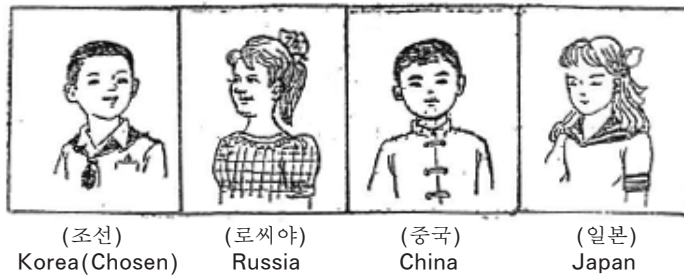


Fig. 3 Pictures of students from four foreign countries (*Yong-o 1*, p. 70)

Page 167 shows a map of East Asia, which is shown side by side with a map from Google maps showing the same general area (See Fig. 4). Comparing the two, the Korean peninsula seems relatively "anatomically correct", but its surroundings—Japan and the East China Sea—are somewhat narrow and misshapen. Both seem smaller than they are in reality, especially Hokkaido. There is no demarcation between North and South Korea, nor between China and Mongolia. On the other hand, a somewhat odd line seems to mark a border between Russia and China somewhere around Harbin on the North Korean map.

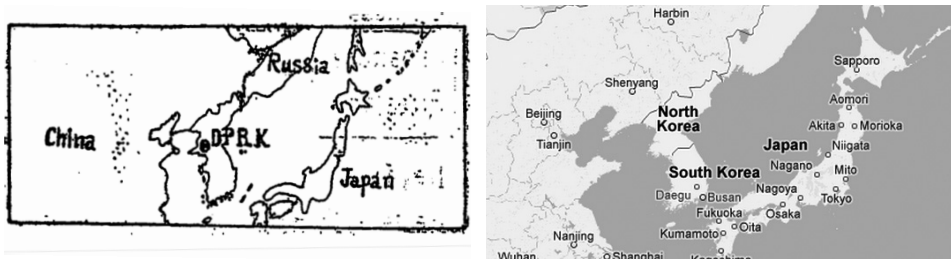


Fig. 4 Map of East Asia (*Yong-o 1*, p. 167) compared with Google map.

It is these four countries—Russia, China, South Korea and Japan, which will receive our special attention in this research. As Japan came up the most often of the four (2 readings in *Yong-o* 5, 1 reading in *Yong-o* 6), it will be discussed first. Of the other three countries, China is mentioned three times, but two of these are simple introductions in the first book, and the third is an incidental mention in the 6th year reading that focused on Japan. On the other hand, in *Yong-o* 5, “south” Korea is the subject of reading 16, and Russia (although it is not named as such) comes up as the subject of reading 14.

3. Japan: a Former Imperialist Enemy

As discussed above, Japan is one of the first countries mentioned in *Yong-o* 1, showing its relative importance in the North Korean worldview. In addition to the map on page 167 (Fig. 4), a map of Japan is shown in *Yong-o* 1 on page 219 (Fig. 5). Interestingly, although the map does not include Okinawa (perhaps this is still regarded as a US-occupied territory) the authors seem to have gone out of their way to include the disputed “northern territories” which are claimed by both Russia and Japan today. Again, Hokkaido is not drawn to scale, and a comparison with the Japan drawn on the East Asian map (center map) shows a very different-looking country indeed, although all of the major islands are present on both maps.

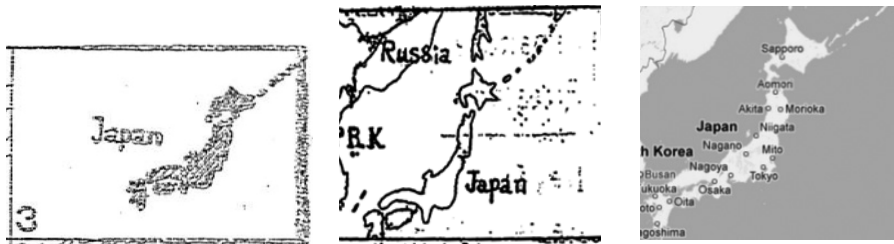


Fig. 5 Maps of Japan in *Yong-o* 1 (p. 167, 219) compared with Google map

Yoo (2002, p.286) discusses “the North’s extreme spirit of resistance against Japan” and the labeling of Japan as “the wicked enemy”. He quotes G.H. Park’s findings that 32% of all chapters in Korean language textbooks which deal with political themes “have a main theme of anti-Japanese sentiment”. On the other hand, in contrast to Park & Yoo’s findings, Japan’s treatment of Korea during the occupation period in the present series is discussed “only” three times in *Yong-o* 5 and 6, two of these in the supplementary lessons. Supplementary lesson 11, *Yong-o* 5 (p.133) is

a reading entitled “A Story about a Mother”. The story is about a Korean mother who worked in a textile mill during the Japanese imperialist rule under very hard conditions. The cruel Japanese foreman beats her and refuses to let her give milk to her baby at noon. The baby then dies of hunger, along with its grandmother who has been waiting for the mother to appear. The mother and other workers “rushed to the Japs and beat them down.” It ends with a moral exhorting the importance of labor revolution: “Now, she is the manager of this textile mill. She is a labor hero, you know.”

The second passage dealing with Japan is in Chapter 8 of *Yong-o* 6 (p.50), entitled “Hero Ri Su Bok”. Hero Ri Su Bok was born as a son of a poor peasant family. He spent his childhood under the Japanese imperialist rule. After the liberation the fatherly leader Generalissimo Kim Il Sung gave his family land and happiness. His parents became masters of land. He could learn at school to his heart’s content. The story intimates that Koreans under Japan could not own land or go to school, and the moral seems to stress the present joy and happiness of Korea today, where people have the freedom to do such things.

Finally, the last lesson of the entire series, English 6 supplementary lesson 10, features an excerpt from the Reminiscences of the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung “With the Century”. It tells the story of Kim Il Sung’s shock upon opening his new fifth year textbook *Mother-tongue Reader* and finding it to actually be a textbook of the Japanese language. Enraged, he takes a pocket-knife and changes the words *Mother-tongue* to *Japanese*. He goes on to explain the reasons for his actions:

The Japanese imperialists forced our people to use the Japanese language in order to make them the subjects of the Japanese emperor ...and prohibited the Korean people from using their own language. ...My urge to resist Japan’s assimilation policy encouraged me to act with such resolution. (*Yong-o* 6, p.90-91)

The reading ends with a rather unusual message for a foreign language textbook, but which is clearly in character in the context of the passage itself:

Whenever I saw children trying to learn Japanese, I told them that Koreans must speak Korean....children at Changdok School or often pestered me to teach them Chinese. But I would refuse, asking them why we should speak a foreign

language when we had our own excellent language. (*Yong-o* 6, p.91-92)

Here, again, we find that the unwavering message is one of revolution and *Juche*. The purpose of studying English, or any foreign language is not to understand or to communicate with people from other countries, but as a vehicle to promote the Korean language and culture; i.e. a “tool of the revolution”.

4. “south” Korea : Under the Thumb of the US Imperialists

The map of Korea found in *Yong-o* 1, page 230 (Fig. 6) clearly demonstrates the North Korean stance towards its southern neighbor. As can be seen, Korea is regarded as a single country with not so much as a demarcation line between north and south, nor is Seoul labeled even though it has three times the population of Pyongyang¹⁾. Other parts of the map are also clearly Korean-colored: the Sea of Japan or East Sea, East China Sea and Yellow Sea are labeled the East Korea Sea, the South Korea Sea and the West Korea Sea respectively. (It is noted the former labels, used in standard Western geography, are also controversial and disputed.)

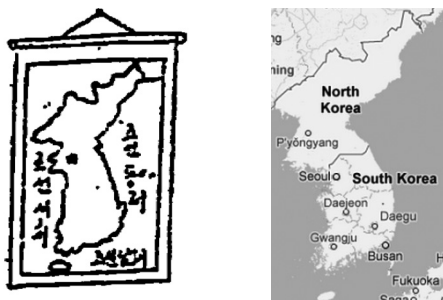


Fig. 6. Maps of Korea in *Yong-o* 1 (p. 230) compared with Google map

Yoo (2002, p.285) discusses Anti-South Korean Sentiment in the North Korean textbook as “censure of the politics, economics, and society of a liberal democracy” and focusing “on the greed and cruelty of landowners or capitalists in South Korea, and the barbarism of the U.S. or Japan.” Math textbooks include problems such as “How many children are there in South Korea who cannot go to school, and so lead

1) According to Wikipedia, the 2008 population census showed that Pyongyang has a population of 3,255,388. Seoul has a population of 10,464,051 (2010)

their life by polishing shoes and begging?” (p.285).

This attitude towards South Korea can best be explained in terms of *Minjok-jeiljuui* [The Superiority of the Korean Race], one of the five North Korean educational policies as explained by Lee (2010, p.351). The citizens of the south are regarded as brothers as they are fellow members of the Korean race, and therefore in need of “rescue” by the citizens of the more enlightened North. Lee (2006) puts it as follows:

North Korean agencies have actively conducted ideological propaganda towards the South Koreans, stating that Koreans must achieve autonomy and independence from America or other imperialists, and cooperate with each other. Kim Jung Il placed emphasis on the grand cooperation of anti-conservatives in the South and demolishing the ‘new Lights’ (conservatives) who often criticize the North Korean regime. By deploying ideological warfare towards the south, the leader of North Korea is attempting to overcome their internal crises. (Lee, 2006, p.406)

Because of this, “...the propaganda of North Korea ... tries to segregate South Koreans from Americans in order to gain ideological and sentimental support” (Lee, 2006, p.420).

Lee (ibid.) also discusses a story in *Kugo* [National Language] 2-1 which

portrays the idea that the reunification process should be initiated by North Korea. The text uses euphemism in line 3 “Friends in the South all may see, rejoice and dance seeing it”, as if South Koreans all support the reunification policy initiated by North Korea.

He adds that “the story implants in readers the ideological input that North Korea should initiate reunification and liberate South Korea from Americans” and that “this story is consistent to the propaganda of North Korea, which tries to segregate South Koreans from Americans in order to gain ideological and sentimental support. *Minjog-jeiljooui* discourse stresses the importance of the Korean race” (ibid., p.420)²⁾.

In keeping with the *Minjok-jeiljuui* policy, never do we find South Korea

2) *Minjog-jeiljooui* was the transliteration used in Lee 2006; Lee 2010 uses *Minjok-jeiljuui*.

mentioned as a separate country in any of the textbooks. “south” Korea is treated as part of North Korea from *Yong-o* 1, and is portrayed as being in a desperate situation due to US occupation in the *Yong-o* 5. The maps on pages 167 and 230 in *Yong-o* 1 (see Fig.6) show an undivided Korea, with not so much as even a line of demarcation. This pattern continues through all the books.

The only direct reading about “south” Korea comes in *Yong-o* 5, lesson 16, pp. 103-4 (the final regular lesson)³⁾. This lesson, entitled “A Poor Girl in Seoul”, deals with a 15-year-old fatherless girl named Nam Suk, whose father was killed by “the Yankees”, and who could not go to school because she had to support her family. She is run over by a “Yankee jeep” in a rich neighborhood, but is rescued by a worker who says “Damn the Yankees! The US imperialists are the sworn enemy of our people.” The story ends with the following sentences:

Such barbarous atrocity can often be found in the southern part of our country. We must struggle to drive out the Yankees and reunify the country. Only when we reunify the country, can we live happily under the warm care of the respected General Kim Jong Il. The day will surely come when the country is reunified and all the Korean people can live happily in the warm bosom of the great General (*Yong-o* 5, p.104).

The moral of the story, then, is multifaceted: it not only stresses the cruelty of the US, who is portrayed as rich, mechanical and heartless, but contrasts this with the kindness of the laborer, who stops to help the girl and sympathize with her, and who sincerely desires a revolutionary struggle to rescue the people “in the south of our country” from the clutches of the “barbarians”.

As a final reminder, which echoes this 5th grade lesson, there is a grammar question in *Yong-o* 6, p.41, as follows:

We must drive the Yankees () south Korea.

Note here the use of the derogatory term “Yankees”, and the small letter in south Korea—more examples of identity management.

3) If the supposition that the supplementary lessons are meant for higher achieving “elite” schools is correct, then the placement of this lesson means that it is considered required reading for all North Koreans.

5. Russia and China: (Ex-)Models of Socialism?

It is somewhat surprising, given the level of dependence of North Korea on China's aid and good will, that this huge neighbor receives relatively little treatment in the textbooks. The only mention of China, in addition to the general introduction given in *Yong-o* 1 as discussed above, comes in the final supplementary lesson of *Yong-o* 6 on Kim Il Sung's excerpt about Korea under colonial Japan, as discussed in Section 4. The end of this lesson mentions that Kim Il Sung studied in China, but its disparaging remarks on the Chinese language relay an undertone of disdain. This, however, is in accordance with the first and foremost policy of *Juche* or self-reliance. Perhaps it is for this reason that China receives so little attention in the texts. Another speculation is that the government may want to prevent the spread of defections across its borders, so it cannot allow China to be presented in a favorable light, nor can China be portrayed like South Korea, as an oppressed running dog of imperialist America.

Russia, however, is a different story. The language figures highly in *Yong-o* 1, hinting that Russian is still considered an important foreign language. The country, however, is never mentioned by name, but a reading from *Yong-o* 5, Lesson 14 ("At a Railroad Station") begins with "This happened in a former socialist country..." and introduces the character "Mr. Ivanov". Poor Mr. Ivanov is in a railroad station, and graciously accepts the offer to hold a woman's baby while she does a short errand. However, "...Mr. Ivanov waited with the baby in his arms for more than three hours till late evening. But she did not come back." A friend stops by and tells Mr. Ivanov that he is stuck with the child, as the woman is another of the poor wretches who cannot afford to bring up her children, and that a similar event had happened just the week before. The passage ends with this moral, "Such a thing can be often seen in the countries where socialism was turned over. As you see, if we defend socialism, we are to win; but if we forsake it, we are to die. Socialism is our soul and life." (*Yong-o* 5, P.90) Here, Russia is held up as an example of the problems that may arise under a socio-economic system that is not socialist. The effect is not to make students dislike the country, which is not even named, but to fear the possible effects of having a different type of system. With such "training", it is not hard to see why a people would not want to give up their way of life, even though they may be facing hardships of their own.

6. Conclusions

Tsutsui & Yoneoka (2012) note that the main role of foreign countries in North Korean English textbooks is to show a contrast with “happy, prosperous” Korea. The majority of references to the outside world are indirect: stories of (usually poor and pitiful) people with western-sounding names point to the horrors of a world without *Juche*. Although America remains the main target for comparison, it is not the only one; nor do the texts necessarily refer to the English speaking world. Each country in Northeast Asia seems to play a different role in the identity management of the North Korean psyche: Japan as a reminder of the dangers of past imperialism, South Korea as an example of the dangers of present imperialism, and Russia as an example of the importance of upholding socialism.

Only with respect to China is the rhetoric silenced, perhaps showing that it is China that worries the North Koreans the most. Extending the North Korean rhetoric, we may wonder why China is not held up as a paragon of socialist society. There are at least two reasons for this: (1) China’s success story is based on a two-system economy that has clearly become capitalist in many ways, and (2) more North Koreans may become likely to defect to China, the only neighbor besides South Korea with which it shares a common border, if they are convinced that life is better there. On the other hand, if China is criticized for its *de facto* economic defection from communism, as was Russia, North Korea runs the risk of losing their staunchest friend and ally. This may be a case of “if you can’t say something good about someone, say nothing at all.”

Yoo mentions the use of “provocative and coarse” language towards Japan and the US (2002, p.285), and we see both in the above readings in the use of “Japs” and “Yankees.” It is difficult to determine, however, whether these are actually understood as “hate terms” in the mind of the North Korean student, or whether they are simply considered abbreviated synonyms for Japanese and Americans. Lee, discussing the readings in Korean language textbooks, states:

(t)here are many silences and absences in these narratives. North Korean literacy textbook narratives do not deal with the diverse voices and social realities of new North Korea; the poor, rural people; the crime; social problems like the shortage of food, electricity and basic daily supplies; North Korean defectors in neighbouring countries like China and South Korea; the problems of

abduction of South Koreans and Japanese. (Lee, 2006, p.429-30)

There is no doubt to the truth of these observations—we find none of these discussed in the English textbooks either. However, we may ask how many other countries discuss their own social problems in primary and secondary school. These are issues which are usually deferred to late high school and university courses, and presented within a global context. On the other hand, in democratic countries, social problems and their consequences are normal fare for nightly news, documentaries, and commentaries, and information is easily accessible via Internet. In North Korea, we cannot assume the same to be true.

Finally, Lee argues that “if North Korea really wants to prepare for and achieve reunification, they must change textbooks to meet the needs of all Koreans ...to prepare for the impending reunification and to better understand each other.” (Lee, 2006, p.431) This argument is valid not only with respect to South Korea. A reunification with South Korea, at least if it is a peaceful one, is bound to also mean a reunification and reintegration with the rest of the world. It can only be detrimental to future global citizens to create an image of a scary outside world as North Korea does in its English textbooks. North Koreans will certainly find many ready to support them among their East Asian neighbors, if only they are taught to trust rather than fear them.

It has already been more than 10 years since the textbook series covered in the present study was written. Moreover, the change of Kim Jong Il’s regime to his son Kim Jong Un in December 2011 has just begun, and changes seem to be in store. In July 2012, Kim Jong Un made world headlines with his introduction of Disney characters on the North Korean stage. According to an article in *The Week* which analyzes the move, there are four possible reasons, including differentiating Kim Jong Un from his father, beginning actual reform, and catching up with the rest of the world. Moreover, *The Korea Times* (Lee, 12/28/2011, online) reports on a new English textbook being published in 2012, which will not criticize or use negative terms in their descriptions of the US or Japan, according to its reviewer Stewart Lone, professor and teacher at two North Korean elite middle schools. The same article hints that the country may soon open up to the Internet. These developments provide hope for a new era of peace and friendship.

However, the attitudes of the current generation towards its neighbors have already been shaped by the textbooks presented in this research. It will be highly

interesting to compare these results with the identity management used in the new 2012 textbook when it becomes available.

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