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## Impact of Textbooks on L2 Beginners

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### Abstract

Most college students of foreign languages other than English are beginners of the language they are learning. Some of them take only a two-credit course during their college years. Students often select a two-credit second language course out of a momentary motive. However, teachers have to consider the priorities of such a language course while selecting the textbook in terms of a balance between what students want to learn and what they have to learn from this course, and the efficient way of learning a foreign language concerning the characteristics of language learning of adults. The importance of choosing an appropriate textbook for an elective language course at the elementary level is that, by doing so, it increases the possibility of making this two-credit language course more interesting, sufficient, and sustainable. In searching such a textbook, the author has used three types of textbook for Introductory Chinese that focus on conversation, grammar, and listening respectively. Based on the former research on the same course using a conversational textbook and a grammar-focused textbook in 2015, this project, from a comparative perspective, endeavors to find out whether a listening textbook better fulfills the priorities of an elective Chinese course for beginners in terms of the preferences of students in learning various language skills, the efficiency of language learning, and the learning styles of adult students.

**Keywords:** Priority, Preference, Efficiency

### Introduction

Most textbooks of L2 English for college students have been composed in a series either in a comprehensive version or based on different language skills. Since students have learned English for six years in middle and high schools, English courses at college are not at the elementary level as most courses of other foreign languages. The textbook selection for English elective courses is therefore more flexible and does not relate to the critical issues this article discusses. However, most students of foreign languages other than English are beginners of that language. In addition, many of them take only one two-credit course during their college years. Choosing an appropriate language textbook for elective students at the elementary level is a difficult decision involving the preferences of students in learning various language skills, the efficiency of language learning, and learning styles of adult students.

Chinese textbooks in a comprehensive version are usually in a large volume that is more suitable for a course under the name of “Comprehensive Chinese” for Chinese majors and minors, or as an elective

course for at least four to five credits. Using such a comprehensive textbook, a two-credit elective course can only complete a small percentage of the content the book covers. Each textbook is composed systematically with a clear goal. For instance, a comprehensive textbook for Introductory Chinese covers the contents for language training at the elementary level in all areas including phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, listening, conversation, reading, and writing. After finishing this textbook, students are ready for learning Chinese at the intermediate level. Thus, the textbook for a two-credit elective course has to focus on only one or two areas while slightly cover other areas for the purposes of learning efficiency and systematic understanding.

The discussions on Chinese textbooks for adult beginners suggest to teach Japanese adults *Formula + Vocabulary* in such a course (Zhu, 2011, & Lincoln, 2013). *Formula* indicates grammar rules and sentence patterns. Based on the characteristics of adult foreign language learning in general and Japanese adults' learning Chinese in particular, *Chinese for All Purposes* (Zhu, 2008) and *Basic Sentence Patterns of Elementary Chinese* (Zhu, 2013) were compiled in the structure of "Formula + Vocabulary", that introduce a simple but complete grammar system of the Chinese language and a substantial volume of practical and age-appropriate vocabulary. A survey was conducted among two groups of students who took Introductory Chinese, one group using this grammar-focused textbook (Zhu, 2013) and another group using a conversation-focused textbook (相原茂; 陳淑梅 & 飯田敦子, 2011) (Survey 1 in January 2013, Lincoln, 2015). One response that stands out in this survey was that two thirds of these two groups of students express their similar preference of learning the conversational skill to other skills including grammar, listening, reading, and writing<sup>1</sup>. However, the priorities of their self-learning outside classroom were in the order of writing, reading, grammar, conversation, and listening, and only 15% and 14% of them spent their own time on practicing conversational and listening skills respectively. The reasons behind this phenomenon can be many. For instance, students lack language partners outside classrooms, conversations learned from the textbook are not practical to be used in students' daily life, students' oral level is not high enough to conduct conversation on their own confidently, etc. In 2015, a listening textbook with daily conversations as its texts was used for Introductory Chinese (毛悦, 2011). The purposes for using this textbook are to focus the learning of this course on listening and conversation under the consideration of students' learning preference and listening as an indispensable input of conversational proficiency. All texts of this textbook are in the forms of Chinese daily conversation on 15 themes such as Names and Greetings, Shopping, Direction and Location, Weather and Clothes, etc. An audio CD with the recordings of the whole textbook is attached. A survey was conducted among students who have used this textbook in 2015 to find out whether using a listening textbook promotes students' learning what they want to learn, whether it brings an efficient way of language learning, and whether it has an impact on the priorities of language learning among elective Chinese beginners, (Survey 2, 2015, Attachments).

### Survey of the Students Using a Listening Textbook

#### Student Group

The survey was conducted at the last class among students who took the elective Introductory Chinese course for two credits in January 2016. Among 60 participants, 76% of them are male students, and 24% females. 68% of them are students with commerce majors, and 32% communication major. Students are at different college years, and 53% of them are freshmen. In conclusion, the three characteristics of the student group of this survey are more male, commerce majored, and 1<sup>st</sup> year students.

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<sup>1</sup> 66.5% of students who used a conversation-focused textbook and 67% of students who used a grammar-focused textbook prefer to learn the skill of conversation (Survey 1, 2013).

### Survey Questions

1. Chinese language skill you want to learn the most;
2. The most efficient way to learn a foreign language: What is the starting point to learn a language skill;
3. Appropriateness of the Listening Textbook for Introductory Chinese;
4. Language skills learned from this textbook;
5. The easiest Chinese language skill to learn;
6. Time of self-learning outside classroom;
7. Area of self-learning outside classroom;
8. Time spent on listening to the recording of the textbook;
9. Similarities between the conversations in the textbook and the Japanese daily conversations;
10. Advantages in using the Listening textbook & PC@ll system for introductory Chinese;
11. Disadvantages in using the Listening textbook & PC@ll system for introductory Chinese (Attachments 1 & 2).

For questions 1 to 9, there are three to five items for students to choose from, of which the following statistics will be presented in detail. Questions 10 and 11 are open-end questions.

### Statistics and Interpretations

#### 1. Feedback on the Listening Textbook

Answers to questions 3 and 9 are students' feedback on the Listening textbook used in 2015. This textbook is composed and published by a top university in China for teaching Chinese to foreigners. It is a threshold of L2 Chinese Listening textbook for beginners or those who have mastered about 200 Chinese vocabulary. As most textbooks for Introductory Chinese, this textbook starts with three sessions of phonetic training in initials, finals, and tones with a large amount of listening exercises that lay a foundation in pronunciation, listening, and conversation. It comes with a CD that contains audio files for the entire book for students to review and self-learn. The textbook is "for short-term intensive training programs for foreigners" (毛悦, 2011), and it requires a 5–6 credit course to complete the whole book. However, since the textbook is composed according to the task-oriented methodology of L2 acquisition, each lesson has its relative independence on other 14 lessons. The two-credit elective Introductory Chinese in this research covers the first three sessions of phonetics plus lessons 1 to 4 with topics of names and greetings, numbers and personal relations, time and date, and shopping. The dialogues and conversations are all practical speaking of daily life Chinese. But what are the opinions of the Japanese learners in this research regarding this textbook?

##### 1.1. Appropriateness of the Listening Textbook (Question 3)

There are three choices of answers to question 3: Appropriate and Easy, Appropriate but Difficult, and Inappropriate and Difficult. 70% of students consider the textbook appropriate but difficult, and the answers to the other two items are 15% each. In other word, 85% of students consider the textbook appropriate, and 15% inappropriate. But there are also 85% of them consider the textbook difficult, and only 15% easy.

##### 1.2. Similarities between Oral Discourses in Textbook and Japanese Daily Conversations (Question 9)

As mentioned above, the dialogues and conversations in this textbook are all practical speaking of daily life Chinese. Besides the phonetic training, the course only covers four lessons on topics of names and greeting, numbers and personal relations, time and date, and shopping respectively. From a Chinese point of view, the course teacher thinks that the ways of Japanese and Chinese in telling time and date are identical, and the phrases used in greeting and personal relations are also very similar. There are some differences in other areas such as numbers and currencies that are not difficult for adult learners to understand. But students' feedbacks from a Japanese point of view are as follows: 53% of them think there are only around

50% similarities between the oral discourses in the textbook and Japanese daily conversations; 35% of them feel 70% & above similarities between the two; and 12% of them think the similarities are less than 30%.

### 2. Concerning Various Language Skills

Five items for students to choose from for questions 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 are identical. They are all concerning various language skills, and Chart 1 is the summary of students' answers to these questions.

	Grammar	Listening	Conversation	Reading	Writing
Q1. The Chinese Language Skill I Want to Learn the Most	3%	14.7%	61.7%	3%	17.6%
Q2. The Most Efficient Way to Learn a FL Should Start With	14.7%	23.5%	26.5%	35.3%	0%
Q4. Language Skills Learnt from the Listening Textbook	10%	25.4%	21%	25.4%	18.3%
Q5. The Easiest Chinese Language Skill to Learn	3%	14.7%	11.7%	35%	35%
Q7. Area of Self-Learning Outside Classroom	0%	21.4%	12%	26%	40.5%
In Total (500%)	30.7%	99.7%	132.9%	124.7%	111.4%

Chart 1

Chart 1 shows that conversational skill is the priority of the majority students in terms of what they want to learn while it is also the area beside grammar that the least students spent time on for their self-learning outside classroom. Although students are using a listening textbook with a CD, more students focus their self-learning on writing (40.5%) and reading (26%) than on listening (21.4%). The statistics above shows a correlation between students' opinion on the easiest language skill to learn (70% in total for writing and reading with 35% for each) and the focuses of self-learning (66.5% in total with 40.5% for writing and 26% for reading). There is a visible reverse correlation between students' opinion on which language skill to start as the most efficient way to learn a foreign language (0% for writing) and students' focus of self-learning (40.5% for writing).

### 3. Time of Self-learning Outside Classroom

Question 6 is exploring the time of self-learning outside classroom in various areas whereas question 8 is asking about the time of self-learning outside classroom in listening to the CD of the textbook.

	Q6. Self-Learning in Various Areas	Q8. Self-Learning in Listening
0 Minute	12%	44%
0~15 Minutes	38%	35%
Around 30 Minutes	26%	15%
30~60 Minutes	12%	6%
More than 1 Hour	12%	0%

Chart 2

Chart 2 above shows an unusual phenomenon that 44% of students spent no time on listening to the oral materials of the texts in the CD attached to the textbook. Another 35% of them spent less than 15 minutes weekly on listening to the CD. Among 24% of students who spent more than half an hour learning outside classroom, only 6% of them spent 30–60 minutes on listening. This phenomenon brings some issues worth our attention and discussion, and we may find some answers in students' opinion to this course with a listening textbook and the PC@LL system.

#### 4. Opinion about Using Listening Textbook and PC@LL System

Questions 10 and 11 are open questions asking students' opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of using a listening textbook and the PC@LL system for the course. Every student is required to answer these two questions. The following two sections summarize the most relevant points from students' answers.

##### 4.1. Advantages

There are a few categories of advantages that relate to learning the listening skill and using the PC@LL system including recording of the texts on the CD.

- 1) Students can listen many times to clear and accurate sound recording.
- 2) It is helpful for self-learning in terms of understanding the content of the textbook, reviewing what they have learned, and doing the homework in listening and conversation.
- 3) Students get used to listening to authentic Chinese, and improve their listening skill.
- 4) The textbook has many conversational exercises with audio files.

##### 4.2. Disadvantages

There are mainly two disadvantages according to this group of students. Although many students think the content of the textbook itself is easy, they feel difficult to understand while listening due to the native level of all the materials and the speed of the recording. The other disadvantage is that of the PC@LL system. Some students feel difficult to use the system, and some others feel it troublesome to start and use the system.

In conclusion, the main points in the statistics of the survey done in January 2016 are as follows. First, the vast majority of students consider listening textbook difficult. It could also mean that students consider learning Chinese through listening difficult other than the textbook itself based on their answers to questions 10 and 11. Second, although the textbook consists of oral discourses and daily conversations in authentic Chinese, 53% of the students think that the formalities between the oral content of the textbook and Japanese daily conversations have only a half of the affinity. Third, although students are using a listening textbook, their top two focuses of self-learning are writing and reading, and 44% of them spent no time on listening outside classroom. Fourth, the content of the listening textbook is not particularly difficult to students in addition to the convenient self-learning accesses to the CD and the PC@LL system. But it is

difficult for them to understand what they are listening to on their own.

### Comparative Analysis

The survey above was done among students of the Introductory Chinese course that used a listening textbook. In addition to this listening textbook, the author has also used two other types of elementary-level textbooks for this two-credit elective course of Introductory Chinese. One of them focuses on conversation, and the other targets the grammar and sentence patterns of elementary Chinese. Surveys were conducted to find factors concerning and correlating students' motivation of learning the language (Lincoln, 2015). The comparative analysis here is based on the statistics of surveys among three groups of students of Introductory Chinese who have used different textbooks focusing on conversation, grammar, and listening respectively. The author is trying to find the answers to the following questions or is wondering whether there are any answers to these questions. Does the category of the textbook have an impact on beginners' language learning? What are the priorities of elective Chinese course for beginners? Which language skill should the most efficient way of learning foreign language start with?

#### 1. Chinese Language Skill I Want to Learn the Most:

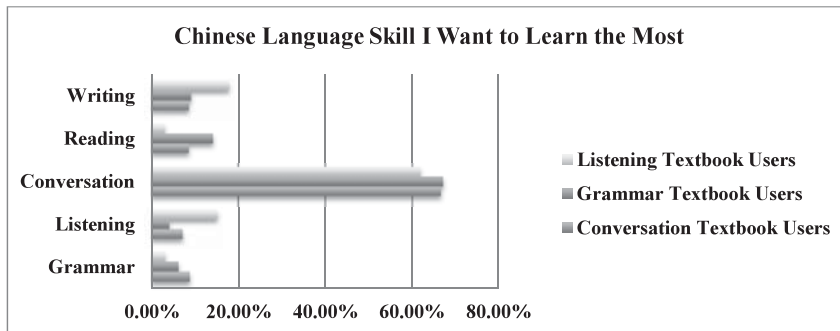


Chart 3

Nearly two thirds of students in each of the three groups want to learn the conversational skill the most. The category of the textbook does not seem to have an impact on which language skill students want to learn the most. However, the skill of autonomous conversation is not cultivated only through memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary or reciting the conversational discourse in the textbook. The premise of mastery in an autonomous conversational skill is listening comprehension. Without listening comprehension, it is impossible to conduct conversations on-site or off-the-cuff. There are more users of the listening textbook who connect writing more than listening to conversation. However, more of them connect listening to conversation than the students in the other two groups. The percentages of students who chose listening as the priority of their language learning are 14.7% of listening textbook users, 7% of conversation textbook, and 4% of grammar textbook, which shows an impact of textbooks on the priorities of students' language learning.

## 2. The Easiest Chinese Language Skill to Learn:

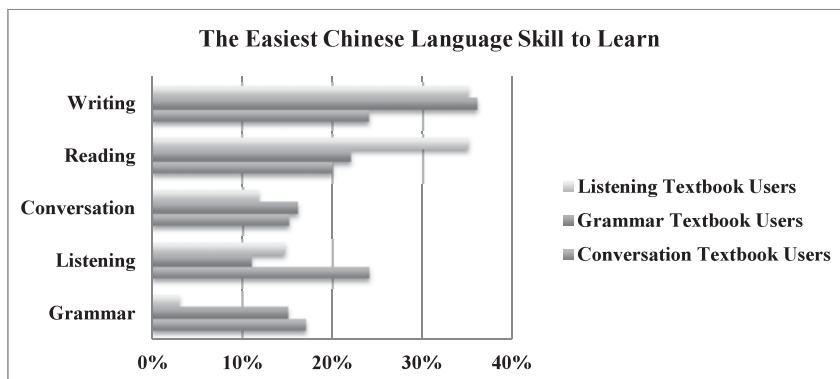


Chart 4

In general, students who participated in the surveys consider writing and reading the language skills that are easy to learn no matter which type of textbooks they use. This is due to a positive transfer from Japanese Kanji to Chinese character. “Before learning Chinese, Japanese students have already known or were familiar with 81% of HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test) level one and two characters, or 74% of the first three levels of HSK characters.” “Among 2905 basic HSK characters, 1125 of them have the same writing and the same or similar meanings as the corresponding Japanese Kanji, and 792 of them are different in writing but similar in meaning” (Lincoln, 2009). There are three visible variations concerning Chart 4, and the characteristics of the textbook are an important perspective to interpret these variations.

- 1) There are more students of the listening textbook than those in the other two groups who consider writing and reading skills easy to learn (70% VS 58% and 44%). The possible reasons for fewer students of the listening textbook who consider grammar, conversation, and listening easier than reading and writing are: the textbook they used has no Japanese explanation to the grammar rules; in using the listening textbook, each class covers three conversations in addition to many dialogues while the course with the conversation textbook has only one conversation for each lesson; and the listening discourses are more difficult than the content in the other two types of textbooks in terms of their content, volume, and the speed of recording.
- 2) There are more students of the conversation textbook than the other two groups who consider the listening skill easy to learn (24% VS 14.7% and 11%). As mentioned above, the text of each lesson in the conversation textbook is very short with only 6–8 sentences, whereas the listening materials that each class of the listening textbook has to cover are much more in quality and quantity.
- 3) There are much fewer students of the listening textbook than the other two groups who consider grammar rules easy to learn (3% VS 15% and 17%). The grammar points in the listening textbook are not systematic and complete. It only covers those appeared in conversational texts, and misses some of the basic grammar points. In addition, it does not have the Japanese explanation to those grammar rules.

### 3. Area of Self-Learning Outside Classroom:

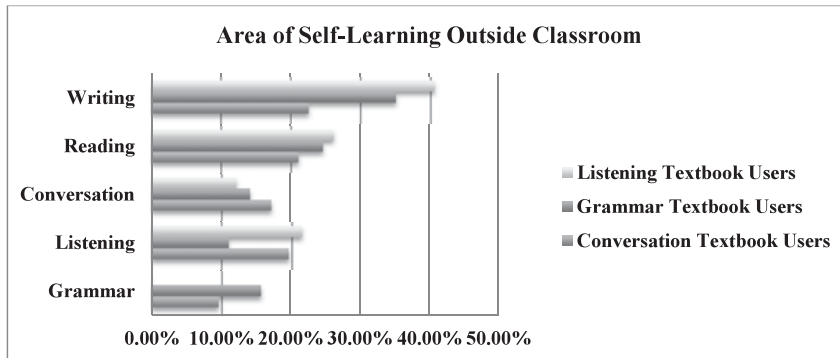


Chart 5

Chart 5 shows a positive correlation between the types of the textbooks and the areas of self-learning outside classroom. For instance, 17% of the conversation textbook users VS 14% and 12% of the users of the other two types of textbooks who practiced conversations on their own; 15.5% of the grammar textbook users VS 9.5% and 0% of the students of the other two groups who studied grammar outside classroom; and 21.4% of the listening textbook users VS 19.5% of the conversation textbook users and 11% of the grammar textbook users who focused on listening for their self-learning. Nevertheless, more students in each of the three groups studied in areas of writing and reading than the focuses of their textbooks such as conversation, grammar, and listening.

### 4. Time of Self-Learning Outside Classroom:

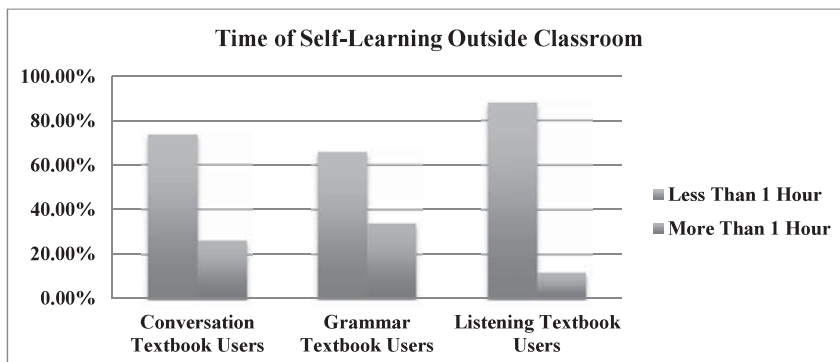


Chart 6

The items in answering this question are different in surveys. Four items in the survey among students who took Introductory Chinese with a grammar focused textbook and a conversational textbook in 2013 are: less than 1 hour, 1~3 hours, 3~5 hours, and more than 5 hours. There are 2% of students who spent more than 5 hours studying Chinese weekly, another 2% between 3~5 hours, and 27% between 1~3 hours. Among the 69% of students who spent less than 1 hour, there is a wide range between 0~60 minutes that the survey did not detail. Five items in this survey are: 0 minute, 0~15 minutes, around 30 minutes, between 30~60 minutes, and more than one hour. As Chart 2 above shows, among 88% of students



who spent less than 1 hour, 12% of them spent between 30~60 minutes, 26% around 30 minutes, 38% less than 15 minutes, and 12% 0 minute. The conclusion from two surveys is that students with a listening textbook spent much less time on self-learning outside classroom than their counterparts with a grammar textbook or a conversational textbook. The listening textbook has a CD with all audio files of the textbook that is convenient for self-learning while the grammar textbook does not have a CD but the textbook itself for self-learning.

#### 5. Students' Opinion on the Difficulty of the Course/Textbook:

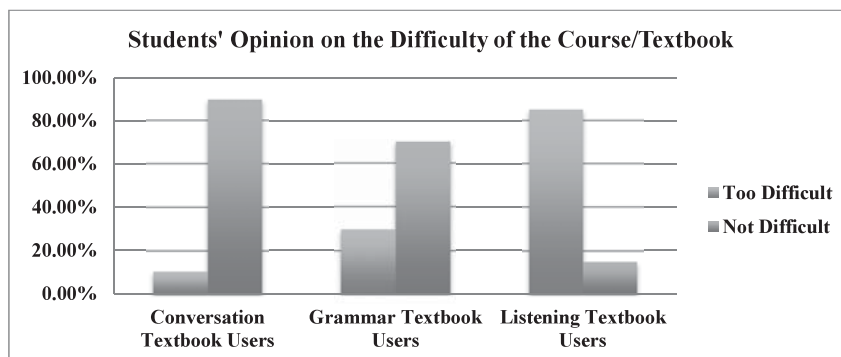


Chart 7

The three textbooks listed above that are used for the same course of Introductory Chinese are all entry-level textbooks starting from phonetics and covering basic vocabularies and grammar points. The pace of the course and the basic teaching style are identical since the same teacher taught the course although she has used three types of textbooks. But students' feedback on the difficulty of the course with respective textbooks is very different. While near 90% of conversation textbook users consider the course and textbook easy 85% of listening textbook users consider the course and textbook difficult. Although the grammar textbook covers more basic words and grammar points, only 30% of its users feel the course and the textbook difficult.

#### 6. Summary of Comparison:

- 6.1. There are around two thirds of students from each group who want to learn the conversational skill the most.
- 6.2. Writing skill is generally considered easy to learn among students of three groups.
- 6.3. Writing is the top area of self-learning outside classroom among students of three groups.
- 6.4. Students with the listening textbook spent the least time on self-learning while students with the grammar textbook the most.
- 6.5. There is an opposite opinion on the difficulty of the course and its textbook between students of listening textbook and students of conversation textbook and grammar textbook.

### Discussion

There are three questions raised from the statistical data and the comparison of surveys among student groups of Introductory Chinese who have used textbooks focused on conversation, grammar, and listening respectively. Two thirds of students from three groups expressed their desire to learn the conversational

skill, but why did they focus their self-learning on writing? Three textbooks are different in the targeting language skills but at the same level of difficulty, so why are there vast majority of listening textbook users who considered the textbook and the course too difficult whereas the reactions of the conversation textbook and grammar textbook users to the same issue are exactly the opposite? There are 85% of listening textbook users who considered the textbook and course difficult, but why did they spend the least time on self-learning, and 44% of them spend no time on listening outside classroom?

### **Priorities of Language Learning**

Priorities of language learning can be understood from perspectives of students' preferences in learning various language skills, the focus of students' self-learning, an efficient way of language learning, and a balance between what students want to learn and what they have to learn from this course.

The conversational skill is what the two thirds of students in this research who want to learn the most no matter whichever textbook students use. However, writing is their first priority of self-learning, and reading as the second priority (Chart 5). First, more students of this research felt writing easier to learn than other skills (Chart 4). Similarity between Chinese characters and Japanese Kanji and students' familiarity with the writing skill and meaning of characters (Lincoln, 2009) made students more ready to practice writing on their own. However, the "writing skill" that students understood is more of character writing than that of sentence writing. In terms of writing Chinese in sentences, Japanese students make no fewer mistakes especially in word order. The morphological root of word order problems of Japanese students is a result of the difference between an isolating language and an agglutinative language. In Chinese, almost every word consists of a single morpheme, whereas Japanese is an agglutinative language that relies on bound morphemes to express the meaning of the sentence (Lincoln, 2004). Second, there is an unbalanced development among Japanese students in learning Chinese. In addition to character writing skill, Japanese learners are very strong in reading comprehension due to the positive transfer in meanings of Chinese characters. They usually pay much attention to reading but not to oral and audio practices (Hu & He, 1984). Third, Japanese students are used to learning quietly (Liang, 1994). Writing and reading are what they can learn individually and conveniently. More importantly, they feel the accomplishment when they can write the characters and guess the meaning of words and sentences even at the very beginning. Fourth, "except in the area of pronunciation, adults were far superior second language learners than children" (Graceffo, 2010). Due to the different stages of physical and cognitive development that children and adults are at, there are certain linguistic elements that children learn faster than adults. There are also certain linguistic elements that adults learn faster than children, based on arguments such as: adults can study on their own, discipline, motivation, and focus (Graceffo, 2010; Lincoln, 2013).

### **Effect of Language Input Through Different Channels**

Why are there drastic variations in students' views on the difficulties of the same level course taught by the same teacher with different textbooks focusing on conversation, grammar, and listening respectively? First, although the three textbooks belong to the same category of entry-level textbook, their difficulties of information volume in terms of the quality and quantity of language input are different. For instance, the conversation-focused textbook (相原茂; 陳淑梅 & 飯田敦子, 2011) covers 300 basic words and 50 grammar points. It has 16 lessons in total with a conversation of 6~8 sentences as the texts from lesson 1 to lesson 8, and 8~10 sentences in the texts from lesson 9 to lesson 16. This textbook needs a four-credit course to complete. All the texts in the first half of the textbook that the course of Introductory Chinese at NUCB covers have only 6~8 sentences. The grammar-focused textbook (Zhu, 2008, 2013) covers 653 basic words and around 90% of grammar points of elementary Chinese with 136 samples of basic sentence patterns and 108 dialogues composed of these basic sentence patterns. Although a two-credit course of In-

Introductory Chinese can also only cover half of this grammar textbook as the conversation-focused textbook mentioned above, it covers around the same amount of dialogues in addition to as twice as much of the basic words, grammar points, and basic sentences as the conversation textbook. The listening-focused textbook (毛悦, 2011) is an entry-level textbook for a six-credit course. It covers three sessions of phonetics and 15 lessons with sufficient listening exercises on pronunciation, listening, and conversation. In addition to basic words, grammar points, and the warming-up exercises, each lesson includes six texts of Chinese daily conversations, which are more difficult in terms of its variety and length. In conclusion, three types of textbooks at the elementary level used for the course of Introductory Chinese are at the different difficulty levels to students, considering the volumes of new words, grammar points, and the contents in three textbooks vary, not to mention that the channels of language input are also different.

Second, students' views on the difficulties of the textbook they are using are possibly related to the difficulties of learning various language skills, of which there could be many reasons in terms of the priorities of language learning, students' native language, the learning habits of Japanese learners, etc. For instance, writing and reading are easier to learn, suitable for self-learning, and match the learning habit of Japanese learners. Chinese input in visual shapes of characters has an instant effect on Japanese beginners whereas Chinese pronunciations or audio input do not make any sense to them. In order to understand Chinese words, sentences, and dialogues, students have to remember the pronunciations of individual words and understand basic sentence patterns in addition to the mastery of Chinese phonetics. Memory plays an important role in language learning. Students can memorize words through practicing writing characters, and memorize sentences by putting words in patterns. But listening comprehension is based on both memorizing the pronunciation and quick connection between sound and its meaning. It is easy to listen and understand individual words. But while listening to sentences, our memory can only remember 3-5 words at a time (漏屋, 2011). Without an accumulation of vocabulary, it is impossible for language beginners to reach the listening comprehension of even those simple sentences.

Third, the effect of language input relates to the learning styles of students. Learning styles refer to "the variations in your ability to accumulate as well as assimilate information," and most experts agree that there are three basic learning styles" of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic ones (Walsh, 2011; Pritchard, 2014). Approximately 65% of people are visual learners, 30% of the population consists of auditory learners, and only 5% of the learners are kinesthetic (Ldpride.net, 2008). To visual learners, language input in vision such as individual characters or sentences that consist of characters in reading and writing is much easier than that in listening. So Japanese visual learners can study Chinese characters and sentences more efficiently. And they intend to focus their self-learning more on reading and writing.

Fourth, there are many textbooks of Introductory Chinese in Japan. But most of them are not listening but conversation focused, consisting of six to eight sentences in a dialogue as the text of each lesson (Zhu, 2011). The listening textbook (毛悦, 2011) the author used is an excellent listening textbook for a course of five credits in which students meet everyday, or for three two-credit courses. But in the first two-credit course, or Introductory Chinese of this research, it takes about one-quarter time of the course to go through the three sessions of phonetics including many listening drills. Containing many words, however, these listening drills focus not on learners' understanding of meaning but their accurate pronunciation. While listening to the texts in dialogues or conversations, words are still new to learners. The fact that beginners hardly know the grammar points and sentence patterns makes the learning through listening even more difficult.

### **Efficiency of Self-learning**

As was mentioned above, in contrast to 30% of students with the grammar textbook and 10.5% of students using the conversational textbook, 85% of students with the listening textbook consider the course

difficult (Chart 7), yet they spent less time on self-learning than students in other two groups (Chart 6). Moreover, 44% of them spent 0 minute on listening (Chart 2). Why?

First, to Japanese learners, listening is more difficult for self-learning than other language skills partly because of the similar shapes but the different pronunciation between Japanese Kanjis and Chinese characters. Excluding those repeated pronunciations in Japanese phonetic chart of fifty figures, there are only over 30 phonetic Japanese pronunciations whereas there are 47 vowels and consonants in Chinese. To Japanese beginners of Chinese language, self-learning in listening is much more difficult than that in writing. Second, the visual sense plays a more important role than the aural sense in information processing as the research data indicates (Fan, 2008). 83% of our knowledge is gained visually but only 11% aurally; visually humans collect 85% of their memory information, aurally 11%, and tactilely 3 or 4%; information received by seeing per unit of time is twice as much as that by listening, and information received through audio-visual coordination is ten times as much as that received through audition only (Fan, 2008; Lincoln, 2011). To Japanese beginners of the Chinese language, self-learning in listening accomplishes much less than they do in writing. Third, it is more difficult to process audio information than visual one. In reading sentences consisting of more than four words, a person can understand the meaning of the sentence based on the meaning of the words and the sentence pattern. But in listening, ordinary people can only remember three words from listening to a sentence in a normal speed, and the rest is just the “invalid sound” (漏屋, 2011). To language beginners, there are more “invalid sound” than meaningful words and sentences in what they are listening to. Fourth, practicing listening needs equipment or facilities and practicing conversations needs partners whereas writing and reading are convenient for students’ self-learning. Thus, students with the listening textbook study more in the areas of writing and reading than listening and conversation (Chart 1). They also think the most efficient way to learn a foreign language should start with the following order: reading (35.3%), conversation (26.5%), listening (23.5%), and grammar (14.7%). No students in this group consider writing the starting point of an efficient way of language learning although writing is their top focus of self-learning (Chart 1) because of the easiness and convenience to learn writing outside classroom. Fifth, the differences between the oral Chinese in the textbook and Japanese daily conversation also can be a factor affecting students’ view on the difficulty of the course using a listening textbook: 65% of students consider the similarity between the two less than 50% (see the answer to question 9 above). This could reduce students’ interests in learning the oral discourses of the textbook through listening to and repeating the conversational texts on their own.

### **Conclusion**

The appropriateness of information input to the beginners for a two-credit elective language course depends not only on the quantity and quality but also the channel of information input. There are disparities among textbooks at the elementary level in terms of the amount of vocabulary, grammar points, difficulty of sentences, and length of paragraphs. Even if the quantity and quality of information input are identical, the difficulties of textbooks with various focuses such as grammar, listening, or conversation are not the same due to the different channels of getting the information and different learning styles of learners.

The type of the textbook has an impact on the focus of students’ self-learning as the data show that more students focus their self-learning on the areas consistent with the types of the textbooks they are using. However, there is a drastic gap between what students want to learn the most and what they learn the most on their own. Many Japanese learners have a quiet personality and keep a low profile in the group. Their habit of language learning cultivated in middle and high schools emphasizes reading and translation. The general situation of more visual learners than audio learners and the positive transfer of Chinese characters due to the similarity between Japanese Kanji and Chinese characters are possibly the main reasons

for students to consider writing the easiest language skill to learn and spend more time on writing for self-learning. Yet they believe that the most efficient way to learn a foreign language should start not with writing but with reading.

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**Attachment 1**Survey on Learning Introductory Chinese

Major: Economics / Management / Business / Communication

Year: Freshman / Sophomore / Junior / Senior / Senior above

Gender: Female / Male

Date & Period of Class: 3rdP.Mon / 2ndP.TUE. / 2ndP.Thur. / 1stPFri.

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1. The Chinese Language Skill You Want to Learn the Most:  
A. Grammar    B. Listening    C. Conversation    D. Reading    E. Writing
2. The Most Efficient Way to Learn a Foreign Language Starting with:  
A. Grammar    B. Listening    C. Conversation    D. Reading    E. Writing
3. Appropriateness of this Listening Textbook for Introductory Chinese:  
A. Easy & Appropriate    B. Appropriate but Difficult    C. Inappropriate & Difficult
4. Language Skills Learned from this Listening Textbook:  
A. Grammar    B. Listening    C. Conversation    D. Reading    E. Writing
5. Chinese Language Skill Easiest to Learn:  
A. Grammar    B. Listening    C. Conversation    D. Reading    E. Writing
6. Time of Self-Learning in Various Areas Outside Classroom:  
A. 0 Min.    B. 0~15 Min.    C. Around 30 Min.    D. 30~60 Min.    E. More than 1 Hr.
7. Area of Self-Learning Outside Classroom:  
A. Grammar    B. Listening    C. Conversation    D. Reading    E. Writing
8. Time Spend on Listening to the Recording of the Textbook:  
A. 0 Min.    B. 0~15 Min.    C. Around 30 Min.    D. 30~60 Min.    E. More than 1 Hr.
9. Similarities between Oral Discourses in Textbook and Japanese Daily Conversations:  
A. 70% & Above    B. Around 50%    C. 30% & Below
10. Advantages of Using the Listening Textbook & PC@LL System for Introductory Chinese:

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11. Disadvantages of Using the Listening Textbook & PC@LL System for Introductory Chinese:

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Thank you for your cooperation!

## Attachment 2

初級中国語学習に関するアンケート

**学部**: 経済学部 / 経営学部 / 商学部 / コミュニケーション学部

**学年**: 1年 / 2年 / 3年 / 4年 / 4年以上

**性別**: 女性 / 男性 **授業の曜日・時限**: 月3限 / 火2限 / 木2限 / 金1限

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1. 最も勉強したいの中国語の能力（一つを選択）:

A. 文法      B. リスニング      C. 会話      D. 読むこと      E. 書くこと

2. 外国語を効率よく勉強するにあたっての順序（1から5まで）:

文法（ ）    リスニング（ ）    会話（ ）    読むこと（ ）    書くこと（ ）

3. 初級中国語のリスニング教科書は:

A. 適切かつわかりやすい    B. 難しいが、適切    C. 不適切で、難しい

4. このリスニング教科書から勉強したのは（複数選択可）:

A. 文法      B. リスニング      C. 会話      D. 読むこと      E. 書くこと

5. 最も勉強が易しかったのは（一つを選択）:

A. 文法      B. リスニング      C. 会話      D. 読むこと      E. 書くこと

6. 授業以外に自己学習の時間は（一つを選択）:

A. 0時間    B. 0～15分    C. 30分ぐらい    D. 1時間以内    E. 1時間以上

7. 授業以外に自己学習のエリアは（複数選択可）:

A. 文法      B. リスニング      C. 会話      D. 読むこと      E. 書くこと

8. 授業以外に教科書の録音を聞く時間は（一つを選択）:

A. 0時間    B. 0～15分    C. 30分ぐらい    D. 1時間以内    E. 1時間以上

9. この教科書の対話の内容は日本語に訳して、日本語の会話状況でそのまま使っても問題ないと思いますか?

A. 70%以上                      B. 50%ぐらい                      C. 30%以下

10. 初級中国語の勉強でこのリスニング教科書と PC@LL 使用の利点:

11. 初級中国語の勉強でこのリスニング教科書と PC@LL 使用の欠点:

ご協力ありがとうございました!