

Integration of Textbooks and Radio – TV for School Education

Mitoji Nishimoto

I. Television Can Teach

A friend of mine in Tokyo hired as a maid a country girl who had just finished the ninth grade (Japanese Junior High School). My friend and his wife expected her to be a somewhat naive but wholesome country girl, which she was. However, there were two surprising things about her that strongly and pleasantly impressed them.

For years they had known a university professor of Japanese history, who was brought up in the northern part of Japan and established his scholarship in Tokyo. This professor's northern accent was a source of agony for his students at a university in the southwestern part of the country where he served for the rest of his professional life. The couple, because of their acquaintance with this professor, had anticipated all kinds of difficulty in communicating with the northern girl when she got to their home. To her new employer and his wife, it came as an unexpected surprise that the new maid had no difficulty in understanding them and that her speech was easy to understand in spite of a slight local accent. She spoke to them in what may be called "standard" Japanese, or in a language quite close to the dialect used by cultured people of Tokyo. The girl's explanation about her language habit was that she had learned the standard dialect mainly through radio-listening while in school and at home. Part of her regular school work was

devoted to study by radio-listening at least once or twice a week.

Soon after she had arrived, the couple left for a two-week's trip. They asked the girl to take charge of their house, leaving her to do all the necessary household work during their absence. After returning from the trip, the wife decided to let the girl take full responsibility in the kitchen. She not only managed the assignment well to her mistress's satisfaction, but her cooking skill and fine food preparations brought a new air into the household. Her knowledge about cooking even seemed to surpass that of her mistress, who had been a trained housewife for thirty odd years. The girl's explanation was very simple. "While you were away I studied cooking every lunch time by watching television." "It is amazing," my friend told me, "how fast and fundamentally the girl has learned in less than one year through television since she became our maid."

Television can teach. Classroom teachers no longer monopolize the process of teaching. My friend confided that through his experience with the young maid he came to recognize the important role of radio and television as a "teacher", and that he became reoriented to new concept of teaching and to the educational implications of television.

II. Television Changes Society

Today in Tokyo alone there are six television channels, including two of the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation): The one is for comprehensive programs, and the other is for educational programs. All but one, the NHK educational channel, offer programs of cooking early in the afternoon every day. It is generally recognized that these cooking lessons are the most frequently viewed daytime programs on television. And it is also said that home cooking in Japan is changing rapidly in response to these programs.

Japanese homes have heavily relied on the forces of tradition. Home cooking has been one of the slow-to-change aspects of family life. However, the impact of television seems to be affecting the cooking habits of the wives and thus is changing the family tradition.

My house is located on the edge of Mitaka, some fifteen miles away from the center of Tokyo. The town still retains a tinge of the old Musashino Plain farm atmosphere. Yet the shelves of nearby grocery stores are filled with modern canned goods. The kinds of green vegetables sold now include such Western vegetables as parsley, celery, and asparagus, which have not been eaten by most Japanese till quite recently. This change not only tells about suburban consumers' change in taste, but also about the influence of televised cooking programs, introducing new techniques of cooking, recipes and tastes.

A further interesting thing about the general change in the food habits of many Japanese is that the change is affecting Japanese farming as well as the grocery business. After the war, the technological improvements in farming and a greater spread of bread and milk products among the Japanese have rapidly altered Japanese farming. Frequent remarks are made to the effect that a shift is occurring in farm production particularly around the area of large cities away from sweet potatoes and other root products typically regarded as Japanese to carrots, tomatoes and cabbages usually considered as Western foods. One must be cautious in making a generalization, but it may safely be said that television is doing its share in bringing about the change in kinds of products farmers feel more profitable to raise.

The influence of television programs is not limited only to the eating habits of the Japanese. Needless to say, television is affecting Japanese life all the way from ladies' clothes and hair styles to young people's language, their ways of thinking, and

even the songs and games which they play.

Thus, television, interacting with other modern mass media, is bringing about great changes in our social life, and is bound to exert its influence upon education of our young people. How school education decides to face up to this situation is a problem of great importance.

III. Television Revolutionizes School Education

Schools as part of social institutions cannot stand aloof from the general trend of rapid changes in society. We may pose a serious question, however, with regard to the role of school education in our changing society. Are our schools today contributing significantly and sufficiently to the advancement of culture and the creativity that society requires in the process of change? Are our schools realistically sensitive enough to the actual changes that are taking place?

Most schools, regardless of differences in size, are equipped with one kind or another school library. Many have classroom libraries. Many new schools are equipped with built-in radio facilities. The classroom use of tape recorders has become widespread. Although the popularity of television installation in schools is impressive, it will take some years before television sets can be installed in all the classrooms. About 98% of elementary and 93% of junior high schools are now equipped.

In both buildings and in equipment, today's schools have made considerable progress compared with those of the prewar era. Have they made the same progress in educational content and method? Teachers and textbooks play important roles in school education, one function of which is to communicate and retain our cultural heritage. During the postwar years, a teacher's role has been broadened so that now a teacher not only communicates past culture, but also helps youth adjust to the changing society and therefore helps to create a new culture. In the

fields of reading and special education in particular, teachers have found a unique role in helping students demonstrate individual potentialities. The broadening of teachers' activities is also illustrated by positive introduction into school education of movies, radios, tape recorders, and television.

In contrast to traditional school education which developed around the printed page, a revolution in content and method is taking place today whereby radio and television are being introduced into the school program. Implications of this revolutionary change have not fully been recognized, but it is a certainty that radio and television are beginning to be utilized in school education through regular "school broadcasts."

Some of the present day school television and radio programs are merely paraphrasing or supplementing passages from textbooks, but efficient utilization of these media in the classroom should emphasize their maximum use so that human nature may be developed to its fullest extent. This fundamental principle should be well recognized by broadcasters as well as teachers and students.

Textbooks and the school programs that are broadcast, though aiming at the same educational purposes, must be treated differently in application because of their functional differences. The fact that the content of materials presented through the loudspeaker and on the television screen moves ahead at a steady pace, with limited opportunity to stop and re-listen or re-view is both a disadvantage and an advantage for the use of radio and television as teaching tools. If teachers are fully aware of both the shortcomings and advantages of radio and television teaching as well as the characteristics of textbooks as a type of teaching tool, they should be ready to utilize to the fullest extent various types of teaching tools that function differently.

IV. The Roles of Teachers in Television Age

The present day world is often referred to as the world of the Atomic Era or that of the Space Age. For our world to become worthy of the name "Space Age" we need to probe deeper into new knowledge and knowhows which in turn require a new type of education.

Needless to say, for centuries printing has played one of the most significant roles in facilitating the advancement of human knowledge and education. The importance of printing will undoubtedly increase for years to come. But now we are facing the need to expand our knowledge and technique beyond the space in which we find ourselves. We must learn more and more in less time. For this the roles of television and radio are indispensable. Through the use of electric devices it has become possible for us to send pictures of the other side of the moon back to the earth, to manipulate outer space rockets, and to accomplish various other feats which were once regarded as sheer impossibilities.

Something quite unexpected is happening also in the area of education by the use of radio and television for educational purposes. Radio and television are offering us tremendous potentialities and influences in many areas ranging from home cooking and entertainment to foreign language study and international understanding. The real impact of these on our education seems immeasurable.

During the last few years, NHK sent a team of camera men to North America, Middle America, and South America as well as to the Near East, Indonesia, and the Soviet Union. Documentary films taken by these camera men created deeper international understanding. The overseas news film and commentaries on television also broadened the Japanese peoples' world outlook. We can find significant meaning in such news reels and news comments from overseas.

Besides this conspicuous change of the mind of the Japanese

concerning international understanding and the world outlook, the daily news, music, drama and dance, which are broadcast throughout the year have a great influence in family and adult social education in the nation. This great contribution of new media started during the last decade, but we cannot predict its future contribution to society. Of course, there are both weak and strong points in these new media, but when we look forward we can expect a bright future in tomorrow's World.

We have not yet attained an optimum level of the use of radio and television for school education. Homes and society in general have been opened to the radio and television waves. Schools, however, have insisted on their own self-contained organization and programs supported by strong self-conscious tradition and authority, which form a strong defense barrier against outside forces.

The main factors that have deterred education through broadcasting media in Japan from attaining wider spread and fuller utilization, in spite of her history of 33 years of radio and 13 years of television school programs, are the schools' strong self-identities and the forces of tradition. But the times are shifting. We are beginning to regard radio and television programs as indispensably useful and important in school education, no longer something outside the proper concern of school program planning.

Textbooks have held the scepter in traditional school education. It has been maintained firmly that other teaching tools than textbooks have only secondary importance in aiding better facilitation or understanding of what is offered in textbook form. The fact of the matter is that we are beginning to realize that textbooks are not almighty, and that there are areas of education, the content of which cannot be effectively or efficiently presented in textbook form only. At the same time, radio and television have demonstrated that their programs can offer much of what is not representable by means of verbal symbols alone.

Furthermore, in contrast to textbooks which presuppose the necessity of explanation and instruction by teachers, radio and television in their own programs contain teachers and their instruction, and the programs themselves appeal directly to the learner's perception and cognition. The radio and television programs can thus be used without intermediaries to influence the growth of the learners.

We must admit that the present stage of radio and television programming requires much improvement. But based on this recognition we must realistically appraise the future potentialities of such programs and their proper roles in the total curriculum of school education. It is our task to decide on a properly balanced incorporation in school programs of textbooks representing, printing, and radio and television programs representing audio-visual tools of education. It is the task of classroom teachers to develop learning activities organized around the parallel and integrated use of textbooks and audio-visual programs through broadcasting.

Printing, from movable type with its 500 years of history, or more than twelve hundred years of wood block printing of mass-production in the Nara Period in Japan, has made great contributions to education. In addition to printed materials for teaching in this new age, audio-visual broadcast programs must join their forces. For today's and tomorrow's children must be trained and educated to make effective and meaningful use of radio and television in their daily lives. It is a challenge from which teachers cannot escape, for educational programs on the air, those of television in particular, must be integrated in regular school programs.

We live in a modern, technological society, and more and more the importance of instructional television is being accepted by even the most traditional teacher and educator. The more progressive teacher is apt to go so far as to say that television

teaching can teach as many facts and skills as the classroom teacher can. However, school administrators and school systems generally have been more or less skeptical of the use of television in the classroom due in part to a tendency to cling to traditional patterns of teaching centering around textbooks and also due to investments which have been made in connection with the printed page.

How can we persuade traditional teachers to change their attitudes regarding classroom teaching? This is a crucial problem not only for instructional television but for the entire educational enterprise in our modern technological age.