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國中教育會考英文科聽力能力測驗與國中英語科課程綱要之分析

An Analysis of English Listening Tests in Comprehensive Assessment Program

in Relation to Curriculum Guidelines

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An Analysis of English Listening Tests in Comprehensive Assessment Program

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To Hsueh-Ying Yu
獻給我的恩師尤雪瑛教授

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碩士論文題要

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論文提要內容:

　　十二年國民基本教育課程綱要和國民中小學九年一貫課程綱要在很多方面不同; 而新課綱的實施有可能會影響到國中教育會考的命題。因此, 本篇研究旨在探討: (1) 十二年國民基本教育課程綱要和國民中小學九年一貫課程綱的差別, 以及新課綱對會考聽力的可能影響, (2) 會考英聽與課綱的吻合程度及其所重視的聽力能力。

　　研究結果顯示, 十二年國民基本教育課程綱要之內容較九年一貫課綱全面, 且其針對聽力能力指標的描述除了較為具體外, 還增加了一項新的能力指標。會考考題大致上和九年一貫課綱吻合, 但考著重在評量學生是否具備「推論」及「了解語言功用」的能力。根據分析結果, 研究者推論未來會考聽力不會有太大的改變, 但應會加入較多樣化的題材, 且會更重視學生整合應用的能力。

關鍵詞: 國中教育會考、英語科、聽力測驗、課程綱要

Abstract

The Curriculum Guidelines of 12-Year Basic Education (2019CG) differs from

Grade 1-9 Curriculum (2008CG) in many ways, and its release may influence

Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students (CAP). The

present study thus intends to find out: (1) the similarities and differences between

2008CG and 2019CG in terms of the description of listening abilities, and the

possible impacts of 2019CG on the listening comprehension section in the future

CAP, and (2) what listening constructs are tested in the listening comprehension

section of CAP from 2014 to 2019 and how the tested constructs correspond to

2008CG.

Results indicated that 2019CG placed more emphasis on developing students'

ability to face challenges in daily life, and therefore, its content is more

comprehensive than 2008CG. In terms of the description of listening ability,

2019CG not only gave more specific description but also added one new ability. The

test items of CAP generally corresponded to the competence indicators of 2008CG,

but the distribution of the items was imbalanced. The test items mostly focused on

students' ability to "understand everyday life English and simple dialogues" and "to

understand daily conversations and simple stories." Regarding what listening

constructs were tested in CAP, results showed that ability to "make inference for

missing, unclear, or ambiguous information" and to "understand the functions of the

speeches" were put strong emphasis, while ability to "follow instruction or direction"

and "make predictions of what is going to be said" were neglected. Based on the

above analysis results, the researcher anticipated that there might not be too many

changes in the future CAP, but more diversified tasks might be included. In addition,

integrative ability may receive more attention in the future CAP, which means solely

relies on lexical ability is not enough for the future CAP.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Motivation

The Curriculum Guidelines of 12-Year Basic Education (2019CG, hereafter) was just put into practice in August, 2019. The release of the new curriculum indicates a big change in Taiwan's English education. The most well-known change that 2019CG has brought about is the highlighted concept of' "core competency." Core competency refers to the knowledge, ability, and attitude that learners need to cope with the challenges encountered in their daily life. The new guidelines differ from the previous curriculum guidelines in that it doesn't limit knowledge and ability to school subjects. Instead, knowledge and ability should be developed by putting them into practice in our daily life.

In fact, before the proposal of focusing on core competency, similar ideas have been adopted in Taiwan's English teaching for a long time. Instead of viewing English merely as a school subject, the purpose of English teaching is to help students communicate in English in their daily life. To achieve the purpose, English curriculum includes both written and oral communication. Written communication requires reading and writing ability, which is always the primary concern of English teachers in Taiwanese schools. Oral communication, on the other hand, relies on

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one's speaking and listening ability. It is generally believed that with good speaking

ability, there should be no problem to communicate with others. Moreover, people

usually judge whether one really knows a second or foreign language by the

effective oral ability (Nunan, 1998). Listening ability is relatively neglected, and

people tended to view it as a skill that will naturally develop with the learning of

speaking ability (Rost, 2016). However, no matter how advanced one's speaking

ability is, communication is doomed to break down when one fails to comprehend

what other people intend to express in the conversation. To help students achieve

effective communication, listening comprehension begins to receive attention lately

in Taiwan's English teaching.

Because teaching and testing are intricately intertwined with the emphasis on

listening ability in the curriculum, listening comprehension section was included

into Taiwan's high school entrance examination, Comprehensive Assessment

Program for Junior High School Students (CAP, hereafter) in 2015. CAP is designed

by Research Center for Psychological and Educational Testing, and it is a large-scale

high-stakes examination. The score of the test will decide the senior high schools

students can go to. Its test validity is of great importance, and its washback effect

has strongly affected Taiwan's junior high school English education. The inclusion

of listening comprehension in CAP has two significant points. First, the test has thus

greatly enhanced its validity. The validity of the previous high school entrance

examination was impaired because it only assessed students' reading ability.

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Comprehension ability is integral when both reading and listening ability are considered. Adding listening comprehension section makes CAP a more comprehensive test of receptive skills. The other point is to the washback effects on Taiwan's English teaching. Because CAP is a high-stakes examination, how English teachers conduct their instruction is strongly influenced by the test. It is hoped that by including listening comprehension section, CAP can exert the effect of guiding English teachers to spend more time on listening teaching, in addition to reading and grammar teaching.

With more and more emphasis has been put on listening ability in both teaching and testing, it is crucial to find out how to improve students' listening ability, so that they may perform well on CAP. So far, two concerns have been raised regarding listening teaching and assessment. First of all, research on listening teaching in Taiwan is relatively less explored. The topics of studies on this field are confined to the causes of listening comprehension difficulty and the methods to reduce anxiety during listening (Cheung, 2006). Very limited research is conducted to explore what abilities junior high school students should develop, how these can be taught, and most importantly, how these abilities are assessed in CAP. The other concern is about the release of 2019CG. Since the guiding principle of 2019CG is that English is no longer treated as merely a school subject, but a tool to deal with everyday life situations, many teachers wonder how teaching materials and methods will change to meet the objectives of 2019CG. Moreover, because the curriculum was just put

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into implementation, no one really knows how the test will change based on the new curriculum. Both teachers and students show great anxiety in facing the approaching high school entrance examination. As a junior high school English teacher who wants to know how to improve students' listening comprehension performance on CAP, the researcher aims to analyze the curriculum guidelines and the listening comprehension section of CAP to find out how 2019CG may influence the future CAP.

The present study focuses on the listening comprehension section of CAP with two major concerns. To begin with, the listening comprehension section of CAP is defined to be an easy level test for the purpose of reducing pressure on students. However, students still find it difficult to get full marks in the listening section. What abilities the listening section intends to measure should therefore be identified, so that teachers can integrate the abilities into their instruction. Yet very little research has been done about this so far. The other reason is that many teachers wonder whether the item types of listening comprehension section will be different because of the release of 2019CG. Much research has been done to investigate the test items of the reading comprehension section and its relation to the new curriculum guidelines. However, very little research is carried out on the relationship between the listening comprehension section and the new curriculum guidelines. To bridge the gaps, the researcher aims to compare the pedagogical objectives of 2008CG and 2019CG and explore what impacts 2019CG may bring to CAP.

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the possible ways the listening

comprehension section of CAP would be developed to cope with 2019CG. Because

CAP is meant to be based on the curriculum guidelines, it is worthy of study to

analyze how the curriculum reform in Taiwan may affect CAP. In the present study,

the researcher intends to find out the differences and the similarities between the

previous curriculum guidelines, Grade 1-9 Curriculum (2008CG, hereafter), and

2019CG. To understand the relation between CAP and the guidelines, the researcher

analyzes the correspondence between the test items of CAP from 2014 to 2019 and

the listening abilities listed in 2008CG. Moreover, to further understand what

detailed abilities that CAP aims to measure, the researcher incorporates listening

abilities from different studies and analyzes the test items of CAP again to develop a

more comprehensive list of listening skills that junior high graduates should possess.

After the above-mentioned analysis, the researcher anticipates what changes

2019CG may bring to future CAP.

Research Questions

The primary research questions in this study are listed below:

1. What are the similarities and differences between 2008CG and 2019CG in

   terms of the description of listening abilities, and what are possible impacts of

   2019CG on the listening comprehension section in the future CAP?

2. What listening constructs are tested in the listening comprehension section

    of CAP from 2014 to 2019, and how do the tested constructs correspond to

    2008CG?

The Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study can be illustrated in three aspects. First of

all, by comparing 2008CG and 2019CG, English teachers may have better

understanding what listening abilities are equally emphasized in both curriculum

guidelines, what listening abilities are newly added to 2019CG, and how English

teachers should design their listening instruction to achieve the objectives of the new

guidelines. Secondly, the study analyzes the test items of CAP in the past. The

results will show not only the correspondence between CAP and these curriculum

guidelines but also the listening abilities are tested in CAP. Lastly, the study will find

out how 2019CG may come into the construction of the future CAP, so that English

teachers may better know how to prepare their students for the future CAP.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter has three sections to review previous related studies. First of all, how curriculum is designed and its relationship with assessment are discussed. A brief history of the development of curriculum guidelines and the testing system in Taiwan are also introduced here. The second part is to discuss the skills involved in listening process and the listening constructs involved in the listening assessment. The third section is to discuss the principles of listening instructions and the effective approaches to listening teaching. The last section is to review the related studies on the English listening comprehension section of CAP.

Curriculum Design

The following sections are divided into three parts. In the first part, the researcher will explain what curriculum is and how curriculum guidelines are developed in Taiwan. In the second part, the researcher will discuss the role of assessment in the curriculum. The last part is an introduction of CAP.

Curriculum Guidelines

Curriculum planning is a series of processes that provides a framework for

teachers to design their courses, create teaching activities, assess learners'

performance, and offer a basis for evaluation of the effectiveness of a course (Brown,

2007; Graves, 2014; Richards, 2001). Richards (2001) described curriculum

development as "an interrelated set of processes that focuses on designing, revising,

implementing, and evaluating language programs." Graves (2014) divided

curriculum design into three sections, including determining goals, deciding and

organizing contents, and assessing achievement. Nicholls and Nicholls (1972) held a

similar view and considered curriculum design a four-stage cycle, including setting

course objectives, deciding methods and materials, organizing assessment, and

giving feedback to the program. To explain the process in detail, Brown (2006)

further separated the processes into eight steps and used a flowchart to show how

each step were interrelated with one another. As shown in Figure 2.1, the eight steps

of designing curriculum are (1) analyzing needs, (2) formulating goals, (3)

determining course content, (4) determining course content, sequences, and

structures, (5) constructing lesson plans, (6) teaching, (7) assessing, and (8) revising.

Each step closely works together to achieve the goals of the curriculum, and the

influential factors on each side are interactive with the process when designing

curriculum, which explains the reason why curriculum design is an interactive,

interrelated, and dynamic process (Brown, 2006; Graves, 2014; Richards, 2001). In

particular, assessment is of great necessity in the process on the grounds that it

provides feedback to teaching. As a result, constant assessments are required for the

purpose of modifying curriculum. (Brown, 2006; Dick, Carey & Carey, 2015;

Graves, 2014; Richards, 2001; Tyler, 2010).

Figure 2.1

Second language curriculum development process (Brown, 2007, p. 151)
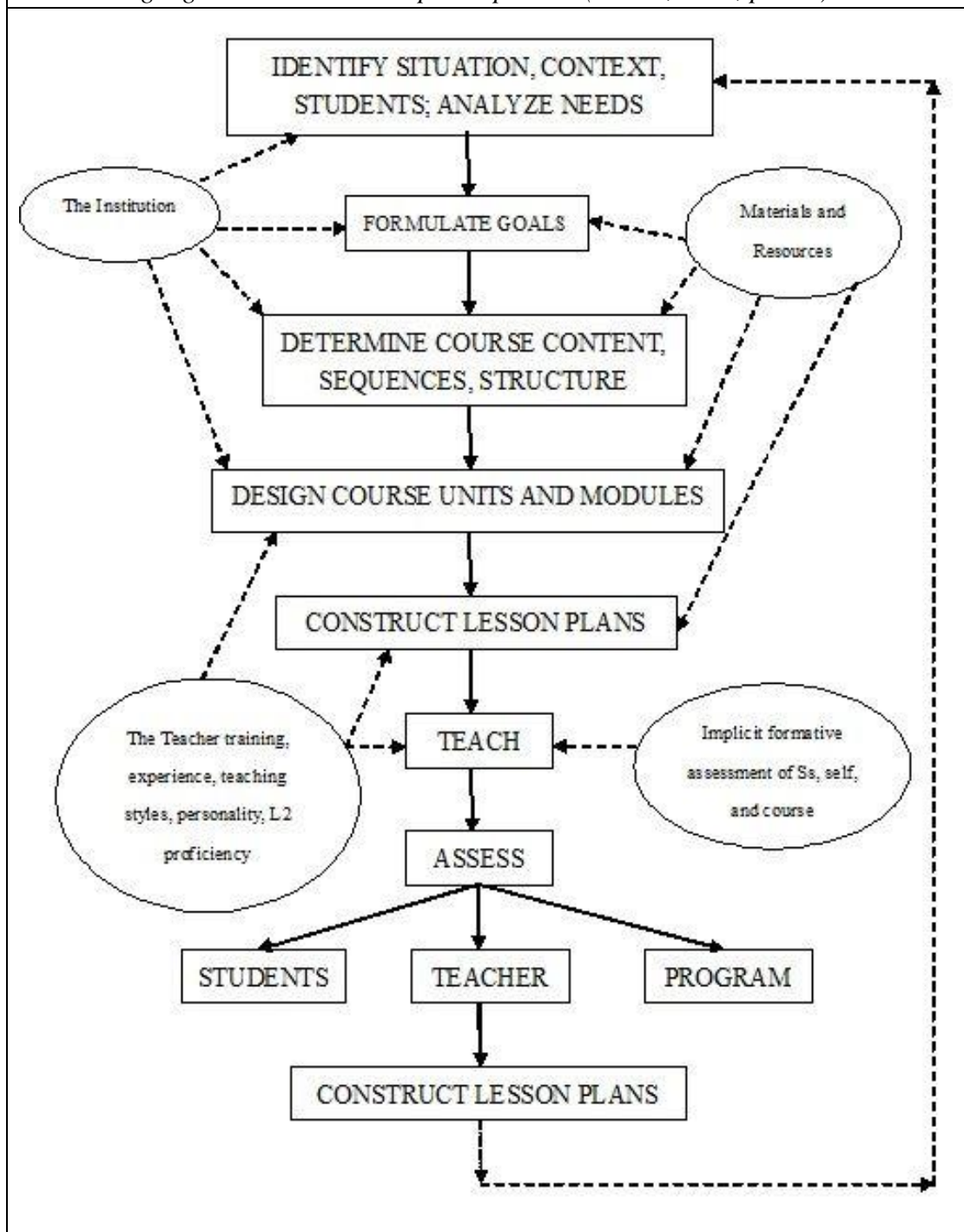
In Taiwan, the history of the curriculum guidelines can mainly be divided into

three phases. Beginning in 1929, there were only regulations of curriculum

standards. Knowledge was divided into different subjects, and each subject was

taught separately with very little connection to one another. English, in this case,

was only considered one of the school subjects. It was not until the Ministry of

Education (MOE) carried out a curriculum reform and implemented 2008CG in

2001 that the ideas of knowledge and subject changed. 2008CG valued skills that

were useful to students; it broke down the narrow divisions of subjects and

combined different subjects into learning areas, a broader term referring to the

content of learning. English teaching, which belonged to the field of language arts,

became communication-oriented. Developing students' basic communication ability

and arousing their learning interests became the goals of English teaching (Ministry

of Education, 2003). As it moved to 2011, MOE implemented a 12-year basic

education program and took a completely different view on learning. Instead of

limiting learning into knowledge and skills taught at school, the 12-year basic

education program emphasized that learning should consider real-life scenarios.

With the new meaning that learning took on, a special committee was established to

design a new curriculum in 2013. 2019CG was developed in response to the change

and implemented in 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Both 2008CG and the current 2019CG contain the following key elements.

First of all, a guideline should clearly specify its fundamental beliefs and curriculum

goals. Then, it divides students' learning into several learning stages and explains the

learning focuses of each stage. It also provides a curriculum framework and

curriculum plannings for different stages. Last, it states its implementation directions, including teaching implementation, teaching resources, assessment, etc. It also gives very general principles regarding how teachers should teach, how textbooks should be written, how teachers choose textbooks. Most importantly, how to assess students' learning outcome. Since curriculum and assessment are intricately intertwined, the principles that a guideline provides and the objectives listed in the guidelines are the bases of designing assessment.

The Role of Assessment in the Curriculum

Assessment plays a vital role and serves a variety of functions in the curriculum. Brown (2010) indicated that assessment can be viewed as an instrument in the curriculum because test-takers show their ability through assessment. Graves (2014) described assessment as a monitor in curriculum design because it provides both teachers and students with learning outcomes, so that teachers will know how to revise the curriculum. Nation and Macalister (2010) held a very similar view. They stated that assessment is necessarily included in a curriculum plan, and its purpose was not only to find out the progress students have made but also to give feedback to both students and curriculum designers. Apparently, a curriculum cannot be complete without an assessment. With the role and the functions that an assessment has in curriculum, a good assessment is demanded to support good teaching and even exert its influence on bad teaching (Hughes, 2008).

Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students

Senior high school entrance exam has always been important to junior high school graduates in Taiwan. Its test result decides whether students are able to attend their ideal high schools, and consequently, it brings a lot of pressure to students. In the hope of lightening students' burden, Ministry of Education (MOE) started to implement Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP) in 2014. CAP was designed based on the following four principles: (1) to lower pressure of exams and motivate students to study; (2) to assess what students achieve and maintain their competitiveness; (3) to give feedback of students' learning outcomes; (4) to provide information of students' competence so that teachers can teach according to students' abilities.

The English test of CAP is designed based on the above principles. It is regarded as an achievement test because it aims to measure what test-takers have learned at school and the progress they have made. It is also viewed as a proficiency test because it intends to evaluate test-takers' English proficiency. The English test of CAP consists of two parts, reading and listening. The reading section contains 40-45 multiple choices in total, and test-takers are given 60 minutes to complete all the items. About 12-20 items are to test test-takers' basic linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary and grammar, and the other 25-35 items are to test test-takers' comprehension ability, including cloze and reading comprehension.

The second section of English CAP is listening test, which is the targeted

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section of the present study. The listening section contains three parts, with 20-30 items in total. Test-takers are given 25 minutes to complete this section. The first part of the listening section is matching pictures and utterances. There are three items in this part, and each item contains three pictures. Test-takers need to listen to the utterances from the MP3 and choose the picture that matches the meaning of the sentence they have heard. There is only one single sentence that test-takers will hear in one test item, and each sentence is played twice. The second part is choosing appropriate responses. There are seven items in this part, and test-takers need to listen to the utterances from the MP3 and choose the most appropriate response. The utterances in this part are also repeated twice. The last part is listening comprehension, which includes 11 test items. Test-takers are required to listen to a dialogue or a short text, and then they are given one question related to what they hear. Test-takers need to choose the most appropriate answer based on what they just heard. The dialogue or the spoken text for each item is played two times, and so does the question of each item.

The Nature of Listening Abilities

This section contains three sections. In the first section, the researcher offers a brief overview of listening process. Then, the researcher will discuss listening abilities from the viewpoint of teaching. In the last section, the researcher will explain what listening constructs are involved in listening comprehension.

An Overview of Listening Process

Listening plays a vital role in our everyday oral communication, and it has been considered almost the same as hearing. Rost (2016) pointed out listening and hearing are actually different, and their difference lies on a degree of intention. Hearing is an innate ability that all normal people have to perceive and receive utterances (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). It is just a passive process of the reception of utterances. Listening, on the other hand, is more complex. It involves activating one's cognitive and affective mechanisms for the purpose of understanding something they hear (Brown, 2007; Rost, 2016). Obviously, successful communication requires not merely one's hearing ability but also listening comprehension ability.

Listeners mainly achieve comprehension through three different types of processes: the bottom-up process, the top-down process, and the interactive process. The bottom-up process suggests that listeners pick up the incoming acoustic message, combine smaller units and assemble them to interpret the message. Words are linked together to form phrases, clauses, and even sentences. Finally, the sentences are combined together to form even larger units of ideas (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). To make this decoding process successful, it is essential for listeners to have good word recognition skills and grammatical knowledge, so that they know how to chunk the message and get the meaning from the segments (Richards, 1983).

Unlike the bottom-up process, the top-down process suggests that listeners

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don't merely rely on the utterances to build the meaning. Instead, they use what they have already known about the topic to achieve comprehension (Brown, 2006). To be more specific, listeners make use of the context and their understanding of the topic to grasp the meaning of what they hear. The basic idea behind this process is the use of 'schema.' The term 'schema' refers to one's life experiences. People build up their life experiences from all kinds of situations every day, and it is these life experiences that help people deal with new situations in their daily life (Bartlett, 1932). In the top-down process, listeners activate their schemata to make sense of what they hear. Comprehension thus goes from schema of the content to the comprehension of language (Richards & Burns, 2012).

The interactive process means using both the bottom-up and the top-down processes while listening. In real-life listening, there is no clear line between the bottom-up process and the top-down process. Sometimes listeners may use the bottom-up process more and sometimes the top-down process more depending on the situations. When listening to a text on an unfamiliar topic, listeners may turn to bottom-up process more to build up the meaning of the speech; but when listeners are familiar with the topic, they may rely more on the schema from the top-down process for comprehension. Garbe (2009) pointed out that it is due to the interaction between these two processes that comprehension can be effectively achieved. The interactive process thus means listeners make use of their world knowledge and linguistic knowledge to process meaning (O'Malley, Chamot, & Kupper, 1989).

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Through the understanding of listening comprehension processes, English teachers should be aware that listening is a complex process and that over-emphasizing any particular type of the processes may cause comprehension problems. To help students become better listeners, it is important to develop their listening skills based on the three processes.

Listening Skills and Subskills

Listening skills are automatic abilities that people use when listening to something (Goh, 2014), and these skills are composed of several subskills. The subskills are the elements that listeners employ to achieve comprehension (Goh & Aryadoust, 2015). The following paragraphs discuss the elements involved in listening comprehension from different researchers' perspectives.

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) analyzed purposes of listening and stated six core skills that help listeners to comprehend what they have heard. The six core skills include *listen for details, listen selectively, listen for global understanding, listen for main ideas, listen and infer,* and *listen and predict. Listen for details* refers to understand and recognize detailed information in a text, such as key words, numbers, names, etc. *Listen selectively* requires listeners to be able to quickly skim and pay attention to particular parts of the message. *Listen for global understanding* refers to catch the overall idea development of a text; listeners need to point out topics covered in a text to show they understand it. *Listen for main idea* refers to

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understand the key points of a text. For example, when listening to an argument, listeners need to understand what the speaker mainly argues about. *Listen and infer* requires listeners to figure out the missing or implicit information by themselves. *Listen and predict* requires listeners to notice the clues from the message they listen to and anticipate what is going to be said. Apparently, the purposes of listening decides which types of skills listeners should employ. Listeners may choose one or several types of skills at one time according to the goals they need to achieve. Though these six skills are all important in our everyday life, they are not detailed enough when it comes to listening instruction and test construction. A more comprehensive list of skills is required.

Richards (1983) divided listening into conversational listening and academic listening, and identified the corresponding listening skills to perform each type of listening. The skills on his list started from very simple ones, such as "the ability to retain chunks of language of different lengths for short periods", to more complex ones, such as "ability to recognize markers of coherence in discourse, and to detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, given information, new information, generalization, exemplification" (Richards, 1983, p. 228-229). Though Richards's list of listening skills was very detailed and comprehensive, he proposed the list from the pedagogical point of view, and therefore it is not suitable for listening test items analysis.

Similar to Richard's taxonomy (1983), Weir (1993) proposed another detailed

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list of listening skills. What makes Weir's list distinct from Richard's is that Weir

took account of not only listening teaching but also listening test construction when

developing the list (Buck, 2011). His purpose was to provide a checklist that

included important listening subskills, and thus he classified listening subskills into

four types and listed important listening subskills for each type. Table 2.1 shows

Weir's list of listening subskills.

Table 2.1	
Weir's list of listening subskills (Weir 1993, p. 125-126)	
Direct meaning comprehension	listening for gist
	listening for main idea(s) or important information
	listening for specifics
	determining a speaker's attitude or intention towards a listener or a topic where obvious from the text
Inferred meaning comprehension	making inferences and deductions
	relating utterances to their social and situational contexts
	recognizing the communicative function of utterances
	deducing meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context
Contributory meaning comprehension	understanding phonological features
	understanding grammatical notions such as comparison, cause, result, degree, purpose, etc.
	understanding discourse markers
	understanding the main syntactic structure of sentences or clauses
	understanding grammatical cohesion, especially reference
	understanding lexical cohesion, especially lexical set membership and collocations
	understanding lexis
Listening and writing	ability to extract salient points to summarize a text
	Ability to select relevant key points from a text

Weir's list of listening subskills was very comprehensive for listening teaching, but

for test construction or test item analysis, Weir's list is not explicit enough to specify

what tasks test-takers should perform for communication.

The Constructs of Listening Ability

Chapelle (1998) defined the term "construct" as an interpretation of the

observed behaviors. Based on this concept, there are three ways to define a construct:

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competence-based approach, task-based approach, and interactional approach

(Backham, 2007; Buck, 2001). Competence-based approach believes that it is the

test-takers' competence that determines their performance, and thus the construct

can be defined as the competence that test-takers should possess. Task-based

approach, on the other hand, believes that it is the context where the listening takes

place that determines the performance, and the construct is therefore defined as the

task that test-takers should perform. Interactional approach combines the above two

approaches and believes that test performance is partly influenced by test-takers'

competence and partly influenced by contextual factors. Thus when defining a

construct, it is necessary to consider both competence and tasks. (Backham, 2007;

Buck, 2001; Chapelle, 1998). It should be noted that these three approaches are

distinctive, and adopting different approaches to defining the construct will lead to

different ways to design the assessment and interpret the test result (Backham,

2007).

Buck (2001) adapted Backham and Palmer's (1996) model for describing

listening ability and developed a descriptive framework from the viewpoint of test

development. In Buck's framework, listening ability is divided into language

competence and strategic competence. The former can be further classified into four

parts: grammatical knowledge, discourse knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, and

sociolinguistic knowledge. The latter contains cognitive strategies and metacognitive

strategies. He also pointed out that when using the framework to assess listening

ability, the part of language competence should be the focus. Based on his framework, he then provided five examples of listening constructs that test designers should pay attention to: (1) knowledge of the sound system, (2) understanding local linguistic meanings, (3) understanding full linguistic meanings, (4) understanding inferred meanings, and (5) communicative listening ability.

Specifically from the perspective of listening test construction, Hughes (2008) offered a checklist of listening skills. He divided listening skills into informational skills and interactional skills. Informational skills describe the ability to understand a message from a monologue or a lecture, and interactional skills describe the ability to understand a conversation. He then further specified the subskills for each. Since Hughes' checklist was specially designed for constructing listening tests, it is very useful for test-makers when writing listening tests. The checklist can be a good resource to examine the constructs of a listening test as well. The aim of the present study is to investigate the abilities assessed in CAP, and Hughes' checklist for listening skills best serves the purpose of the study. As a result, the researcher adapted Hughes' (2008) checklist for listening skills as the main analysis framework for the present study. A detailed explanation of how it is adapted and modified for the present study will be provided in Chapter 3. Table 2.1 shows Hughes' checklist for listening skills.

Table 2.2

Hughes' checklist for listening skills (Hughes 2008, p.161-162)

Informational skills	obtain factual information
	follow instructions (including directions)
	understand requests for information
	understand expressions of need
	understand requests for help
	understand requests for permission
	understand apologies
	follow sequence of events (narration)
	recognize and understand opinions
	follow justification of opinions
	understand comparisons
	recognize and understand suggestions
	recognize and understand comments
	recognize and understand excuses
	recognize and understand expressions of preferences
	recognize and understand complaints
	recognize and understand speculation
Interactional skills	understand greetings and introductions
	understand expressions of agreement
	understand expressions of disagreement
	recognize speaker's purpose
	recognize indications of uncertainty
	understand requests for clarification
	recognize requests for clarification
	recognize requests for opinion
	recognize indications of understanding
	recognize indications of failure to understand
	recognize and understand corrections by speaker (of self and others)
	recognize and understand modifications of statements and comments
	recognize speaker's desire that listener indicate understanding
	recognize when speaker justifies or supports statements, etc. of other speaker(s)
	recognize when speaker questions assertions made by other speakers

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Approaches to Teaching Listening

The concept of listening teaching has gone through a drastic change. Listening

instruction is no longer limited as a by-product of grammar teaching or speaking

practice. Instead, it deserves emphasis in English teaching and should be treated as a

skill in its own right (Morley, 1999; Rost, 1994; Vandergrift, 2009). With the

changing concept of listening instruction, the focus of listening teaching has also

evolved from the product of listening to the process of listening (Morely, 1999;

Vandergrift, 2004). It is thus of great importance for English teachers to understand

the principles of listening instruction and the stages of listening lessons.

Approaches to listening teaching can mainly be divided into bottom-up

approaches and top-down approaches. Brown (2006) indicated that bottom-up

approaches help learners "proceed from sounds to words to grammatical

relationships to lexical meanings, etc., to a final 'message.'" That means learners

need to acquire the ability to break the message they hear into small units, and then

use their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar to figure out the meaning of the

message (Richards & Burns, 2012). Such an approach requires learners to pay

attention to phenomena in connected speech such as reduced forms, assimilation,

elision, etc. (Brown, 2006; Hulstijin, 2003; Vandergrift, 2004). Top-down

approaches, on the other hand, aim to help learners to make good use of context and

their prior knowledge (Brown, 2006; Morley, 1991, Vandergrift, 2004). Top-down

approaches help learners to activate their schemata, and with global understanding

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of the message, they may interpret the meaning. It should be noted that though prior

knowledge helps improve comprehension, over relying on top-down approaches

sometimes may cause misunderstanding. Likewise, over emphasizing bottom-up

approaches may hinder learners' ability to process messages (Brown, 2006). In

addition, the choice of adopting bottom-up approaches or top-down approaches

should depend on the purpose of listening. Therefore, English teachers should be

aware that focusing on one approach at the expense of the other is not wise (Hulstijn,

2003; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 2004).

Based on the approaches to listening instruction, a typical listening lesson may

be composed of three stages: pre-listening stage, while listening stage, and

post-listening. In the pre-listening stage, teachers need to prepare students to engage

in the listening task. Activities for the pre-listening stage include activating students'

previous knowledge, providing students the background knowledge they may need,

reviewing key vocabulary, and making predictions. The goal of the while-listening

stage is to help students process the meaning, and consequently, teachers should

choose activities that focus on comprehension only, such as listening for the gist,

listening for sequences, listening selectively, etc. Activities that may distract

students should be avoided during this phase. In the post-listening stage, teachers

check students' understanding of what they hear by offering feedback. Teachers also

need to give students chances to respond to the content of the message. During the

process, teachers may examine the grammatical features used in the text during this

stage (Field, 2008; Richards, 2005; Richards & Burns, 2012). Below is the format of

a good listening lesson proposed by Field:

Figure 2.2

Format of Listening Lesson (Field, 1998)

Pre-listening

    Set context: Create motivation

While-listening

    Extensive listening (followed by questions on context, attitude)

    Pre-set task / Pre-set questions

    Intensive listening

    Checking answers

Post-listening

    Examining functional language

    Inferring vocabulary meaning

Related Research on English Listening Comprehension Section of CAP

    This section discusses the related research on English listening comprehension

section of CAP. The topics of these studies including the washback effect that the

listening comprehension of CAP brought, the relationship among the strategies used,

test types, and test performance of CAP, and test item analysis.

    Lin (2017) explored the relationships among students' listening performance,

listening strategy use, and test items on the listening comprehension section of CAP.

The study was conducted through questionnaires and interviews. The findings

showed that among the three parts of the listening comprehension section, students

performed best in Picture Recognition, followed by Question Response, and Short

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Conversation. However, the test types did not influence students' choice of listening strategy. One point worth noticing was that students tended to connect the listening tests with their background knowledge when answering Question Response and Short Conversation.

Tseng, You, Tsai, & Chen (2019) carried out a study on the washback effect of the listening comprehension section of CAP. The research was also conducted through interviews and questionnaires. The result showed that due to the implementation of the listening comprehension of CAP, English teachers started to adopt more diverse teaching materials in class. Moreover, the time allotted for listening and speaking instruction has increased since the implementation of the listening comprehension of CAP. Lastly, the inclusion of listening comprehension assessment in the regular midterms and finals increased by 10%. Though the findings of this study indicated that the washback effect was positive, there was no discussion about item types and difficulty levels. The researchers thus suggested that future studies should focus more on item types and difficulty levels.

Chu (2019) conducted an analysis of the listening comprehension section of CAP from 2015 to 2018. The study was intended to find out what listening subskills were measured in CAP and their percentage, how test-takers performed each listening subskills, and what listening subskills could best discriminate test-takers. The researcher adopted the specifications for the E8-Standards Listening Test in Austria (Mewald, Gassner, & Sigott, 2007) as the categorization of listening

subskills for coding. The result showed that six listening subskills were assessed in

the listening comprehension section of CAP from 2015 to 2018, including (1)

listening for specifics, (2) *making inferences*, (3) *determining a speaker's attitude or*

intention toward a topic, (4) *relating utterances to their social and situational*

contexts, (5) *recognizing the communicative function of utterances*, and (6)

understanding lexis. As for the distribution, *recognizing the communicative function*

of utterances was the most frequently assessed subskill, while *determining a*

speaker's attitude or intention toward a topic accounted for the lowest proportion.

As for test-takers' performance, *understanding lexis* was the subskill that test-takers

performed best, whereas they performed less satisfactorily on *making inferences* and

determining a speaker's attitude or intention toward a topic. Regarding what

listening subskills best discriminated test-takers, no specific listening subskill

consistently best discriminated among test-takers. Despite the fact that Chu (2019)

may be one of the very few pioneers of conducting analysis on the listening

comprehension section of CAP, two limitations still need to be noticed. To begin

with, the checklist that Chu adopted was taken from the specifications for the

E8-Standards Listening Test in Austria. Since the checklist was specially designed

for students in Austria, it may not be suitable for students in Taiwan. Adopting a

more commonly-used or widely-accepted listening constructs checklist may result in

different outcome. In addition, since there was no detailed explanation for each

listening subskills listed in the checklist, Chu mentioned in the study that it was hard

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to classify some test items which caused learning difficulty. Consequently, the researcher suggested that a checklist specially designed for listening comprehension test construction was needed for future studies.

Due to the short history of the inclusion of the listening comprehension test in Taiwan's high school examination, relevant studies are limited. As previously reviewed studies, very little research has been conducted to investigate what listening constructs are measured in the listening comprehension section of CAP and the relation between the listening test and the curriculum guidelines. In order to bridge the gap, the researcher aims to explore what listening constructs are assessed in the listening comprehension section of CAP, how the tested constructs correspond to 2008CG, and find out what possible impacts the new guidelines might have on the future listening comprehension section of CAP.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the data, the analysis framework, the coding procedure, and examples to illustrate coding practice. The present study intends to answer the research questions about (1) the similarities and differences between 2008CG and 2019CG in terms of listening activities, (2) listening constructs tested in CAP, and (3) the possible effects of 2019CG on the future CAP. To answer the first research question, the study analyzes the content of both 2008CG and 2019CG. To answer the second research question, the study applies a specially designed checklist to examine the listening constructs tested in CAP. For the third research question, the study uses a checklist based on the outline of the curriculum guideline.

Data Collection

The data used in this study comprise two parts: (1) 2008CG and 2019CG, and (2) the listening comprehension test items of CAP from 2014 to 2019. The following paragraphs provide further information of the data.

For the curriculum guidelines, the researcher collected the general guidelines of both 2008CG and 2019CG, including fundamental beliefs, curriculum goals, core competence of 2008CG and core competency 2019CG. For the part of English

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teaching, the researcher also collected the course objectives and the indicators listed

in the two guidelines. The content of both 2008CG and 2019CG can be found on the

website of National Academy for Educational Research.

The competence indicators of 2008CG are divided into two phases. The first

phase is for elementary school students, and the second phase is for junior high

school students. In spite of the division, there is continuity between the two phases,

which means some items in the first phase may overlap with some in the second

phase. Particularly, two items mentioned in the first phase repeat and still receive

much focus in the second phase. These two items are "understand sentences with

simple sentence patterns" and "understand everyday life English and simple

dialogues." Since these two items are about sentential level comprehension, which

are the targets of the listening comprehension section of CAP, the researcher

incorporates these two items into the competence indicators for listening of 2008CG.

Table 3.1 shows the competence indicators for listening of 2008CG.

Table 3.1

Competence Indicators for Listening of 2008CG

Competence Indicators
1. Understand sentences with simple sentence patterns.
2. Understand everyday life English and simple dialogues.
3. Understand the rhythms, rhymes, and contents of songs and verses.
4. Identify the emotions and attitudes from different tones.
5. Understand daily conversations and simple stories.
＊6. Recognize the main idea and the setting of a conversation or a message.
＊7. Approximately understand the content of simple video clips and short plays.[1]

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[1] Items with asterisks are optional and should be taught according to students' ability.

Notice that both Item 2 and Item 5 mention the ability to understand talks, but there

is a difference between them. With the term "simple dialogues," Item 2 focuses on

the ability to understand short and basic talks with only one or two sentences. On the

other hand, with the term "daily conversations," Item 5 emphasizes the ability to

comprehend exchanged ideas or information, usually including not only an initiation

and a response but also follow-ups.

2019CG specifically lists eleven listening abilities as learning performances

that students should possess in order to use English as a great tool in daily life. Table

3.2 shows the learning performances listed in 2019 CG.

Table 3.2

Learning Performances for Listening of 2019 CG

Learning Performances
1. Understand the words and phrases learned in class.
2. Understand common classroom English and everyday life English.
3. Understand sentences with basic or important sentence patterns.
4. Understand the main content of daily conversation.
5. Understand the main content of songs and verses.
6. Understand the main content of simple stories and short plays.
7. Identify the main idea and setting in a short instruction or description.
8. Understand the main content of videos.
＊9. Identify the attitudes and emotions from the tones of sentences.
＊10. Understand the rhythms and rhymes of songs and verses.
＊11. Understand the content of public announcements, such as the announcement in the MRT, in the train station, or at the airport.[2]

Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 would be compared to identify the differences of the

indicators of listening in 2008CG and 2019CG.

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[2] Items with asterisks are optional in grade 7-9 and will be repeated in grade 10-12.

In addition to curriculum analysis, the present study also investigated test items and the correspondence between the items and the curriculum guidelines. For the test items, the researcher collected a total of 125 listening comprehension test items of CAP from 2014 to 2019. The listening comprehension test can be divided into three parts. The first part of the test is matching pictures and utterances. There are three items in this part, and each item takes about 15 to 20 seconds. The second part is choosing appropriate responses. There are seven items in this part, and each item takes about 14 to 20 seconds. The third part is understanding a conversation or a passage, and it contains 11 to 12 items. The length of each item varies from half a minute to more than two minutes.

Except the scripts, all the test items and the audio files can be collected from the CAP official website. Therefore, the researcher listened to the audio files and transcribed the items for the analysis. Since the data were analyzed through transcription, the potential problem was that the scripts might fail to show the intonation made by the speakers. To solve this problem, the researchers needed to listen to the audio files again to cope with items that aimed to assess test-takers' ability to recognize speakers' tones.

Data Analysis Framework

Data analysis framework was designed according to the research questions. In the following section, the researcher first explains how the comparison between

2008CG and 2019CG was made in order to answer the first research question. For the second research question, the researcher provided two checklists to see (1) how the listening comprehension section of CAP corresponds to 2008CG, and (2) what listening constructs are tested in the listening comprehension section of CAP. For the last research question, the researcher explained how impacts of the new curriculum on the future CAP would be discussed.

Comparison between 2008CG and 2019CG

To find out the similarities and differences between 2008CG and 2019CG, the comparison was divided into three parts. First of all, the researcher compared the general guidelines of 2008CG and 2019CG, including their fundamental beliefs, curriculum goals, core competence of 2008CG and core competencies of 2019CG. Secondly, the researcher compared the course objectives between the two guidelines. Lastly, competence indicators of listening comprehension in 2008CG and learning performance of listening in 2019CG were compared.

Checklist for Listening Abilities

To answer the second research question, the researcher designed two checklists for listening abilities for the present study. One checklist was made to find out whether the test of CAP matched the objectives of the 2008CG. The curriculum checklist contained two columns. The first column listed seven listening abilities

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given from the competence indicators for listening of 2008 CG, and the second

column was used to record numbers of the matched test items. The details of

Curriculum Checklist for 2008CG is provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Curriculum Checklist for 2008CG

Competence Indicators for Listening	Numbers of the Matched Items
1. Understand sentences with simple sentence patterns.	
2. Understand everyday life English and simple dialogues.	
3. Understand the rhythms, rhymes, and contents of songs and verses.	
4. Identify the emotions and attitudes from different tones.	
5. Understand daily conversations and simple stories.	
6. Recognize the main idea and the setting of a conversation or a message.	
7. Approximately understand the content of simple video clips and short plays.	

There are three points worth attention. First of all, the descriptors given in the

curriculum are too general and fail to identify what detailed abilities they involve.

For example, one indicator mentioned in 2008CG was "understand daily life

conversation and simple stories." There is no further description explaining to what

extent can be called "understand," or what test-takers need to perform to show their

understanding. This may result from the fact that the competence indicators are

designed for teaching, not for testing. The competence indicators serve as general

guidance for school teachers when designing English courses; they are, thus, meant

to be general to give more room to school teachers. Secondly, all the competence

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indicators are just about text descriptions. The indicators described the text types in detail, but the way to understand texts and the abilities involved are not mentioned. Take "understand everyday life English and simple dialogues" as an example. It only pointed out the text types that students should understand are everyday English and simple dialogues, but it failed to specify what abilities students need to possess in order to deal with the text. To make the analysis more complete, a detailed list of listening abilities is needed. The last point is that the abilities described in the curriculum are not suitable for testing, and more specific and detailed descriptions involved in the competence indicators need to be formed. The researcher thus developed a more comprehensive checklist of listening ability for junior high school graduates with the aim of finding out what detailed abilities tested in the listening comprehension section of CAP.

The listening constructs checklist for the present study was mostly adapted from Hughes' checklist for listening skills (2008). The reason why the researcher didn't directly adopt Hughes' checklist was that Hughes mainly focused on communication-oriented aspects. Considering CAP was specifically designed for EFL beginning-level students and contained lots of one-way comprehension items, the researcher thus made several modifications by incorporating Harris' (1969), Heaton's (1989), Rost's (2011), and Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) views to design a suitable checklist for the present study.

Several modifications were made to meet the purpose of the present study. First,

Hughes divided listening skills into informational skills and interactional skills, and

each skills contains a long list of subskills. Since some of the subskills in

informational skills overlapped with some of the subskills in interactional skills, the

researcher broke the division between informational skills and interactional skills

and integrated the similar subskills into one category. For example, understanding

requests for information, understanding expressions of need, and understanding

apologies, etc. were all integrated into understanding the functions of the speeches.

Figure 3.1 shows how the subskills in Hughes' listening constructs checklist were

integrated.
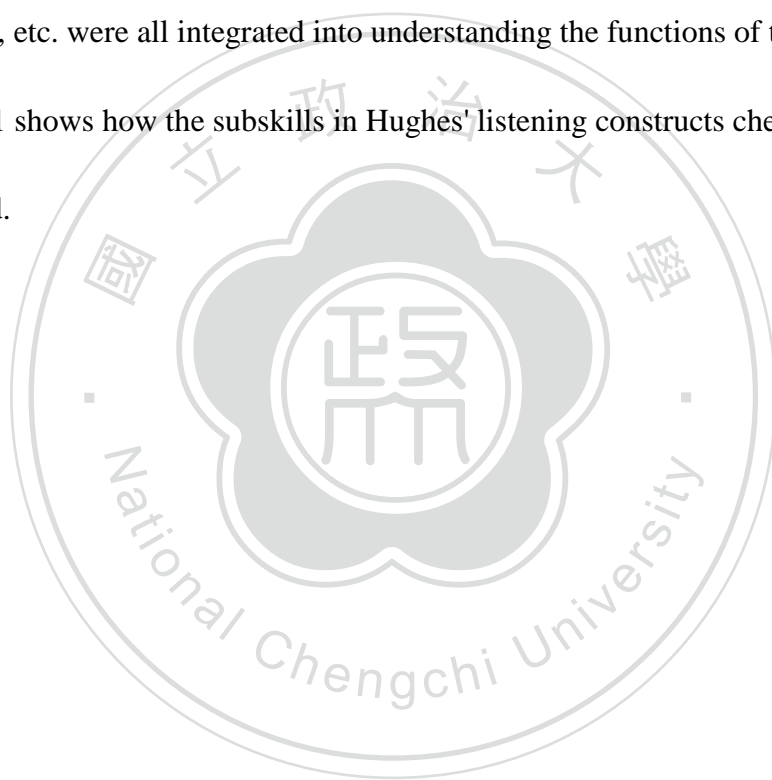
Figure 3.1

Integration of the Subskills from Hughes' Listening Constructs Checklist

obtain factual information recognize and understand opinions recognize and understand excuses recognize and understand expressions of preferences recognize and understand speculation understand comparisons understand greetings and introductions

→ obtain global or local information

understand requests for information understand expressions of need understand requests for help understand requests for permission understand apologies recognize and understand suggestions recognize and understand complaints understand and recognize requests for clarification recognize requests for opinion

→ understand the functions of the speeches

recognize and understand comments understand expressions of agreement understand expressions of disagreement recognize indications of uncertainty

→ recognize the speakers' attitudes

In addition, the researcher excluded 7 subskills in Hughes' listening constructs because they were too advanced and not suitable for beginning-level students. The deleted subskills included following justification of opinions, recognizing speaker's desire that listener indicate understanding, recognizing when speaker justifies or supports statements, etc. of other speaker(s), recognizing indications of understanding, recognizing indications of failure to understand, recognizing and

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understanding corrections by speaker (of self and others), recognizing and understanding modifications of statements and comments, recognizing when speaker questions assertions made by other speakers.

Lastly, the researcher added five other listening subskills to make the checklist more complete. As the researcher indicated before, Hughes put great emphasis on communication, and his checklist didn't include linguistic skills or subskills. Since linguistic knowledge was also of crucial importance in listening tests especially for beginning-levels, the researcher added three subskills assessing test-takers' linguistic knowledge: recognize words and phrases (Rost, 2011), recognize the correct signals in the question (Heaton, 1989), and understand colloquial languages such as idioms, slang, reduced forms, shared cultural knowledge (Harris, 1969). What's more, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) indicated that the ability to make inferences and predictions was crucial in listening comprehension teaching and testing, and that corresponded to CAP's listening comprehension scale descriptions. The researcher therefore added two more items in the checklist, i.e. making inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information and making prediction of what is going to be said before or during listening. Table 3.4 provides Listening Constructs Checklist for the listening comprehension of CAP.

Table 3.4

Listening Constructs Checklist for the Listening Comprehension of CAP

Listening Constructs		Numbers of Matched Items
1	recognize words and phrases	
2	recognize the correct signals in the question	
3	understand colloquial languages	
4	obtain the main idea	
5	follow instructions or directions	
6	follow sequence of events	
7	understand the functions of the speeches (e.g. requests, apologies, complaints, comments, etc.)	
8	recognize the speakers' purpose	
9	recognize the speakers' attitudes	
10	make inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information	
11	make predictions of what is going to be said before or during listening	

Test items of CAP from 2014 to 2019 would be coded with reference to the two

lists. The coding results on Table 3.3 would show to what degree the test items

match the curriculum indicators. On the other hand, the coding results on Table 3.4

would show what listening constructs were tested in CAP. Put the above two results

together, the item analysis of CAP in the past may offer basis for anticipating future

development of CAP with the release of 2019CG.

Data Analysis Process

This section aims to explain the analysis process and the coding system. To

answer the research questions, the researcher designed the abovementioned two

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checklists. To make sure the effectiveness of the checklists, a professor who is an expert in the theory of evaluation and assessment at a university in northern Taiwan will review them. The researcher would adjust the checklists based on the professor's suggestion.

Two raters participated in this study. One was the researcher herself, and the other was an English teacher who has six years' teaching experience in both junior high school and vocational high school. Three meetings were held for coding. In the first meeting, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and clarified the meaning of each specification to ensure both raters understood each definition. Then, the raters practiced analyzing the listening comprehension test items of 2014 CAP. The two checklists were given to them, and they were required to write down the numbers of the matched items in the right-hand columns. The practice analysis was done independently. When both of them finished the coding, they started to compare the result and discuss the problems they encountered during the analysis. If one item involved more than one subskill, it would be coded accordingly in more than one category. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was used to measure the inter-rater reliability. After the first meeting, the raters analyzed the test items from 2014 to 2016.

In the second meeting, the raters gathered together to compare the outcome of the analysis. The raters needed to discuss the discrepancy until they reach agreement. If there was still any disagreement, the researcher consulted experts for professional judgment. The inter-rater reliability was measured again to see whether the figure

was better than the previous one. After the second meeting, the raters analyzed the test items from 2017 to 2019.

In the third meeting, the raters compared the result of the analysis again. Similar to the previous meeting, if there was any disagreement, the raters would discuss until they reached consensus. The inter-rater reliability was calculated again to make sure there was consistency between the two raters. At the end of the third meeting, the categorization of all the test items was determined.

Exemplification of Coding Practice

To make the whole coding procedure more clear, the researcher provides three examples from the listening comprehension tests and explains how the test item is classified.

1.

I can't talk right now. Can I call you back?
(A) Since when?
(B) Almost there.
(C) No problem. (CAP, 2015)

Explanation:

This item is from Choosing Appropriate Responses. It is a very short dialogue with only one speaker, and the context of this dialogue is very common in everyday life. Thus, in terms of the correspondent competence indicators of 2008CG, this item can be categorized into "understand everyday life English and simple dialogues."

As for the listening constructs tested in this item, the researcher finds that the purpose of this item is to assess whether test-takers understand that the speaker was asking for permission to call back later. Thus, the researcher classifies this item into "understand the functions of the speeches" in the newly developed listening constructs checklist shown in Table 3.4.

2.

M: So how was Nacuna?
W: Lovely.
M: What did you do there?
W: Most mornings, Jamie and I just lay under a big umbrella. In the afternoon, I would go for a swim. The water was nice and warm then. And Jamie would play volleyball. The kids were always building castles. Oh, and… um… well, we didn't do it this time, but many people were suffering.
M: Sounds great. I'm going next week.
W: You'll love it.
Question: What is Nacuna?
(A) A beach.
(B) A gym.
(C) A toy store.   (CAP, 2018)

Explanation:

This item is from Listening Comprehension. Test-takers need to understand the woman was talking about her vacation in Naucuna and figure out what Naucuna is through the information provided by the woman. This item can be categorized into "understand daily life conversation and simple stories" in terms of the correspondence to the curriculum indicators.

With reference to Table 3.4 of the listening constructs analysis, this item

measures test-takers' ability to make inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information. Due to the fact that the woman in the conversation didn't say where exactly she went, test-takers need to catch some key words, such as "water" and "surfing" and infer that Naucuna referred to a beach. Thus, this item can be classified into "make inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information" in the newly developed listening constructs checklist shown in Table 3.4.

3.

Can you show me where First Hospital is? I know it's near here.
(A) He's really a good doctor.
(B) I have to take medicine every day.
(C) It's right in front of you.   (CAP, 2014)

Explanation:

This item is from Choosing Appropriate Responses. It is a very short dialogue with only one speaker, and the context of this dialogue is very common in everyday life. Thus, in terms of the correspondent competence indicators of 2008CG, this item can be categorized into "understand everyday life English and simple dialogues."

As for listening constructs of Table 3.4, this item tests abilities of both "understand the functions of the speeches" and "recognize the correct signals in the question." To choose the correct answer, test-takers need to understand the speaker is asking for direction. The function of the speeches is asking for help, and test-takers need to recognize the key word "where," so that they can choose the answer indicating the location of the hospital.

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CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of analysis are presented and discussed in response to the two research questions. The first section explains the inter-rater reliability of the coding outcomes. The second section discusses the similarities and differences between 2008CG and 2019CG to answer the first research question. The third section aims to discuss the results of the Curriculum Checklist and the correspondence between 2008CG and the listening comprehension test of CAP in order to answer the second research question. The fourth section presents the coding results of the Listening Constructs Checklist with the aim of exploring listening constructs tested in CAP. The final section discusses possible impacts of 2019CG on the listening comprehension section in the future CAP.

Inter-rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability, also known as inter-rater agreement, is a great concern when a study requires more than one person to collect data. McHugh (2012) clearly stated that the result of inter-rater reliability is of huge importance because it reveals how correct the data collected in the study are. Since the present study included two raters to analyze the targeted test items, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was utilized to

measure the inter-rater agreement.

The magnitude of Cohen's Kappa coefficient of Checklist for 2008CG is .67, and the magnitude of Cohen's Kappa coefficient of Listening Constructs Checklist is .69.   Cohen (1960) suggested that the Kappa value of .61 to .80 is described as substantial. In consequence, the result of the Kappa value of this present study indicates that the coding consistency between the two raters is substantial.

Results of the Comparison between 2008CG and 2019CG

The outcome of the comparison between 2008CG and 2019CG is divided into three parts: the first part deals with the comparison of general guidelines. It discusses the similarities and differences in terms of the fundamental beliefs, curriculum goals, and the indicators. The second part discusses the course objectives of the two guidelines. The third part presents the similarities and differences of what learners' listening abilities are requested in the two guidelines.

General Guidelines

The fundamental difference between 2008CG and 2019CG lies in the fact that the two guidelines hold different views on education, which leads to the discrepancy of the curriculum goals. 2008CG viewed education as a learning process to help students encompass basic competences that modern citizens should possess, and school is the context where students learn the knowledge. According to this concept,

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2008CG listed ten curriculum goals to state how an ideal modern citizen should be.

Table 4.1 shows the curriculum goals of 2008CG.

Table 4.1

Curriculum Goals of 2008CG

Curriculum Goals
1. To enhance self-understanding and explore individual potential
2. To develop creativity and the ability to appreciate beauty and present one's own talents
3. To promote abilities related to career planning and lifelong learning
4. To cultivate knowledge and skills related to expression, communication, and sharing
5. To learn to respect others, care for the community, and facilitate team work
6. To further cultural learning and international understanding
7. To strengthen knowledge and skills related to planning, organizing, and their implementation
8. To acquire the ability to utilize technology and information
9. To encourage the attitude of active learning and studying
10. To develop abilities related to independent thinking and problem solving

Unlike 2008CG, 2019CG was developed based on holistic education. Instead of emphasizing how to develop students' ability to be modern citizens, 2019CG values adequate education. Therefore, it caters to the specific needs of each individual and takes account of cultural diversity between ethnic groups. Table 4.2 presents the curriculum goals of 2019CG.

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Table 4.2

Curriculum Goals of 2019CG

Curriculum Goals
1. Inspiring students to unleash their full potential.
2. Teach and develop students' knowledge about life.
3. Promote students' career development.
4. Inculcate students' civic responsibility.

2019CG lists four clear and concise curriculum goals. Though these four goals look very similar to those in 2008CG, they are actually more specific and individualized. Take "inculcate students' civic responsibility" as an example. It consists of several details, such as enrich students' international cultural awareness, respect cultural and ethnical diversity, pursue social justice, develop a caring and active attitude toward resource preservation, endeavor toward ecological sustainability, etc. The similar goal in 2008CG is "to further cultural learning and international understanding," which only relates to developing students' social participation and raising their citizen awareness. Another example is the idea of "decent work." This concept can be found in "promote students' career development" in 2019CG. It emphasizes students' ability not only to adapt to social changes and global trends but also to develop their courage to initiate a new trend or fashion, but this wasn't included in 2008CG. All of the above suggests that the curriculum goals in 2019CG are broad in scope compared to 2008CG and can overcome the limitation of 2008CG.

To achieve the curriculum goals, the guidelines set several indicators as the basis of curriculum development. Since the indicators should be established based

on the curriculum goals, the discrepancy between the two guidelines causes the differences among the benchmarks. The following paragraphs will separately discuss the contents of the indicators of the two guidelines, and then their similarities and differences will be explained.

2008CG categorized ten indicators for the purpose of developing the abilities that a modern citizen should possess. These abilities are called "core competence," including (1) self-understanding and exploration of potentials, (2) appreciation, representation, and creativity, (3) career planning and lifelong learning, (4) expression, communication, and sharing, (5) respect, care and team work, (6) cultural learning and international understanding, (7) planning, organizing, and putting plans into practice, (8) utilization of technology and information, (9) active exploration and study, (10) independent thinking and problem solving.

While 2008CG only put emphasis on the abilities students should develop, 2019CG valued the information, ability, and attitude that students need to possess. Since what the indicators represent differs from 2008CG, 2019CG gave it a new term, "core competency." The idea of core competency emphasizes that instead of the knowledge and ability taught in school, learning should also consider real-life scenarios and value the specific needs of each individual. Moreover, the fundamental goal of learning is to help students become lifelong learners. In this case, 2019CG divided the competencies into three dimensions, i.e. spontaneity, communication and interaction, and social participation. Each dimension involves

three items. Table 4.3 illustrates the main concept of the core competencies of

2019CG.

Table 4.3

Three Dimensions and Nine Items of Core Competencies of 2019CG

Dimension	Items of Core Competencies
spontaneity	physical and mental wellness, and self-advancement
	logical thinking and problem solving
	planning, execution, innovation, and adaptation
communication and interaction	semiotics and expression
	information and technology and literacy, and media literacy
	artistic appreciation and aesthetic literacy
social participation	cultural and global understanding
	interpersonal relationships and team work
	moral praxis and citizenship

Though the content of core competencies looks very similar to core

competences, the former are actually more comprehensive than the latter for the

following three reasons. First of all, core competencies not only included all the ten

competences listed in 2008CG, but they added several other important issues about

life that 2008CG failed to contain, such as moral praxis and citizen awareness,

technology literacy and media literacy, artistic appreciation and aesthetic literacy, etc.

What core competencies added in 2019CG compensates for the deficiency in

2008CG. Secondly, competencies not merely contain the idea of basic ability, core

competences, and school knowledge in the past, but imply deeper meaning of

education. The content of core competencies shows that students are autonomous

learners, and learning should not be limited to the acquisition of school knowledge.

Core competencies emphasize what students can apply to their daily experience, and thus learning should connect with real-life scenarios. Lastly, all the items of core competencies are evolved based on one central idea, that is, to foster students to be lifelong learners. The existence of having a fundamental concept helps the content of core competencies to be more well-rounded than the content of core competences. The above-mentioned reasons indicate that core competency not only contains all the ideas of core competence but is more comprehensive than core competence.

Course Objectives of English Subject

Course objectives of each subject are designed in accordance with the general guidelines. The following paragraphs will separately discuss the course objectives of English subject of 2008CG and 2019CG.

Since 2008CG focused on the ability that students should possess, the English course objectives were (1) to develop students' basic English communication ability and use it in real-life situation, (2) to motivate students' interest in English learning and help them find the way to learn English effectively, (3) to help students know more about indigenous culture and foreign culture and respect cultural differences. All of the aforementioned objectives were the abilities that students need to possess as modern citizens, and once the course objectives were achieved, students would be able to handle international affairs in the future and thus boosted our national competiveness.

2019CG, on the other hand, values adaptive development and lifelong learning, and thus the English education of 2019CG highlights language use and how to acquire new knowledge with the help of English. In correspondence to the curriculum goals of 2019CG, the English course objectives of 2019CG are (1) to develop students' four skills and use them in everyday communication, (2) motivate the interest in English learning and take the initiative to acquire knowledge with the help of English, (3) to develop an effective way of English learning, improve self-learning skills, and prepare for lifelong learning, (4) respect and accept diverse cultures, and cultivate international perspectives, (5) develop the ability to use English to think logically, analyze, integrate, and create. It is obvious to see that the English course objectives of 2019CG not only value what ability students need to possess but also how English education helps students to equip themselves for daily life and challenges.

Competence Indicators of 2008CG and Learning Performance of 2019CG

Both competence indicators and learning performance refer to expected learning performance. The former was used in 2008CG, and the latter is used in 2019CG. The following paragraphs will separately discuss their contents first and then compare their similarities and differences.

The core value of English course was that it took English as the prime tool for communication. Since the purpose of English education was to help students achieve

successful communication with others, 2008CG considered what abilities students

need to develop during the three-year English course and listed them in the

guidelines. These abilities were called competence indicators. For the convenience

of comparison, Table 4.4 repeated the competence indicators presented in Table 3.1.

Table 4.4

Competence Indicators for Listening of 2008 CG

Competence Indicators
1. Understand sentences with simple sentence patterns.
2. Understand everyday life English and simple dialogues.
3. Understand the rhythms, rhymes, and contents of songs and verses.
4. Identify the emotions and attitudes from different tones.
5. Understand daily life conversation and simple stories.
＊6. Recognize the main idea and the setting of a conversation or a message.
＊7. Approximately understand the content of simple video clips and short plays.[3]

2019 CG not only considered English a means of communication but a great

tool for students to acquire new knowledge and get the information they need. To

achieve the aforementioned goal, 2019CG listed eleven listening abilities that

students should possess in order to help students become lifelong learners and tackle

the problems they meet. For the convenience of comparison, Table 4.5 repeated the

content of learning performance in 2019CG presented in Table 3.2.

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[3] Items with asterisks are optional and should be taught according to students' ability.

Table 4.5

Learning Performance for Listening of 2019 CG

Learning Performance
1. Understand the words and phrases learned in class.
2. Understand common classroom English and everyday life English.
3. Understand sentences with basic or important sentence patterns.
4. Understand the main content of daily conversation.
5. Understand the main content of songs and verses.
6. Understand the main content of simple stories and short plays.
7. Identify the main idea and setting in a short instruction or description.
8. Understand the main content of videos.
＊9. Identify the attitudes and emotions from the tones of sentences.
＊10. Understand the rhythms and rhymes of songs and verses.
＊11. Understand the content of public announcements, such as the announcement in the MRT, in the train station, or at the airport.[4]

All the abilities listed in 2008CG are included in 2019CG. Though the contents of 2008CG and 2019CG look very similar, there are three differences between them. First of all, 2008CG only looks upon English as a means of communication, while 2019CG not just considers English a means of communication but an indispensable tool to acquire new knowledge and get the information they need to deal with all kinds of life situation. The added ability, "understand the content of public announcements, such as the announcement in the MRT, in the train station, or at the airport," could support this view. Secondly, the added ability shows that 2019CG aims to enhance students' ability to integrate all the listening abilities they acquire. Students need to not only catch key words and phrases but also understand the speaker's intention or even utilize their background knowledge to make up for any

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[4] Items with asterisks are optional in grade 7-9 and will be repeated in grade 10-12.

unclear parts of the message.

The third difference is how the listening abilities are presented and described in the two guidelines. As for the way the listening abilities are presented, 2008CG divided the all the listening abilities into two phases, i.e. the elementary school phase and the junior high school phase. Though 2008CG states that there is continuity between the two phases, it doesn't mention what abilities in the first phase are still useful and important in the second phase. Teachers need to make the decision by themselves, and this may cause great confusion for them. Unlike 2008CG, the new guidelines not merely points out what abilities repeatedly appear in different learning phases but also increases their difficulty levels when they show up again in the higher phase. Take "understand sentences with simple sentence patterns" as an example. This ability was listed in the elementary school phase, and when the same ability is referred to again in the junior high school phase, it becomes "understand sentences with basic or important sentence patterns." It is because elementary school students only need to understand simple sentence patterns, but for junior high school students, basic sentence patterns are not enough, and important ones are also what they need to learn. This kind of adjustment made in 2019CG helps teachers get specific principles when preparing lessons.

In terms of the descriptions of the listening abilities, 2008CG only mentioned the text types that students need to understand, while 2019CG not only mentioned the text types but further explained what exactly students should understand. Take

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one listening ability which shows up in both guidelines as an example. In 2008CG, it was described as "understand daily life conversation and simple stories." This item contains two different text types, i.e. daily life conversation and simple stories, and there is no further description explaining what the guidelines expected students to understand when listening to a conversation and simple stories. However, when 2019CG refers to the similar abilities, it clearly indicates that it is the main content that students are expected to comprehend. Thus, the same ability in 2019CG is described as "understand the main content of daily conversation," and "understand the main content of simple stories and short plays." Though these seem to be minor differences, they give English teachers a principle to follow when deciding the focus of their listening instruction and assessment.

Results of the Test Items Analysis with Reference to the Curriculum Checklist

The purpose of the Curriculum Checklist is to examine whether the test items match the curriculum checklist. The result of the Curriculum Checklist for 2008CG is presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

The Result of the Curriculum Checklist for 2008CG

	Competence Indicators for Listening	Numbers and Percentages
1	Understand sentences with simple sentence patterns.	12 (8.6%)
2	Understand everyday life English and simple dialogues.	**55 (39.6%)**
3	Understand the rhythms, rhymes, and contents of songs and verses.	0 (0%)
4	Identify the emotions and attitudes from different tones.	4 (2.9%)
5	Understand daily conversations and simple stories.	**41 (29.5%)**
6	Recognize the main idea and the setting of a conversation or a message.	**27 (19.4%)**
7	Approximately understand the content of simple video clips and short plays.	0 (0%)
	Total.	**139 (100%)[5]**

Generally speaking, the test items of the listening comprehension section of CAP are in correspondence with the competence indicators for listening ability of 2008CG, but the distribution of the percentages of matched items is quite imbalanced. The indicator that has the highest coverage is "understand everyday life English and simple dialogues" (39.6%), and "understand daily conversations and simple stories" (29.5%) ranks second. Obviously, the test items are mostly about dialogues and conversations, which is closely related to everyday life situations. In addition, two indicators are totally absent from the listening comprehension test, and still another two indicators receives very low distribution. The following paragraphs will further discuss the table in detail.

The most-frequently involved indicator is "understand simple dialogues."

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[5] The total number of the listening comprehension test items of CAP is 125. Due to the fact that one item may be coded in more than one categories, the total number here is more than 125.

Fifty-five items (39.6%) are classified into this category. A typical example of this item is presented below:

The weather is no nice today. Let's go for a swim this afternoon.
(A) Nobody's home now.
(B) Sounds like a plan.
(C) You never know.   (CAP, 2017)

In this short dialogue, there is only two turns. Test-takers need to make the right response after listening to what the speaker says. The first speaker was giving some ideas about what to do this afternoon. If test-takers understand the speaker is offering a suggestion, they would choose answer B.

It is worth noting that the "simple dialogue" may involve more than two turns. One example is provided below:

W: Can you go shopping with us on Saturday?
M: I'd love to, but I have to go to school.
(A) I'm happy to hear that.
(B) That's a good idea.
(C) That's too bad.   (CAP, 2015)

In this dialogue, test-takers need to know the man politely rejected the woman's invitation, and thus an appropriate response for the speaker of the third turn should be C.

According to Table 4.6, the second mostly invested category is "understand conversations and simple stories." Forty-one items (29.5%) belongs to this category. Below is a typical example of this type:

M: Sandy?
W: Uh...do I know you?

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M: Mike Black! Remember? We were in Mrs. Long's class for a year!

W:Uh...oh yeah! Wow, you're so different. What are you doing in London?

M: I'm on a business trip, and you?

W: I'm studying here.

Question: What do we know about the man and the woman?

(A) They are on a trip together.

(B) They met for the first time.

(C) They went to the same school. (CAP, 2017)

This conversation assesses whether test-takers can understand daily conversations.

Test-takers need to understand the speakers haven't seen each other for quite a while,

and now they meet again in London. Based on the expressions "I'm on a business

trip, and you?" and "I'm studying here," test-takers can decide that one of them is

doing business there, and the other is studying. Thus, test-takers would be able to

choose the correct answer, which is C.

Besides the above two types, "recognize the main idea and the setting of a

conversation or a message" ranks the third. Twenty-seven items are categorized into

this type. Here is an example of this category:

W: Hey, let's have a look inside.

M: Leo's pieces? Oh, isn't this Lily Webber's shop? My favorite movie star!
   She's also a great writer. I've read two of her books.

W: Yep, that's her! I'm also a big fan of hers. Oh, look at these skirts and shirts.

M: Do you want to try them on?

Question: Where are the man and the woman?

(A) At a bookstore.

(B) At a clothes shop.

(C) At a theater. (CAP, 2017)

To correctly choose the answer, test-takers need to catch the key words and phrases

"skirts," "shirts," and "try them on," so that they can recognize the conversation

happens in a clothes shop and choose B.

Among the seven categories, two are less found, including "understand

sentences with simple sentence patterns" (8.6%) and "identify the emotions and

attitudes from different tones" (2.9%). An example of understanding sentences with

simple sentence patterns is provided below:

The girl is too short to get the box on top of the refrigerator.
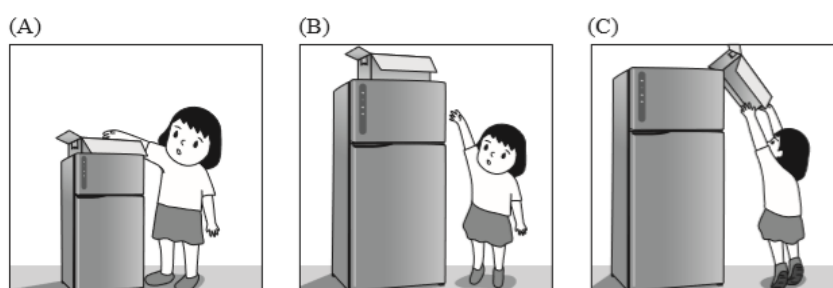
To correctly choose the answer, test-takers need to know that the sentence pattern

"...too... to..." has a negative meaning. This item means the girl is not tall enough to

get the box on top of the refrigerator. Thus, test-takers can delete answers B and C

for the girl in these two answers can get the box.

Regarding identifying the emotions and attitudes from different tones, here is

an example:

W: Oh, no! Anna is going to kill me. I broke her favorite teacup!
M: Do you mean the one she bought from England and she loved very much?
W: Yes! Oh... what am I going to do?
M: Just tell her.
W: Hmm... Interesting. So who never told her that he ate the super expensive
steak she bought?
Question: What does the woman think of the man's idea about what she should
do?

(A) It's helpful.

(B) It's simple.

(C) It's stupid.

(CAP, 2017)

Test-takers need to be aware of the question the woman asked in the end of the

conversation. Wh-questions typically end in a falling pitch, but in the test, the

woman asked the question with a rising pitch, which indicates that it was not a real

question. The woman already had the answer in her mind, and the intonation showed

that she didn't agree with the man's suggestion. If test-takers pay attention to the

intonation, they would know the woman didn't agree with the man's idea at all and

choose the correct answer, C. It must be noted that intonation plays a major role in

the conversation; however, there is no indicator about recognizing intonation and

understand its function in 2008CG.

Two indicators of the curriculum checklist are absent from the listening

comprehension test: (1) understand the rhythms, rhymes, and contents of songs and

verses, and (2) approximately understand the content of simple video clips and short

plays. The lack of presence of these two items might be due to the following two

reasons. The first one is the limitation of equipment. To successfully hold the

listening comprehension CAP, the authority has to provide mp3 players for all the

test centers and train test administrators to appropriately use them every year, which

already costs a huge amount of money. If CAP intends to include video clips and

short plays into the test, the cost of equipment purchase and training will certainly

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increase. The other possible reason is that how songs and videos might affect

test-takers' listening comprehension still remains uncertain. Songs and videos may

influence test-takers' performance in a better way, but they may also be a distraction.

Since CAP is a large-scale high-stake examination, and no one is sure how songs

and videos might influence test-takers' performance, avoiding them might be a better

choice.

It should also be noted that one item may test more than one ability. In this

present study, 14 test items in total are classified into two categories. Below is an

example:

How often do you go mountain-climbing?
(A) Seldom. I don't really like it.
(B) Perhaps. Maybe next month.
(C) Great! It's beautiful up there. (CAP, 2017)

The correct answer is A. This short question is very common in everyday life

English, and the item aims to assess whether test-takers are familiar with the

sentence pattern "How often…" Therefore, this item is categorized into

"understanding everyday life English and simple dialogues" and "understand

sentences with simple sentence patterns."

The results of the above analysis can draw attention to two important points.

First of all, the authority should be aware of the washback effect resulting from the

imbalanced distribution of the matched items. Competence indicators that have high

coverage may become the focus in English classes, while those with low coverage

might be ignored by both students and English teachers. Secondly, as indicated in the previous chapter, the descriptions of the competence indicators are not specific enough, which causes problems when the researcher intends to understand what detailed abilities test-takers should possess. Below are examples:

W: Could you buy me some milk and bread?
M: Right away.
Q: Where's the man going?
(A) To a bookstore.
(B) To a supermarket.
(C) To a theater.

(CAP, 2014)

W: Have you ever heard about King of a Fighter?
M: A soccer player or something?
W: No. It's a great book. I like it very much. I'm sure you'll like it, too!
Q: What's King of a Fighter?
(A) A good book.
(B) A soccer player.
(C) A video game.

(CAP, 2014)

Both of these two items are categorized into "understand daily conversations and simple stories." However, it is apparent that the abilities they aim to assess are not the same. For the first item, test-takers need to understand the function of the phrase "right away" as response to a request. The other item, on the other hand, requires test-takers' ability to understand the content of a long reply that provides clues to the question. Due to the vague and limited descriptions of the competence indicators, the researcher had no choice but to classify them into the same category. However, it

is necessary to find out what exact abilities these items intend to measure. This also

proves that a more comprehensive checklist of listening ability is of great value.

Results of the Test Items Analysis with Reference to the Listening Constructs

Checklist

The purpose of the Listening Constructs Checklist is to further examine the

detailed listening abilities that CAP assesses. Table 4.7 shows the distribution and

the percentage of the numbers of the matched items of Listening Constructs
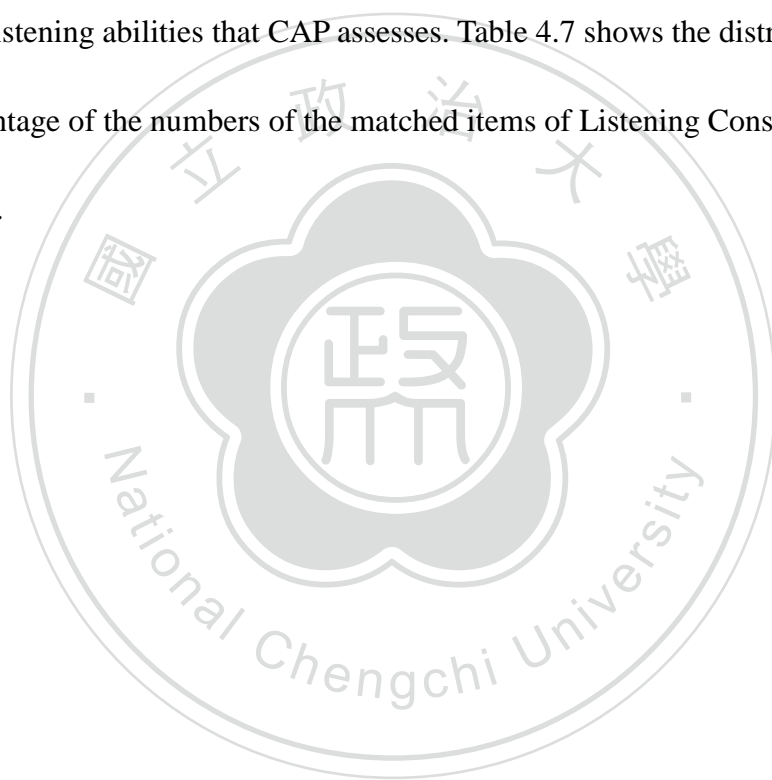
Checklist.

Table 4.7

The Result of Listening Constructs Checklist

Listening Constructs		Numbers of Matched Items
1	recognize words and phrases	**28 (19.6%)**
2	recognize the correct signals in the question	12 (8.4%)
3	understand colloquial languages	6 (4.2%)
4	obtain the main idea	2 (1.4%)
5	follow instructions or directions	0 (0%)
6	follow sequence of events	1 (0.7%)
7	understand the functions of the speeches (e.g. requests, apologies, complaints, comments, etc.)	**38 (26.6%)**
8	recognize the speakers' purpose	1 (0.7%)
9	recognize the speakers' attitudes	3 (2.1%)
10	make inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information	**52 (36.4%)**
11	make predictions of what is going to be said before or during listening	0 (0%)
	total	**143 (100%)[6]**

From the above table, we can see the distribution of the matched items between

the listening comprehension of CAP and listening constructs is extremely

imbalanced. The top two most-targeted listening abilities in the listening

comprehension section of CAP from 2014 to 2019 account for more than 50 percent

of the items. They are making inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous

information (36.4%) and understanding the functions of the speeches (26.6%).

While the above two constructs receive high coverage, two other constructs are

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[6] The total number of the listening comprehension test items of CAP is 125. Due to the fact that one item may be coded in more than one categories, the total number here is more than 125.

neglected, i.e. "follow instructions or directions" and "make predictions of what is going to be said before or during listening." The rest receive very little attention. The paragraphs below will further discuss the table in detail.

Among all the listening skills, making inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information is the most-targeted ability (36.4%). A typical sample of making inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information is given below:

> Teacher: That's wonderful, students. All of you have beautiful voices, but, please sing louder. You can stand up or drink some water if you think it helps. Let's try it again. Three, two, one, go!
> Question: Which class are the students in?
> (A) PE.
> (B) Math.
> (C) Music. (CAP, 2019)

The purpose of this item is to measure whether test-takers can infer what class the students are taking through what they heard. If test-takers catch the key phrases such as "beautiful voices" and "sing louder," they would realize that the students must be in a music class and choose C.

Below is another example of making inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information:

> M: Excuse me.
> W: How may I help you?
> M: Uh…yeah. I'm looking for a pair of pants.
> W: What kind of pants? Jeans?
> M: No… Um… Something can wear to work.
> W: Let me see. How about this pair?
> M: Um… These look nice.

W: Why don't you try them on?

Question: Who is the woman?

(A) A police officer.

(B) A shop clerk.

(C) A secretary.   (CAP, 2019)

The correct answer is B. If test-takers notice that after the man came to the woman

for help, the woman started to help him find some pants to wear, they can infer the

conversation took place in a clothes shop. Then they may make an inference that the

woman should be a shop clerk and choose the right answer.

It must be noted that test-takers' ability to make inferences for missing, unclear,

or ambiguous information can also be measured by asking them to infer the meaning

of colloquial languages. An example is provided below:

M: Hey, have you bought a ticket to A.J.'s music show?

W: Oh, no! I forgot! I've been busy preparing for my test this week.

M: Well, they're going to stop selling the tickets in ten minutes.

W: Oh, I'll check online now.

M: You can try, but there might be not any left. Honestly, I think you've already
     missed the boat.

Question: When the man tells the woman, "You've already missed the boat,"
     what does he mean?

(A) She failed her test this week.

(B) She was too late to catch a boat.

(C) She lost the chance to get a ticket.   (CAP, 2019)

The purpose of this item is to assess whether test-takers can infer the meaning of

colloquial languages "You've already missed the boat" after listening to the whole

dialogue. If test-takers fail to realize that "too late to catch a boat" means something

different from its literal meaning, they may choose B, which is the wrong answer.

Test-takers need to infer the meaning of "the boat" from the context and understand

that "the boat" refers to "the chance to get a ticket." Thus, the correct answer is C.

Since test-takers need to perform two kinds of abilities, i.e. making inferences for

missing, unclear, or ambiguous information, and understanding colloquial languages,

this item is put in two constructs.

Referring back to Table 4.7, we can find understanding the functions of the

speeches is ranked the second. Thirty-eight test items (26.6%) belongs to this type. A

typical sample of understanding the functions of the speeches is presented below:

Hurry up. We're late. The taxi is waiting.
(A) Give me five more minutes.
(B) It's not early enough.
(C) The taxi driver will be late.   (CAP, 2015)
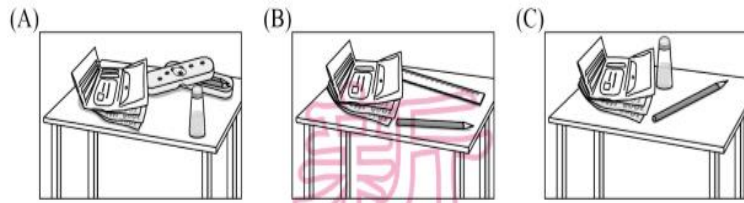
The purpose of this item is to assess whether test-takers realize that the speaker is

urging the other person to get ready. Test-takers need to understand the function of

what the speaker said and choose the correct response, A.

The third highest percentage falls in the category of recognizing words and

phrases, which is tested by twenty-eight items (19.6%). The typical way to assess

this ability is to ask test-takers to match pictures and utterances. Below is an

example:

You can see a wallet, a pencil case, and glue on the desk.

(CAP, 2014)

The purpose of this test item is to assess whether test-takers can recognize the words "wallet," "pencil case," and "glue." If test-takers recognize these words, they would choose the correct answer, A.

A more difficult way to measure this ability is to ask test-takers to listen to a conversation and recognize the key words. For example:

W: Excuse me. Is this bus to the train station?
M: No. The bus to the train station is Number 543.
W: Number...?
M: 543. Number 543.
Question: Which bus goes to the train station?
(A) Number 543.
(B) Number 453.
(C) Number 345.   (CAP, 2014)

Unlike the previous example, this test item requires test-takers to listen to a conversation and be aware of the repetition of the number. Test-takers then need to remember the key word of the number and identify which option is correct. To successfully answer this type of test items, test-takers need to not only recognize words and phrases but also retain the words and phrases in their short-term memory. Compared to matching pictures and utterances, the level of difficulty of this type is higher.

Among all the listening constructs, 28 test items (19.6%) are identified as recognizing words and phrases, 12 items (8.4%) as recognizing the correct signals in the question, and 6 items (4.2%) as understanding colloquial languages. The above three constructs are related to test-takers' linguistic knowledge, which means 46 test items (32.2%) in total aim to assess test-takers' bottom-up abilities. Though the percentage is not high, it shows that the listening comprehension of CAP still values test-takers' linguistic skills.

Additionally, two listening constructs are not incorporated into the test: (1) following instructions or directions and (2) making predictions of what is going to be said before or during listening. One possible reason might be that these two constructs are more challenging. Following instructions or directions may require test-takers' short-term memory. When the text is long, it may be difficult to know whether the test item is to assess test-takers' listening ability or short-term memory. The other absent construct is also too challenging for junior high school graduates because it requires more complicated tasks. However, these two listening constructs are very useful in our everyday conversation, and the lack of their presence in the large-scale high-stake examination may result in ignorance in instruction.

It should be noted that one item may involve more than one construct, which means it is possible to ask test-takers to perform more than one abilities for one test item. In the present study, 18 test items in total are related to two constructs. An example is given below:

Which do you like, computers or comic books?

(A) I can play them well.

(B) I don't do well at school.

(C) I like computers.   (CAP, 2014)

The correct answer is C. In order to correctly choose the answer, test-takers need to understand the function of the speech is to get information. Furthermore, test-takers also need to recognize the signal "which" in the question, and thus their response should be limited to the options between computers and comic books. Since this item requires test-takers to perform two kinds of abilities, this item is classified into two constructs, i.e. understanding the correct signals in the question, and understanding the functions of the speeches. This kind of questions show that the listening comprehension section of CAP also values test-takers' ability of integrating several skills. Test-takers need to know not only what listening skills they should apply but also how to integrate them to comprehend a text. This phenomenon is also mentioned in Chu's (2019) study. Chu said that several test items were not able to be classified into one specific listening subskill in her study. It is because the CAP test designers did not intend to confine one test item with only one ability to deal with.

Finally, the three parts of CAP represent a different item types, each targeting at certain constructs. For example, the first part of the listening comprehension section of CAP is matching pictures and utterances, and the results show that this part mostly measure test-takers' ability to recognize words and phrases. This might be because once test-takers recognize the key words or phrases in the listening text,

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they are able to choose the correct pictures. The second part of the listening test is

choosing appropriate responses, and this part mostly involves understanding the

functions of speeches and recognizing the correct signals in the question. More than

half of the test items in this part are a question raised by a speaker. Test-takers need

to recognize key words or signals in the questions and understand why the speakers

ask these questions so as to choose the appropriate responses. The last part of the

listening test is understanding a conversation or a passage, and the results indicate

that making inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information is the most

frequently tested construct in this part. This might be because the texts in this part

are longer than the other two parts, and to understand a long text usually require

listeners' ability to catch key words and make use of their background knowledge,

so that they are able to make appropriate inferences for missing, unclear, or

ambiguous information during listening. Thus, this construct is tested most in this

part. In Both Lin's (2017) and Chu's (2019) studies, they indicated that students

performed best in the first part, followed by the second and then the last. The result

of the present study may explain the phenomenon. The first part focuses on

test-takers' ability to recognize the key words or phrases, which is the easiest ability

compared to the other two parts. The last part aims to evaluate test-takers' ability to

make inferences, and since this ability requires test-takers to integrate several

abilities, such as retaining the message in their short-term memory, following the

flow of the message, activating their prior knowledge, etc. (Chu, 2019), it is

considered a higher-level ability. Therefore, test items intend to assess students'

ability to make inferences tended to be more difficult for students.

Overall, the results of the listening constructs checklist draw the following two

points. To begin with, understanding the functions of the speeches and making

inferences for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information are tested more compared

to the others. The former is very common in daily conversation and should be a

basic skill for test-takers, and the latter requires test-takers' ability to identify key

words. Secondly, it should be noted again that the imbalanced distribution of the

matched items between listening constructs and test items might lead to a negative

washback effect on teaching.

Possible Impacts of 2019CG on the Future Listening Comprehension section of

CAP

Based on the results of the analysis, the researcher will discuss possible impacts

of 2019CG on the future CAP in this section. The discussion will be presented in

two parts: (1) current practice in the listening comprehension section of CAP, and (2)

possible changes in the future CAP under the influence of 2019CG.

Current Practice in the Listening Comprehension Section of CAP

The current trends in the listening comprehension section of CAP have the

following four features. Firstly, the tasks that CAP has adopted to assess listening

comprehension include three parts, matching pictures and utterances, choosing

appropriate responses, and understanding a conversation or a passage. And as

previously indicated, most of them are about dialogues and conversations. Secondly,

to be consistent with the objectives of the curriculum guidelines, the content of the

tasks is closely associated with test-takers' daily life situations. Thirdly, in terms of

the competence indicators, understanding everyday life English and simple

dialogues and understanding daily conversations and simple stories may remain the

top two highly emphasized ability. Lastly, item types are correlated to certain

specific constructs. The first part of the listening comprehension section is matching

pictures and utterances, and the most frequently tested construct is recognizing

words and phrases. The second part of the test is choosing appropriate responses,

and the most commonly tested constructs are understanding the function of the

speeches, and recognizing the signals in the question. The last part of the test is

understanding a conversation or a passage. For this item type, making inferences for

missing, unclear, or ambiguous information is the most frequently tested construct in

this part.

Possible Changes of the Future CAP Under the Influence of 2019CG

Based on the above analysis, the researcher anticipates that the release of

2019CG may not lead to great changes in the future listening comprehension section

of CAP. It is because there is only slight differences between the competence

indicators of 2008CG and the learning performances of 2019CG. Even so, the following two points are still worth attention.

First of all, more diverse tasks and content might be included in the future listening comprehension section of CAP. Compared with the course objectives of 2008CG, the focus of 2019CG is not limited to improve students' daily communication skills, but expands to equip students with abilities to deal with everyday life situations and even challenges. In addition, the descriptions of learning performances of 2019CG are more detailed and more comprehensive than those of 2008CG. The new guidelines specifies more listening abilities with details. These may lead to more diversified tasks which CAP would require test-takers to perform in the future. From 2014 to 2017, all the text content is either one sentence or a short dialogue. It was not until 2018 that short monologues started to be included in the test items, though they are of very low coverage. Due to the changes of the course objectives in the guidelines, the researcher anticipates that more monologues, such as lectures, speeches, and stories might be included in the future CAP.

Secondly, the course objectives of 2019CG and the newly-added indicator of 2019 imply the significance of developing integrative ability. Understanding the content of public announcements under different kinds of situations requires students not only to recognize words and phrases but also to utilize their background knowledge to catch key words and even make appropriate inferences. The integrative ability is very common in our daily life situations, and since the course

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objectives of 2019CG emphasize the ability to deal with everyday life situations,

items intend to assess students' integrating ability may increase.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides conclusions for the present study based on the results and discussions from the previous chapters. To begin with, a summary of the major findings is given to answer the two research questions. Then, pedagogical implications for junior high school English teachers are offered. Finally, the limitations of the present study and the suggestions for the future study are discussed.

Summary of the Major Findings

The results of the present study can be summarized by responding to the two research questions proposed in the study. The first research question is about the comparison between 2008CG and 2019CG, and to find out possible impacts of 2019CG on the future CAP. The second research question aims to find out what listening constructs are tested in the listening comprehension section of CAP from 2014 to 2019, and how the tested constructs correspond to 2008CG.

RQ1. What are the similarities and differences between 2008CG and 2019CG in terms of the description of listening abilities, and what are possible impacts of

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2019CG on the listening comprehension section in the future CAP?

The researcher compared 2008CG and 2019CG, and the outcome of the analysis can be divided into three parts: (1) the comparison between general guidelines, (2) the comparison between course objectives of the English subject, (3) the comparison between indicators of English competency. The first part of the comparison shows that 2008CG places more emphasis on the abilities students should develop at school, while 2019CG values not only the knowledge and the abilities acquired at school but also the attitude in dealing with everyday life situations. This difference leads to the discrepancy between the competence indicators of the two CGs. 2008CG lists ten competence indicators that students should acquire. These competence indicators, called "core competence," are meant to help students to be good learners at school. On the other hand, with the purpose of cultivating students' lifelong learning, 2019CG divides the indicators into three dimensions, and each dimension contains three abilities that students should develop. These abilities are termed "core competency." Compared with 2008CG, the curriculum goal of 2019CG is broader in scope, and the content of core competencies is more well-rounded and comprehensive.

The second part of the analysis is to compare course objectives of English subjects of 2008CG and 2019CG.. The analysis results show that 2008CG considers English a tool of communication and that its course objectives are mainly regarding what abilities students need for authentic communication. By contrast, 2019CG

values English as a tool not only to communicate but also to get new information

and acquire new knowledge. Its course objectives, therefore, emphasize how

students equip themselves for facing challenges encountered in their life with the

aids of their language ability.

The third part of the analysis is to compare indicators of competence in

2008CG and learning performance of 2019CG. The analysis results show that the

contents of the two CGs look very similar, but three differences are found between

them. Firstly, 2019CG adds one new ability in authentic context, "understand the

content of public announcements, such as the announcement in the MRT, in the train

station, or at the airport." Secondly, the learning performance listed in 2019CG

indicates that 2019CG intends to develop students' discourse knowledge, which is

not emphasized in 2008CG. Lastly, the way how 2019CG describes its abilities is

more specific than 2008CG. 2019CG not only points out the abilities that appear in

different learning phases but also indicates their difficulty levels, while 2008CG is

vague in this aspect and leaves a space for teachers to decide, which causes great

confusion in actual teaching. The learning performance described in 2019CG offers

English teachers specific principles when designing their courses.

As for possible impacts of the new guidelines on the future CAP, there might

not be significant changes. The tasks that CAP has adopted to assess listening

comprehension may remain the same. The content of the tasks would still be closely

related to students' everyday life situation. Targeted constructs may still be making

inferences, understanding the function of the speeches, and recognizing words and structures. However, more diversified texts might be adopted. Monologues such as lectures, speeches, and storytelling may be included in the future CAP. In addition, students' integrative ability may be put more emphasis on the listening test of CAP. That means, solely depending on lexical or grammatical abilities may not be enough for dealing with the listening test of the future CAP.

RQ2. What listening constructs are tested in the listening comprehension section of CAP from 2014 to 2019, and how do the tested constructs correspond to 2008CG?

To answer the second research question, a total of 125 listening comprehension test items of CAP from 2014 to 2019 are analyzed by using the Curriculum Checklist for 2008CG and the adapted Hughes' (2008) Checklist for Listening Skills as the coding schemes. The findings can be separated into two parts. The first part intends to investigate the correspondence between the test items of the listening comprehension section of CAP and the competence indicators listed in 2008CG. The analysis results show that the test items of the listening comprehension section of CAP are in accordance with the competence indicators of 2008CG. Among the 125 test items, 39.6% of them are categorized as "understanding everyday life English and simple dialogues," and 29.5% of them are "understanding daily conversations and simple stories." That means 69.1% of the test items in total intend to assess

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students' ability to comprehend dialogues and conversations. However, it should be noted that the distribution of the items is quite imbalanced. Two of the other competence indicators listed in 2008CG are not tested in the listening comprehension section of CAP: (1) understanding the rhythms, rhymes, and contents of songs and verses, and (2) approximately understanding the content of simple video clips and short plays. The imbalanced distribution might cause negative washback effect.

The second part of the findings is to find out among the 11 constructs on Checklist for Listening Skills, what are tested in the listening comprehension section of CAP. The analysis results show that the top three most frequently tested constructs on the checklist are making inference for missing, unclear, or ambiguous information (36.4%), understanding the functions of the speeches (26.6%), and recognizing words and phrases (19.6%). These abilities are very basic and commonly used in our daily life conversation. On the other hand, two constructs are missing from the listening comprehension section of CAP, i.e. following instructions or direction, and making predictions of what is going to be said. This imbalanced distribution might lead to a negative effect on English teaching.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the analysis results, the researcher provides two suggestions for junior high school English teachers.

First of all, more authentic and diversified teaching materials can be adopted in listening teaching. The analysis results presented in the previous chapter indicate that 2019CG emphasizes students' abilities in handling situations in their daily life. To help students achieve this goal, two important points should be taken into consideration. Firstly, the teaching materials need to be authentic and close to the real-life scenarios. Moreover, the listening tasks and content should be diversified to prepare students for a great variety of challenges in their everyday life. With authentic teaching materials and diversified listening task content, students are given the chance to perform well in simulated scenarios.

Secondly, students' integrative ability can be emphasized more in listening instruction. The result of test item analysis of CAP has shown that one test item may involve more than one constructs. It is because, in the real-life situations, it is impossible to rely on only one ability to comprehend all the messages. Sometimes we may need to make appropriate inferences for unclear information we receive, while sometimes we need to catch key words or phrases. Furthermore, the new guidelines also clearly states that the purpose of English teaching is to develop students' ability to deal with what happens in their daily life, and the content of teaching and testing should be close to real-life scenarios. Consequently, teachers may spend more time teaching students to know not only how to apply appropriate ability during the listening test but also know how to integrate the abilities they have learned to reach successful comprehension.

Limitations and Suggestions

The following suggestions for future study are provided to compensate for the limitations of the present study. To begin with, the analytical framework that the present study adopted is quite simple. A more comprehensive framework on listening constructs covering different dimensions is expected for future research. Secondly, since the focus of the present study is to explore the relationship between the curriculum guidelines and the constructs assessed in the listening comprehension section of CAP, the present study lacks feedbacks from test-takers and fails to investigate the metacognition abilities the test-takers adopted while taking the listening test. Questionnaires or interviews may be included in the future study to find out how and why test-takers come up with the answers during the test.

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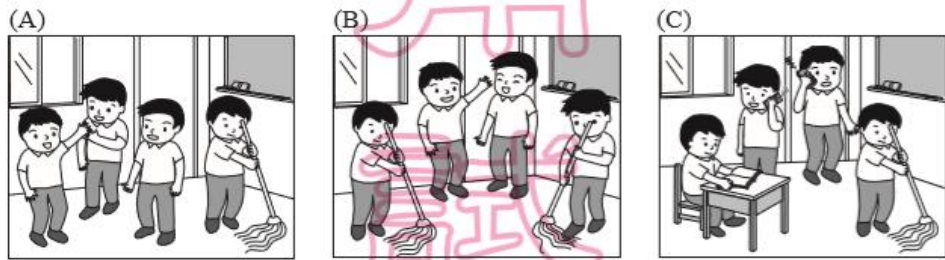
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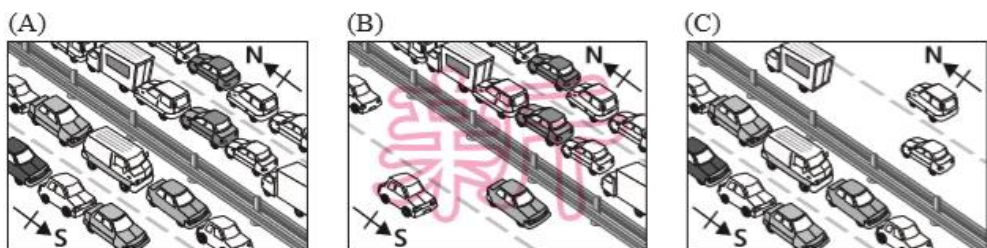
一　辨識句意

1.　One of the students is mopping the floor, and the others are talking.

2.　The boy's holding a broken umbrella and the rain keeps falling through the hole onto his head.

3.　There are a lot of cars going up north but there are few cars going down south.

二　基本問答

4.　Happy birthday, Rachael. Here's a CD of your favorite singer.
　　(A) You're welcome.　　(B) Thank you very much.　　(C) Nice to meet you.

5.　Which do you like, pork or fish?
　　(A) I like to go fishing.　(B) I like the park.　　　(C) I like fish.

6.　Oh, no. I can't find my camera.
　　(A) Did you check your bag?
　　(B) Isn't this photo nice?

(C) Where did you find it?

7. How often do you go mountain-climbing?

(A) Seldom. I don't really like it.

(B) Perhaps. Maybe next month.

(C) Great! It's beautiful up there.

8. Excuse me, can you tell me where the library is?

(A) Sorry. I'm not really sure.

(B) Sorry. I can't tell you the news.

(C) Sorry. You shouldn't talk there.

9. The weather is so nice today. Let's go for a swim this afternoon.

(A) Nobody's home now.   (B) Sounds like a plan.   (C) You never know.

10. Who's the boy talking to your sister?

(A) He's taller than your sister, right?

(B) Have you seen him these days?

(C) You mean the one with long hair?

三 言談理解

11. W: How much is the sweater?

M: It's three thousand five hundred dollars.

W: What? That's too much.

M: Well, it's handmade and you seldom see this kind of sweater. This is the last one we have.

W: I'll give you three thousand.

M: Not possible. Three thousand three hundred. Can't be lower.

W: Three thousand two hundred?

M: Alright, then.

W: OK, I'll take it.

Q: How much is the woman paying for the sweater?

(A) $3,000.   (B) $3,200.   (C) $3,300.

12. W: Hello, what can I do for you today?

M: I fell down the stairs at school this morning and hurt my left foot.

W: Umm…let's have a look. Does this hurt?

M: Ouch! Yeah, it truly does.

W: OK. Put some ice on your foot for ten to fifteen minutes several times a day, and try to rest as much as possible. You need to keep the foot up. Come back in two days so I can check it again.

Q: What is the woman?

(A) A doctor.   (B) A reporter.   (C) A teacher.

13. W: Hey, let's have a look inside.

M: Leo's Pieces? Oh, isn't this Lily Webber's shop? My favorite movie star! She's also a great writer. I've read two of her books.

W: Yep, that's her! I'm also a big fan of hers. Oh, look at these skirts and

shirts.

M: Do you want to try them on?

Q: Where are the man and the woman?

(A) At a bookstore.　　(B) At a clothes shop.　　(C) At a theater.

14.　M: Sandy?

W: Uh…do I know you?

M: Mike Black! Remember? We were in Mrs. Long's class for a year!

W: Uh…oh yeah! Wow, you're so different. What are you doing in London?

M: I'm on a business trip, and you?

W: I'm studying here.

Q: What do we know about the man and the woman?

(A) They are on a trip together.

(B) They met for the first time.

(C) They went to the same school.

15.　M: Susie!

W: Just five minutes more, okay?

M: You said that five minutes ago.

W: It's still early, Dad. I'm very tired.

M: I've told you not to play online games so late. You're gonna be late again!

W: Uh… five more minutes.

M: Come on, I've made you some eggs and toasts.

Q: What's the man trying to do?

(A) Get his daughter out of bed.

(B) Make breakfast for his daughter.

(C) Stop his daughter playing online games.

16.　W: Good evening, River's Station. May I help you?

M: Yes, I'd like a table for two on Saturday evening, please.

W: Sure. What time would you like to come, sir?

M: Around seven.

W: Can I take your name, please?

M: Sure. It's John Smith.

W: Thank you, Mr. Smith. We'll see you at seven on Saturday.

Q: Where is the man going at seven o'clock on Saturday evening?

(A) A restaurant.　　　(B) A theater.　　　(C) A train station.

17.　M: Why did you walk to work today? It's snowing like crazy.

W: Oh…my car has a mind of its own in winter time. It only starts when it wants to.

M: Maybe you should have someone look at it.

W: It's alright. It's been like this for years.

Q: What do we know about the woman's car?

(A) It still looks like a new car.

(B) The woman will sell it to the man.

(C) There is something wrong with it.

18. M: Do you still want to watch *Moonlight* on Friday evening?

W: Yeah, what time is it showing at the city theater?

M: 6:30, 7:30 and 8:30.

W: Umm…I won't be home until 6:30.

M: What about 8:30, then?

W: How long is the movie?

M: Just over two hours.

W: I don't really want to get home too late, though.

M: Well, there's only one left then.

Q: What would be the best time for the man and the woman to see the movie?

(A) 6:30.   (B) 7:30.   (C) 8:30.

19. W: Hello, Mr. Grey. Nice to see you today.

M: Hi, Wendy. I must thank you for the tip on the tomato soup. It was delicious.

W: I'm glad you liked it. So what can I get you today?

M: Umm… I'm thinking about making an apple pie.

W: Your famous apple pie? And I see you've got some nice steaks from Mrs. Brown. Someone's coming to dinner, I guess?

M: Well, it's my son. He's coming back tonight.

W: Lovely. And lucky for you, we just had the best apples come in this morning.

M: Great! I'll need eight apples, and give me a lemon too, please. I always put a little lemon juice on the apples before I bake the pie.

W: Sure. Lemons are always great with pies.

 Q: Where are the man and the woman?

(A) In a bakery.   (B) In a market.   (C) In a restaurant.

20. W: Oh no. Anna's going to kill me. I broke her favorite teacup!

M: Do you mean the one she bought from England and she loved very much?

W: Yes! Oh… what am I going to do?

M: Just tell her.

W: Umm… Interesting. So who never told her that he ate the super- expensive steak she bought?

Q: What does the woman think of the man's idea about what she should do?

(A) It's helpful.   (B) It's simple.   (C) It's stupid.

21. M: Excuse me, I'd like to go to the National Museum. Which bus should I take?

W: You can take bus 260. It stops right in front of the museum. But I'm afraid it won't come for another 30 minutes.

M: Is there any other bus?

W: Yes, you can take bus 108 at the city park. It's about a 15-minute walk from here. The bus to the National Museum comes every 10 minutes.

M: Well, then I think I'll just wait here. Thank you.

Q: How would the man go to the museum?

(A) He'll walk there.　　(B) He'll take Bus 108.　(C) He'll take Bus 26.