

Chapter Two

Literature Review

With the implementation of the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum, the teaching materials are not “unified textbooks” as before. All teaching materials are open to publishers. However they should be written according to the Guidelines of the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum, in which the textbooks’ writing principles are prescribed. The understanding of textbooks’ writing principles helps teachers to select and evaluate their ideal textbooks.

This chapter aims to introduce the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum, discuss the writing principles of English textbooks, relevant theoretical issues and studies about the selection and evaluation of textbooks.

2.1 The Nine-year Integrated Curriculum

In order to meet the needs of national development and public expectations, the MOE places top priority on curriculum reforms, especially the development and implementation of the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum. The new curriculum was planned and developed from 1997 to 2002 and put into practice in August, 2002 throughout elementary schools and junior high schools

The Nine-year Integrated Curriculum purports to develop 10 core competences as the 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; and
10. To develop abilities of independent thinking and problem solving.

According to the MOE, the aim of national education is to teach students to obtain basic knowledge and to develop lifelong learning. The learning activities emphasize humanity, practicality, individuality, comprehensiveness, and modernity to guide students to achieve the above curriculum goals.

In order to foster core competences in citizens, individual development, community and culture, and natural environment are emphasized in the curriculum of elementary and junior high school education. In response to this, the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum develops seven major learning areas: language arts, health and physical education, social studies, arts and humanities, mathematics, science and technology, and integrative activities.

Language arts involve Mandarin and English, focusing on listening, speaking, reading and writing of languages, developing basic communicating competences, understanding culture and custom. Here, English teaching is divided into two stages: Stage one from grade 5 to grade 6; Stage two from grade 7 to grade 9.

2.2 Writing Principles of the English Textbooks in the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum

According to the general guidelines of the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum, the

new curriculum lays emphasis on being diversified, humanized, modernized, practical, and integrated. Guidelines for English curriculum in the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum stress natural and pleasant language learning environment to arouse students' learning interest and develop basic communicative ability. The teaching materials are directed to daily life, being practical and interesting. Themes are diversified. The communicative capacity is developed through diversifying teaching materials and practicing activities instead of the input of grammar and structure from teachers. Consequently, the main objectives of English courses in the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum are:

1. to develop students' basic English communication abilities
2. to arouse students' interests in learning adequate English learning strategies
3. to develop students' cross-culture awareness.

To achieve these objectives, the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum prescribes a set of JHS English textbook writing principles as follows (MOE, 2001):

1. Both workbooks and audio-visual materials should be contained in JHS English textbooks.
2. Teaching materials should be compiled based on students' interests and needs; the content should be practical, simple and interesting.
3. Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills should be integrated.
4. English textbooks should be compiled based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching with its emphasis on communicative activities related to real life.
5. Vocabularies, phrases and sentence patterns should be based on the principles of progression, accumulation and spiral, from simple to complex and easy to difficult. They will proceed in gradation with repetition and review.

6. Themes should be diverse and interesting, including songs, dialogs, verse, letters, stories and short plays and related to students' life experiences to promote their learning interests.

2.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

In response to the above principles, the compilation of JHS English textbooks is based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT has become the mainstream in foreign language teaching and learning nowadays, in opposition to the previous focus on grammar and syntactic structures.

Taylor (1983) pointed out five features of CLT:

1. Students should have the opportunity to participate in real context discourse.
2. Information gap should be included in a created situation.
3. Students should have the opportunity to predict what they are going to say and how they are going to say it in unrehearsed communication.
4. Students should have the opportunity to negotiate on their interested topics.
5. Students should be able to communicate in real situation.

To interpret CLT, Wilkins (1985) made a list of five characteristics of CLT:

1. Conversational interaction takes priority over other modes of language behavior.
2. Notions and functions are stressed rather than structures in syllabus.
3. Learning is oriented to individual or group needs rather than generalized language content.
4. Materials are authentic.
5. Process is emphasized rather than product.

To characterize CLT, Brown (1995: 78) reviewed David Nunan's (1989: 279) five features about it.

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target

language.

2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

Learning process is stressed in CLT according to the above characteristics. The participation of students in classroom activities is important in the learning process. Interesting activities can motivate them to achieve the purpose of communication.

The major function of language is to communicate. Language ability can be developed through activities. Chastain (1988) claimed that language is a tool for showing feelings and opinions so it's an effective channel to exchange or negotiate information between people. CLT is communication-oriented; it offers students opportunity to express their feelings, opinions as well as negotiate information with others in classroom activities to achieve communicative function. Thus, language learning is meaningful and purposeful through real communicative practice.

To enhance students' communicative competence is the goal of CLT (Larsen-Freeman, 1982). According to Larsen-Freeman, communicative competence is the ability of using appropriate language to a given social context.

Savignon (1983: 8-9) sorted out the following characteristics of communicative competence:

1. Communicative competence is a dynamic rather than a static concept that depends on the negotiation of meaning between persons so it can be said to be an interpersonal rather than an intrapersonal trait.
2. Communicative competence applies to both written and spoken language, as well as to many other symbolic systems.
3. Communicative competence is context specific. The success of communication depends on one's understanding of the context and on prior experience of a similar kind.

4. Competence and performance are theoretically different. Competence is defined as an ability, and performance as the overt manifestation of that ability. In other words, competence is what one knows, and performance is what one does. Only through performance can competence be developed.
5. Communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved.

From Savignon's definition, competence is an ability developed through performance and the success of communication is based on understanding of the context related to prior experience. Communicative competence is achieved through the cooperation of all the participants. That is to say, the negotiation nature of communication is emphasized for developing communicative competence. Communicative competence develops through real communication.

Therefore, the compilation and writing of textbooks have to be based on the principles of CLT. If the textbooks are designed for grammar mastery and not for communication, students taught with such textbooks are most likely to become communicatively incompetent. (Liao, 1996) It is necessary to provide learners with more opportunities to express and negotiate meaningfully, not just the linguistic and grammatical knowledge. Thus, communication-oriented materials are needed for learners. However, it doesn't mean that communicative-oriented textbooks provide nothing concerning language forms. Thompson (1996) pointed out that grammar is learned through a retrospective approach in CLT. The learners practice and discuss grammar rules under the guidance of teachers. To sum up, grammar is taught in an implicit way in CLT.

Richards and Rodgers (1987: 152) presented the role of teaching materials in the communicative approach:

1. The materials help develop the communicative abilities of interpretation,

expression, and negotiation.

2. They focus on understandable communication rather than on grammar form.
3. They arouse the learners' interests and involve their intelligence and creativity.
4. They involve different types of text and different media, which the participants can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks.

In order to develop communicative competence, the design of ideal textbooks should be based on the spirit of CLT. Richards and Rodgers (1986) and Koh (1992) stressed the importance of authentic materials in CLT. The purpose of using authentic materials is to overcome the problem that students are unable to transfer what they learn in traditional classes to the real situation outside the class. (Koh, 1992)

However, authentic materials are designed for native speakers so they are too difficult and not suitable for most low proficiency ESL or EFL learners. In order to solve this problem, Richards and Rodgers (1986) supplies two solutions using simpler or simplified authentic materials and the realia that do not contain lots of language, such as menus or timetables.

According to the above theories, communicative competence and activities in a real context are stressed in CLT and also prescribed in the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum.

2.2.2 The Philosophy of Whole Language Teaching

Since the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum emphasizes the integration of the themes of JHS English textbooks with students' experiences and the integration of four skills, it embodies the philosophy of the Whole Language Teaching.

Goodman (1986: 40) states "whole language learning builds around whole learners learning whole language in whole situation." and "whole language learning

assumes respect for language, for the learner, and for the teacher.” This means that listening, speaking, reading and writing should be kept in a whole and taught for meaningful purposes, and teachers have to respect students’ experiences and interests in a language teaching setting. In addition, Brown (2001: 90) claims, “If language is broken into many bits and pieces, students won’t see the relationship to the whole.” If language is broken into many pieces, it will turn into a set of abstractions unrelated to the needs and experiences of learners (Gini, 2000).

Therefore, as Goodman (1986) proclaims, language learning is easy when it is relevant, purposeful, meaningful, respectful, and powerful. Only when listening, speaking, reading and writing are interrelated and interdependent, will the four skills reinforce and strengthen one another.

Freeman and Freeman (1992) addresses that students’ learning tends to be short-term rote memorization if they are not interested in learning something. That is, when lessons are interesting and experience-related, students are more motivated and willing to learn. Thus, learner-centered lessons related to students’ experiences will encourage students to actively involve in and share what they are learning with peers (Anderson, 1984; Goodman, 1986).

The Whole Language philosophy is stressed in the textbook writing principles of the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum. Since the writing and compilation of the newly published textbooks are based on the writing principles of the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum, the principles should be strictly followed in the textbook selection.

2.3 Textbook Selection

When teachers have to choose textbooks for their students, they had better understand how to select the most appropriate ones.

2.3.1 Textbook Selection Committee

In order to select the most suitable textbooks, the school authorities should form a textbook selection committee to make a wise decision. Gall (1981) claims that a selection committee should be formed before textbooks selection. Teachers, a curriculum or media specialist, the parents, the students, and the school administrators should be assigned to the committee. Shih (2000) also proclaims that English teachers, the principal, the dean and the parents should be involved in selecting the textbook.

In order to select the most suitable textbook, it is necessary to collect the opinions of the teachers, the school administrators, the parents and the students. While the opinions of students are not always mature and acceptable so teachers should investigate students' needs in advance on the basis of textbook selection.

2.3.2 The Procedures of Textbook Selection

Forming the textbook selection committee and planning the process of selecting textbooks carefully would help make a wise decision.

According to Shih (2000), the process of textbook selection can be divided into three stages. The first stage is to examine the sample textbooks. Some schools may invite the publishers to give an introduction of their textbooks at this stage. The second stage is the preliminary selection. The selection committee can select three or more sets of textbooks for further discussion at this stage. The third stage is to make the final decision. In addition to the three stages, Shih (1999) also adds that the Bureau of Education should provide the reference information of textbook evaluation for English teachers.

Cunningsworth (1995) proposes that analysis, interpretation, evaluation and selection are the four stages of selecting a textbook. According to his point of view, analysis is to look for information in a range of categories and provide the necessary

data for the second stage of the process. Interpretation is to interpret the obtained data by professional judgment and experience. Evaluation involves value judgments based on learner and teacher expectations, methodological preferences, the perceived needs of the learners, syllabus requirements and personal preferences. The fourth stage of this process is selection which is to match the features identified during the previous stages to meet the requirements of a particular learning/teaching situation.

Furthermore, Gall (1981: 18) provides detailed steps about the process of selecting materials. The process includes identifying your needs, defining the role of the curriculum, determining a budget, forming a selection committee, accessing an array of materials, analyzing the materials, appraising the materials, making an adoption decision, and disseminating, installing, and monitoring the materials.

In order to facilitate the process, Cunningsworth (1995) proposes to establish a set of general criteria beforehand as the guidance. Here, the criteria of textbook selection should be discussed.

2.3.3 The criteria of textbook selection

When the textbook selection committee is formed, some criteria or principles should be offered to the committee to choose the most appropriate textbooks. The following are some basic principles from experts and researchers in Taiwan and abroad that can help teachers examine the textbooks. Teachers can follow these principles to select the ideal ones.

Johns (1985: 141) presents eight principles for the selection of teaching materials:

1. authenticity of the materials themselves and of the task students are asked to complete,
2. relevance to the goal of the course,
3. purposefulness in conveying information and in maintaining social contact,

4. exploitation of students' background knowledge,
5. task dependence in the organization of exercises,
6. integration of skills, item types, and tasks,
7. challenge of language and exercises, and
8. variability of exercises and answers.

According to Johns, the compilation and writing of textbooks should be in accordance with the goal of the course; the contents should be related to social situation and culture, especially, relevant to students' background. Moreover, the integration of four skills is needed; the presentation of language should be up-to-date and the exercises should fit the course structure; besides, exercises and answers have to be variable. All of the above principles meet the present needs, but authenticity is hard to achieve completely. As mentioned earlier, to solve the problem, authentic materials have to be simplified or simplified. Moreover, realia including menu or timetables could be used in the materials just as Richards and Rodgers (1986) suggest. If authentic materials are written carefully according to the above principles, they will be more helpful for learners.

Referring to Johns' principles, Cunningsworth (1995) claims that a sound way of selecting ideal coursebooks includes identifying the aims and objectives of the teaching program, analyzing the learning/teaching situation as well as drawing up a list of potential coursebooks together with information from publishers, advice from colleagues and teachers' previous experience. Cunningsworth suggests that the aims of the teaching program should be identified firstly, and then the learning and teaching situation should be analyzed before choosing the textbooks. Besides, the information of the publishers, opinions of colleagues and teachers' experience should be also considered

In addition, Chang (1996: 12) also gives five suggestions for adopting textbooks:
A good textbook has

1. to be consistent with teaching objectives,
2. to meet students' needs and interests,
3. to vary the content and make it stimulating,
4. to make clear main points of every unit, vary pattern exercises and language skill activities, and if necessary, assist with activity books,
5. to select books with clear and bold printing and vivid pictures.

According to Chang, besides the emphasis of the importance of teaching objectives, students' needs and interests as well as variable content, main points of every unit, variable exercises and activities, and material quality and layout should also be highlighted.

In order to select the most appropriate textbooks, the committee should evaluate the textbooks more carefully. The use of a list of questions or a checklist is the most common way to evaluate textbooks. For example, Dubin and Olsbain (1986) examined language teaching materials with the aid of the following questions:

1. By whom and where were the materials developed?
 2. Are the materials compatible with the syllabus?
 3. Do most of the materials provide alternatives for teachers and learners?
 4. Which language skills do the materials cover?
 5. How do learners and teachers who have used the materials feel about them?
- (pp. 29-30)

The above questions facilitate the committee's evaluation, but they are not detailed enough. A detailed checklist will be more helpful for evaluators to choose ideal teaching materials because it provides more information and chosen items for evaluating the textbooks.

Brown (1995: 161) makes a detailed checklist for adopting textbooks as follows:

<p>A: Materials background</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Author's credentials (education and experience) 2. Publisher's reputation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. General language needs b. Situation needs 4. Goals and objectives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Percentage of match b. Order 5. Content <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consistent with techniques used in program b. Consistent with exercise used in program
<p>B: Fit to curriculum</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approach 2. Syllabus 3. Needs
<p>C: Physical characteristics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Layout <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Space b. Pictures and text c. Highlighting 2. Organization <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Table of contents b. Index c. Answer keys d. Glossary e. reference potential 3. Editorial qualities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Content is accurate and edited in a manner consistent with your style b. Directions clear and easy to follow c. Examples clear 4. Material quality <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Binding c. Tear-out pages
<p>D. Logistical characteristics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Price 2. Auxiliary parts

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Audiovisual aids b. Workbooks c. Software d. Unit tests <p>3. Availability</p>
<p>E. Teachability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers edition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Answer key b. Annotations to help teachers explain, plan activities, and the like c. Reviews d. Acceptability among teachers

The selection of textbooks is a complex process, not just based on global or general impressions. Thus, the textbook selection committee has to acquire adequate directions and information to judge the textbooks. Cunningsworth (1995) proposes that the role of textbook is to be at the service of teachers and learners instead of being their master. In other words, teachers and learners have to treat the textbook as a tool rather than a tyrant. Undoubtedly, textbooks play a significant part in language teaching and learning. Appropriate teaching materials can be used for the purpose of successful teaching and effective learning. Consequently, it is crucially important for teachers to select textbooks much more carefully.

2.4 Textbook Evaluation

Textbook selection depends on the result of textbook evaluation. Cunningsworth (1995) presents two reasons for materials evaluation: one is the intention to adopt new textbooks and the other is to identify particular strengths and weaknesses of the in-use textbook. The weak areas, he suggests, can be strengthened through adaptation or substituted by other books. Textbook analysis and evaluation indeed help teachers to gain good and useful insights into the nature of the teaching materials.

2.4.1 Principles of Textbooks Evaluation

In order to provide more specific criteria for evaluation, Cunningsworth (1995: 15-17) proposes four guidelines for textbook evaluation as follows:

1. Coursebooks should correspond to learners' needs. They should match the aims and objectives of the language-learning program.
2. Coursebooks should reflect the uses (present or future) which learners will make use of the language. Select coursebooks which will help to equip students to use language effectively for their own purposes.
3. Coursebooks should take account of students' needs as learners and should facilitate their learning processes, without dogmatically imposing a rigid method.
4. Coursebooks should have a clear role as a support for learning. Like teachers, they mediate between the target language and the learner.

Furthermore, Williams (1983: 253) offers seven principles for evaluating textbooks as follows:

1. to give introductory guidance on the presentation of language items and skills,
2. to suggest aids for the teaching of pronunciation: e.g. phonetic system,
3. to offer meaningful situations and a variety of techniques for teaching structural units,
4. to distinguish the different purposes and skills involved in the teaching of vocabulary,
5. to provide guidance on the initial presentation of passages for reading comprehension,
6. to demonstrate the various devices for controlling and guiding content and expression in composition exercises, and
7. to contain appropriate pictures, diagrams, tables, etc.

The above principles are aimed to make a deeper evaluation about the general aspect such as speech, grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and technical aspect of the textbooks.

In addition, teacher's manual has to be included in the evaluation because it provides teachers with more information about teaching. Cunningsworth and Kusel

(1991) present five functions of the teacher's manual as follows.

1. Provide information of the general purpose of the teaching material as well as present the linguistic and /or methodological rationale.
2. Encourage the development of teaching skills generally and go beyond the specific skills
3. Provide the structure of the course materials and the contribution of each lesson or unit to the overall course.
4. Provide guidance in the practical use of the material.
5. Provide necessary linguistic and cultural information for the effective use of the teaching material in class.

When teachers evaluate textbooks, they should pay attention to the above principles to make a correct judgment.

2.4.2 Checklists for Textbooks Evaluation

In addition to the above-mentioned principles in different checklists, many other scholars propose other different checklists for the evaluation of textbooks. Forresster (1970) presents two models of textbook evaluation that are "mind" models and "explicit" models. According to Forresster, the latter are superior to the former because they are open to inspection without guessing the other colleagues' unstated mind. The listed items in explicit models are easier to discuss specifically and definitely, so they are adopted more often in textbook evaluation. Chambers (1997) claims that the evaluation sheet is explicit, facilitating the decision-making process by reducing the fuzziness of the logic. Checklists are a kind of explicit models. They can help teachers check whether the textbooks meet each criterion or not. Furthermore, everything is clearly stated in the checklist, so the result can be open to scrutiny by others instead of resulting in ambiguity when selecting a textbook.

Skierso (1991) presents a very detailed checklist for textbook evaluation, containing 108 items. It is divided into three parts: the textbook, the teacher's manual, and overall values.

In the textbook part, bibliographical data, aims and goals, subject matter, vocabulary and structure, exercises and activities, as well as layout and physical makeup are included. As to the teacher's manual, it contains general features, supplementary exercises for each language skill, methodological and pedagogical guidance and linguistic background information. The overall values are taken into consideration, such as suitability, appropriacy, adequacy and effectiveness. The distinguished trait of the checklist is that these criteria are precise and discrete enough for teachers to put focus on one characteristic at a time. Of course, the teachers can adopt or adapt the items according to their own needs. Anyway, it provides very detailed items to teachers as an evaluation reference.

Shih (2000) produces an evaluation checklist similar to Skierso's for the elementary English teachers in Taiwan to select textbooks. In the checklist, each heading is given different points on the basis of its significance in teaching. It is designed based on the needs of the elementary schools in Taiwan. It is much easier and less time-consuming for teachers. Thus, many researchers use Shih's checklist as an evaluation criteria in Taiwan. Besides, Sheldon (1988) offers an evaluation checklist including 17 features. The checklist only asks the evaluator to mark poor, fair, good, or excellent on each item instead of giving a score to each item as the above ones.

Furthermore, Harmer (1991) designs an evaluation form by asking teachers questions about what they need and expect from the teaching materials including practical consideration, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subject and content, guidance, and conclusion.

No checklists are completely suitable for every teachers and every teaching situation just as Wright (1990) claims that there are no universal evaluation criteria because the processes of evaluation in different places are not similar. Thus, the evaluators have to use the checklist flexibly and adapt the items carefully based on the real needs.