

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Teachers' responses to questionnaires indicating their perceptions of textbook selection and their opinions on textbooks for the newly integrated curriculum were presented in detail in the previous chapter. The results showed that most English teachers were generally satisfied with the new textbooks. The results of the returned questionnaires also showed that teachers from different schools had different comments on the same version of particular textbooks. Teachers' opinions of particular versions of textbooks even varied within English teachers at the same school.

This chapter focuses on discussing the results of the research questions. Suggestions are also provided for teachers and publishers based on the results of the research.

#### **5.1 Teachers' Criteria for Textbook Selection**

Concerning the first research question, the criteria for the new textbook selection by teachers were correspondence to the curriculum guidelines, content of student's workbook, difficulty of grammar, variety of themes, content of teacher's manual, service offered by the publisher, illustrations, layout and printing, activity design, publisher's reputation, first impression on the textbook when skimming, publisher's workshop for teachers and compiler's expertise in sequence.

According to the results of the returned questionnaires where teachers indicated their criteria for selecting textbooks, ninety-seven percent of the English teachers emphasized the need of textbooks to correspond to the curriculum, the level of grammar, and the content of the student's workbook. Also, more than 95 % of the teachers stressed the need for a textbook to have a variety of themes. Furthermore,

ninety percent of the teachers were concerned about the amount of vocabulary, the design of activities, the illustrations, the layout, the content of the teacher's manual, and the level of service offered by the publisher in choosing a textbook. The publisher's reputation, the first impression of the textbook, and workshops provided for teachers by a publisher were considered important to 80 % of the teachers who responded. Finally, 77.9 % of the teachers valued the expertise of authors and their status in the academic community.

It shows that the teachers valued the curriculum guidelines (97.6%), the level of grammar (97.2%) and the content of student's workbook (97.3%) more than publisher's workshop for teachers and compiler's expertise.

A study by Tully and Farr (1990) discovered that the selection of textbooks is based more on general impressions than on specifically evaluating the advantages and the disadvantages of textbooks. That is, idiosyncratic impressions rather than specific criteria are the determinants when selecting textbooks. Based on the findings of Tully and Farr, it is possible that teachers and students use textbooks that are not suitable because the evaluation process may not be thorough.

Since textbooks play a significant part in teaching and learning English, teachers should be very careful in their selection process so as to choose a textbook that best suits their curriculum. Textbook selection is a complex process. Guidelines for selecting textbooks should be put into place and teachers should follow them carefully to select the most suitable textbook for their students.

## 5.2 English Textbook Selection Committees

Regarding the second research question, Graph 4.1 shows the result of English textbook selection by committees from each of the responding schools. Among the 55 schools surveyed, 42 of the schools had textbook selection committees that were

composed of English teachers only. The committees of the remaining 13 schools were composed of English teachers and school administrators, either principals or deans. Among the 13 schools, only 5 invited students' parents to participate in the textbook selection. Worth noting is that students were not invited to join the process of selecting textbooks at any of the schools. Finally, according to the questionnaires and the interviews, most schools did not invite parents to be members of the textbook-selection committees because most of the parents were deemed as neither education professionals nor the primary users of the textbooks.

Allwright (1981) stressed the importance of student participation in the textbook selection. Breen and Candline (1978) proposed that teachers could make a more accurate decision when students participated in textbook selection. Gall (1981) also advocated that students engaged in the textbook selection. Although advocating student participation in the textbook selection, Chang (1994) advised considering the age and the maturity of students involved. Though the above scholars stressed the importance of students' participation in textbook selection, no students were involved in the textbook selection according to the survey. Based on the teachers' interview, junior high school students' age was not mature enough to choose the textbook, just as Chang claimed (1994) that whether students were allowed onto a committee or not, should depend on their age and maturity. It is suggested that teachers should consider students' needs and their preferences during the textbook selection process. As for parents, though they are neither education specialists nor are they the primary users of the textbooks, they need to be familiar with the textbook their children will be using in order to help their children study at home. Thus, parents should be well-informed of the English textbook their children will be using at school. When there were few committee members at some schools, Shih (2000) proposed that parents should be recruited as members of the textbook selection committees. To avoid any bias, schools

should consider allowing parents to join, in some capacity, the textbook selection at smaller schools. The parents have an important stake in their children's education and their opinions on textbooks could prove helpful to the overall selection process.

Textbooks are an essential element in schools and therefore the textbook selection committee bears a great responsibility for selecting the most appropriate textbook for the intended curriculum. In order to make the best decision possible in selecting textbooks, a committee should survey the needs of students in advance and then take the views of parents and students, into consideration. The more advice and direction the committee is given, the better the chances are that it will make a sound decision in choosing textbooks.

### 5.3 Textbook Selection Procedures

As regards to the third research question, Graph 4.2 shows the result of textbook selection procedures. Of the 55 schools that responded to the questionnaire, all said they reviewed prospective textbooks, most likely a sample, before choosing a textbook. Fifty schools (90.9 %) invited publishers to introduce their textbooks, 46 schools (83.6 %) held at least one textbook selection meeting. According to the collected data, the teachers of 41 schools (74.5 %) decided which textbook to use by reviewing textbooks, by inviting publishers to present their textbooks, and by holding selection meetings. In contrast, the teachers of 9 schools (16.4 %) decided which textbook to use by reviewing textbooks and by inviting publishers to present their textbooks. Finally, the teachers of the remaining 5 schools (9.1 %) decided which textbooks to use by reviewing sample textbooks and by holding a selection meeting.

Chang (1994) advocated that a complete textbook selection process should be divided into three stages. First, determine the needs of teachers and students and compare the strengths and weaknesses of various textbooks. Pick all the available

textbooks that best meet the needs of the teachers and students. Second, a textbook selection committee should establish selection criteria. Third, before making the final decision, selected textbooks should be tested by teachers. Once a textbook has been chosen, a workshop should be held to show how to properly use the textbook.

In this study, most teachers chose which textbooks to use by reviewing sample textbooks, by inviting publishers to present their textbooks, and by holding a textbook selection meeting. This means that teachers did not test the textbook and did not hold a workshop to show how to properly use the textbook. However, Chang (1994) recommended that teachers should test textbooks and hold workshops.

Nevertheless, it is difficult for teachers to try out or test textbooks because the selection takes place at the end of the semester and course timelines are decided at the beginning of the school year with little time left for trying out textbooks. Ideally, publishers should hold workshops at schools that have selected their textbooks as finalists for their curricula. It would be beneficial if representatives of these publishers instructed teachers on how to use particular textbooks. This would help teachers see how to use new textbooks and subsequently make better choices for their classes. Thus, it is suggested that publishers hold workshops for teachers when their textbooks are being strongly considered for particular classes.

In selecting textbooks, about 91 % of the English teachers who responded to the questionnaire used checklists for evaluating textbooks. According to the survey, most teachers developed their checklists in collaboration with other coordinators. To improve evaluation checklists, the respondents suggested that English teachers, scholars, and experts be called upon to devise a suitable evaluation checklist. When producing a checklist, it would be highly beneficial if teachers combined their teaching experience with the expertise of scholars to create criteria that target students' needs.

#### 5.4 Teachers' Satisfaction with New Textbooks

With respect to the fourth, the fifth, the six and the seventh research questions, the results were shown in Table 4.6 to 4.11, Table 4.12 to 4.17, Table 4.18 to 4.23 and Table 4.24 to 4.29 respectively. According to data collected in this study, most teachers were generally satisfied with the new textbooks developed for the newly integrated curriculum. However, there was some dissatisfaction among teachers in regards to the classroom activities found in the Kang-Hsuan textbook and the Hess textbook. These teachers commented that the activities in these two textbooks be neither authentic nor challenging.

Most of the junior high school English teachers who responded to the survey were pleased with the layout of the new textbooks. Furthermore, the majority of teachers found teachers' manuals for the new textbooks to be helpful references for teaching and planned to make use of them. On the whole, most of the junior high school English teachers were satisfied with the new English textbooks.

The most obvious problem with these new textbooks, according to data collected, is that about half of the English teachers thought there was too much material and that it was too difficult. Too much content and overly difficult content are the main problem most teachers encountered with the new textbooks, no matter which textbook they used. English teachers often have to speed up to finish teaching all the intended lessons and related activities. Sometimes teachers even omit some unimportant parts of lessons or activities. This is especially true before mid-term exam.

#### 5.5 Changing Textbooks and Its Consequences

In regard to the eighth research question, Tables 4.48, 4.49, 4.50 and 4.51 show the results of the reasons of changing the textbook in the following semester, the problems solving and students' interest in the newly changed textbook respectively.

According to the data collected from the survey, five of the schools changed textbooks. All five switched from one set of textbook in the first semester to another set of textbook in the second semester. The main reasons for the dissatisfaction with the first semester textbooks at these five schools were that the textbooks were overly difficult, poorly organized, and lacking in continuity between lessons. Most teachers found that the problems encountered, on the whole, were solved after changing to new textbooks for the second semester. Interestingly, after textbooks have been changed for the second semester, teachers noted that students became more interested in the newly adopted and simpler textbooks than the previous difficult ones. Teachers seemed to believe that the newly adopted and simpler textbooks helped their students learn more, as well. After examining the returned questionnaires, it is clear that most teachers were more satisfied after switching to new and easier textbooks.

Gary (1979) proposed that textbooks should be consistent across all curricula. Using textbooks from a single publisher provides more continuity than using textbooks from two or more publishers: what is covered in the first volume of one publisher's textbook may be introduced in the second or third volume of a different publisher. As a result, important concepts are missing or unnecessarily repeated. If teachers deem it necessary to change textbooks, they should carefully review and compare the material of the two sets to avoid unnecessary content or missing important lessons. This will ensure a consistent progression when they decide to change the textbooks. If textbooks were considered unsuitable during a school year, it would be advisable to change textbooks as soon as possible. Teachers' goals are to find and use textbooks that are suitable and not to change them once they are chosen.

## 5.6 Pedagogical Implications

The goal of this study is to provide information about English textbooks used in Taipei City and Taipei County. It is hoped that teachers will be better informed of the advantages and disadvantages of new English textbooks and use the results of this study to make the wisest decisions when selecting textbooks.

One challenge teachers face in choosing a textbook is to balance the amount of class time with the amount of teaching material in particular textbooks. And since the survey indicates that available English class time for students varies from three to five hours per week, textbooks that are good for one curriculum may not be good for other curricula. It is important to choose a textbook that provides the right amount of teaching material so that the pace of teaching is neither too slow nor too fast.

Teachers should tailor the content carefully to meet students' needs. This is especially true considering the range of English abilities among students. It is also hoped that each school can pay much attention to English and increase the regular class hours for English class per week. If class hours were consistent and adequate, teachers could make better use of new textbooks and supplementary materials including activities.

In order to select the most appropriate textbooks for students, each school should make the selection process more objective and reliable. The Ministry of Education should establish textbook evaluation criteria for teachers to refer to just as Shih (1999) suggested.

Once a school chooses its textbooks, publishers should offer training courses on how to effectively use their textbooks. These training courses would be helpful so that teachers could learn how to make good use of the publisher's textbooks. The publishers, textbook writers, editors, and teachers can also exchange opinions in the training course.



According to the questionnaire, most junior high school English teachers are satisfied with the new sets of textbooks available for this school year. But it should be noted that there is still some dissatisfaction with certain publishers' textbooks, especially the overly difficult and the excessive amount of content of nearly all publishers. Therefore, textbook writers and editors should strongly consider teachers' suggestions. The publishers who do this well will reduce the chances of orders being canceled by schools who are dissatisfied with their textbooks. In order to make textbooks appropriate and effective, publishers should constantly and regularly ask for the opinions of teachers and the reactions of students.

Now that the students are learning English starting from elementary school, publishers have to properly connect the content of junior high school textbooks with that of elementary school textbooks. Textbooks should provide a seamless transition from elementary school to junior high school English material.

Publishers should not only provide high-quality textbooks, but also work to minimize the gap in English textbooks that currently exists between junior high school and elementary school.

### 5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

At the conclusion of this study, only the first two volumes were published. In the future, the researchers may survey additional textbooks to provide more complete information for English teachers.

This study investigated the areas of Taipei City and Taipei County. Future studies may include the more of surveyed areas. To survey and compare the textbooks used in different places in Taiwan is strongly suggested for future research projects. Classroom observation would also be beneficial in supporting or supplementing the results acquired from the questionnaires.

If the gap between elementary school English textbooks and junior high school textbooks continues to become problematic, an investigation into the incongruity is suggested. This could also be said for any similar gap between junior high school and high school.

Although junior high school English teachers seem to be satisfied with the new textbooks, publishers should strongly consider the suggestions provided by teachers. Publishers should constantly and regularly seek the opinions of teachers and study the reactions of students to improve the quality of English textbooks available to English teachers in Taiwan.