

**ANALYSIS OF HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF WRITER, TEACHER AND STUDENT—TAKING UNIT 1 OF YILIN EDITION OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH COMPULSORY COURSE BOOK 1 AS AN EXAMPLE**

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**ABSTRACT**

It has been 5 years since the new version of high school English textbooks was published and used in 2019 in China. The new textbook is based on The National Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High School English (2017 edition and 2020 revision) and aims to help teachers develop students' core competences through English learning. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the usage of new textbooks and understand the perceptions of different subjects, namely textbook writers, teachers, and students, towards textbooks. In view of this, this article separately investigated textbook writers, textbook users, students, and teachers to obtain the results of textbook analysis from three different subjects, and presented them in a first person "me" tone.

**Keywords:** English Textbooks, Writer, Teachers, Students.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2017, the Ministry of Education of China promulgated *The National Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High School English (2017 edition)*, which provided a clear direction for the reform of high school English education in China. In 2019, the new edition of high school English textbooks was published and put into use. The advent of the new textbooks posed challenges for English teachers. Up to now, after three years of observation, adjustments, and improvements have been made to this edition of textbooks. Despite this, how to study and implement the core literacy of English curriculum through textbooks remains a crucial and challenging issue for Chinese English teachers. *The National English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition and 2020 Revision)* explicitly proposes the recommendation of "in-depth reading of texts", which is not only a requirement for teachers but also a prerequisite for teachers to effectively use textbooks in English teaching. Therefore, this article intends to analyze the first unit of the compulsory course book for high school English published by Yilin Publishing House from three different perspectives: textbook authors, textbook users (teachers), and students. It aims to draw some conclusions and provide insights for English teachers to effectively use textbooks in English teaching. The analysis from these three different perspectives will be presented in the first person.

**2 ANALYSIS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES**

**2.1 Analysis from the Perspective of Textbook Writer**

The first section is from the perspective of textbook authors, focusing primarily on the analysis of "why did I arrange it this way?" The purpose of writing this textbook is to guide students in

developing the core literacy of the English curriculum through learning activities. The thematic context of this book revolves around “people and self.” Each unit in this book is themed around various contexts such as school life and personal growth; family life and relationships; self-enrichment and fostering friendships; self-awareness and healthy living. The distribution pattern of thematic contexts follows a progression from the immediate to the broader, from self to others. However, each unit is closely centered around the concept of self. The organization of our textbooks starts with the study of people and self in Compulsory Course Book 1, moves on to people and society in Compulsory Course Book 2, and finally concludes with people and nature in Compulsory Course Book 3. This arrangement aligns with the cognitive development patterns of students and also complies with the recommendations and requirements regarding thematic contexts in the new edition of the high school English curriculum standards. It is noteworthy that the three thematic contexts of people and self, people and society, and people and nature are not presented in isolation. Within each unit and across different textbooks, there is an integration of thematic contexts. For example, in Unit 1 of Compulsory Course Book 1, even though the major theme is school life and personal growth, the extended reading section also involves cross-cultural thematic contexts. While each unit in Compulsory Course Book 1 primarily focuses on people and self, it also encompasses factors related to people and society. This requires teachers to fully understand and utilize the curriculum and textbooks, consider students’ learning situations, and design a variety of learning activities from the perspective of students’ self-development. This will enable the interconnection of these three thematic contexts and the collective development of students’ core competence in the English subject.

The units of the book are mainly divided into nine teaching and learning sections. Additionally, the appendix section provides sentence structures, grammar knowledge, and word lists for reference by both teachers and students. The following is a basic introduction to the teaching and learning sections of this unit.

Firstly, the section of “Welcome to the unit” will stimulate students’ interest in learning through a high school student interview video, allowing them to get a preliminary understanding of the unit theme. The next section of “Reading” further enhances students’ understanding of high school life and the basic structure of speeches through the study of a principal’s speech. The section of “Grammar and usage” helps students learn sentence components and sentence structures. The section of “Integrated skills” allows students to apply language skills in a scenario involving preparing for a school club. The section of “Extended reading” enables students to gain a new understanding and expectations of school life through a narrative essay about British school life, showcasing different cultural backgrounds. And the “Project” section, through the expressive task of creating a school brochure, promotes students’ understanding of the unit theme and the comprehensive application of knowledge and skills, as well as strengthening their sense of belonging to their school. The “Assessment” section, in the form of self-assessment and peer assessment, helps students reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and clarifies the direction for further improvement. The “Further study” section provides students with websites and movies for self-study after class. The “Workbook” section uses a variety of exercise types to test students’ learning effectiveness and enrich their learning pathways.

## ***2.2 Analysis from the Perspective of Students***

The second part is from the perspective of students, focusing primarily on the analysis of “how would I learn?” The sub-questions in this part include:

- (1) What will I learn in this unit?
- (2) How do I learn this unit?
- (3) How do I perceive the content of this unit's textbook?
- (4) Where did I perform well in this unit?
- (5) Where do I have shortcomings in my learning in this unit?
- (6) What help do I expect from the teacher?
- (7) How do I hope the teacher conducts the teaching?

In this analysis section, I am the role of a student from an ordinary high school in a county in central China, with an average to above-average level and still in the surface-learning stage. Next, I will introduce, in the voice of this student, how I use the textbook, evaluate the textbook, evaluate the learning process, and express my expectations for the course without teacher guidance.

#### ①Section One: Welcome to the Unit

In this part, I was initially attracted by the unit title “Back to school” and had a curiosity about why “back” was used instead of “welcome” for new students. The English translation of Confucius’s Analects under the title also provided a fresh perspective, showcasing the beauty of both Chinese and foreign languages. The section then presented the learning objectives of the unit, but at this point, I was still somewhat confused and eagerly anticipated how the following sections would unfold. I watched an interview video conducted by peers in this section and answered the questions in the book based on the video and my own feelings. The most appealing part to me was still the interview video, which felt very genuine and interesting. However, I noticed that my vocabulary and sentence expressions were not rich enough, and there was room for improvement in language fluency and accuracy. I aspire to learn from my peers in the video and hope that the teacher provides opportunities for us to share our opinions in this section, understand each other’s thoughts, learn together, and progress collectively.

#### ②Section Two: Reading

This part featured a speech by the principal with the title “Realizing your potential.” I followed the textbook sequence to complete various requirements. While reading the text, I spontaneously extracted paragraph themes and summarized topic sentences. However, my summaries were different from the answers, requiring clarification from the teacher. Short-answer questions were straightforward, and I could find the answers directly in the text. The completion of the vocabulary fill-in-the-blank questions relied on my existing vocabulary knowledge and new vocabulary learned from the text. While there were hints for the morphological fill-in-the-blank questions, without prior guidance from the teacher and reinforcement of foundational knowledge, they were still relatively challenging. The structure of the speech was clear and engaging, but the text was too formal, and the question difficulty varied. I learned how to deliver a logical and captivating speech, understand key vocabulary, sentence structures, word formation, and rhetorical devices, which could enhance my language skills. However, I missed the opportunity to concretely apply the advice from the speech, such as discovering personal and peer’ potentials, goal-setting, and life planning, which were not explicitly presented in the principal’s speech. Therefore, I hope the teacher allows students to give speeches from the perspectives of the principal or peers, enhancing the emotional appeal and interest of the text, while also strengthening our writing and speaking abilities. Additionally, I hope the teacher designs activities to help us further clarify our potentials and set detailed goals based on our actual situations.

#### ③Section Three: Grammar and Usage

The main purpose of this section is to help us learn to identify sentence components and classify sentence structures. I gained knowledge of grammar but felt this section focused too much on grammar learning with weak activities. I am uncertain about distinguishing certain sentence components and need further learning. The most noticeable issue during the learning process was that I tended to focus excessively on sentence structures and neglect the content of the text. Therefore, I hope that, with teacher guidance, I can gain more from the text, have opportunities for collaborative learning with classmates, and discuss unfamiliar concepts. Ultimately, I wish to analyze sentence structures directly from the text without predefined analysis requirements.

#### ④Section Four: Integrated Skills

This part revolved around the theme of preparing for a school club. The first activity was listening training, including sorting and filling in the blanks. In the sorting part, I could make predictions based on my background knowledge and verify them against the audio. In the filling in the blanks part, my answers differed from the standard ones, requiring evaluation and explanation from the teacher. The section then presented a sample proposal for a club and guided us through the process of writing a proposal. The most attractive aspects were the teacher-student dialogues in the listening section and the proposal writing. I learned how to apply existing knowledge to learn and how to write a club proposal. However, since there are no clubs at my school, I cannot apply what I've learned in practice. Therefore, I hope the teacher provides opportunities for us to simulate club preparations and create real class interest groups.

#### ⑤Section Five: Extended Reading

This part featured a self-narration of a high school student's study abroad experience in the UK, with clear text structure, vivid imagery, and a sense of immersion. Through further guidance after the exercises, I learned how to describe aspects of school life, compare similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign campus life, and summarize my ideal school life. However, lacking communication, my personal reflections cannot be shared effectively, and I cannot gain more insights from peers or the teacher. Therefore, I hope to discuss similarities and differences with classmates and share more ideal school life scenarios.

#### ⑥Section Six: Project

This section focused on creating a school brochure, guides us from selecting a topic to collecting data and ultimately forming a product, stimulating deep thinking. This activity was realistic, interesting, and progressively challenging, with strong operability. Through this project, I learned how to use existing knowledge and skills to collect and organize information, create a school brochure, and strengthen my sense of belonging and pride in my school. This project instilled confidence and anticipation for my new high school life.

#### ⑦Section Seven: Assessment

This part requires self-assessment and peer assessment, based on the evaluation results, forming improvement plans. My self-assessment for the first four aspects was mainly based on subjective feelings, while the vocabulary and grammar knowledge aspect was based on the workbook exercise error rate. I learned how to self-assess in different aspects and identify strengths and weaknesses in my learning in this unit. However, the criteria for self-assessment and peer assessment were not clear. For instance, the evaluation of the first four aspects was too subjective. I hope the teacher provides diverse evaluation examples. In the vocabulary test, due to unfamiliarity with the specified vocabulary range, four questions had answers different from the standard ones. This, however, does not necessarily imply a lack of mastery of these words. This

test could not accurately measure my real vocabulary proficiency, and I could only give myself a lower evaluation based on the answer key, believing that my focus for improvement should be vocabulary. Therefore, I hope to receive corresponding advice and more appropriate evaluations from the teacher.

### ***2.3 Analysis from the Perspective of teacher***

The third part is from the perspective of the teacher, focusing primarily on “how would I teach?” The analysis covers aspects related to students and textbooks, goals and assessment, and content and methods.

(1) From the perspective of students and textbooks, as a teacher, before using the textbook to teach students, it is crucial to consider the students’ needs, the characteristics of the textbook, and the implications of the curriculum standards. Based on the issues that emerged in the simulated student self-study process and the students’ perspectives on the textbook, I discovered that while the textbook holds knowledge value, it might fall short in realizing educational values. Students tend to overly focus on knowledge acquisition. This calls for teachers to guide students in using the textbook rationally, engaging in learning activities, enriching learning experiences, promoting deep learning, and enhancing core competencies.

(2) From the perspective of goals and assessment, I conducted a discourse analysis of the textbook, combined with the curriculum standards, to extract unit literacy goals and propose tentative evaluation methods. Following the analysis method presented by Wang Qiang in the article “A Comprehensive Design of High School English Units Aiming at Deep Learning”, I analyzed the discourse types, target skills, discourse content, and discourse themes of the six sections in this unit. The distribution of discourse themes is progressively deep, featuring an impression of overall high school life, a general introduction, specific goal-setting, the establishment of clubs, a comparison between domestic and foreign school life, aspirations for a better learning life, and positive discoveries and experiences in current school life. In line with the understanding of unit teaching in the educational discussions in Shanghai’s Hongkou District, in such unit teaching conducted under these thematic situations, students can, after completing the unit content learning and acquiring unit language knowledge, use specific scenarios to comprehensively apply what they have learned, complete specific language and communicative tasks, and learn, practice, and apply English in communication, cooperation, and research. This process cultivates and improves students’ comprehensive English application abilities, gradually forming core competencies, including language skills, thinking qualities, learning abilities, and cultural awareness. However, in terms of language abilities, the set goals might not fully align with students’ actual levels based on the core vocabulary, phrases, and grammar listed in the curriculum and textbook. This goal setting can lead to blind spots in the expert’s understanding, setting expectations either too high or too low, which requires teachers to grasp the students’ basic situations before teaching. In terms of cultural awareness, for students with a certain language knowledge foundation, it is easier to elevate the understanding to help students grasp the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, enhance cultural confidence, and foster a high degree of school identity. Corresponding evaluation methods are needed for the stated unit goals. These evaluations should not be limited to simple skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A good example is the workbook’s integrated training section, which allows students to transfer these skills in real-life scenarios. Therefore, a formative assessment, including expressive assessments, self-assessment, and peer assessment, needs to be integrated with discussions, proposals, booklets, and other performance



assessments from the textbook. This approach ensures students genuinely understand the unit theme, flexibly apply knowledge and skills, critically think about discourse meanings, and develop awareness of transferring abilities.

(3) From the perspective of content and methods, I chose the reading section as an example. Following Wang Qiang's question chain model, combining views on English learning activities and the characteristics of deep learning, I designed 10 questions aimed at guiding students in progressively exploring the text. Ultimately, students should be able to discuss their potential, formulate action plans to promote potential, and engage in persuasive speeches as expressive tasks, reflecting their understanding of this section and strengthening their understanding of the entire unit theme.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The above analysis of Unit 1 from the perspectives of textbook writers, teachers, and students, although there are still some limitations to this research approach, at least it can provide us with some inspirations as follows.

#### ***3.1 Shifting the analysis perspective and focusing on the student's subjectivity.***

The difference between modern and traditional teaching lies in emphasizing the subjectivity of students. To achieve this, teachers need to shift their perspectives, conduct textbook analysis from the student's viewpoint, adopt a student-oriented approach, and promote teaching through learning and vice versa.

#### ***3.2 Understanding student needs and clarifying teaching goals***

Whether as a teacher or textbook writer, we cannot accurately gauge students' real needs. Therefore, through case studies or surveys, teachers can gain insights into student needs before actual teaching. Combining the curriculum standards with the requirements for talent, appropriate teaching goals can be set.

#### ***3.3 Enriching the assessment mechanism and guiding the teaching process***

Under the guidance of goals, teachers need to use a variety of assessment mechanisms to promote students' understanding as the ultimate goal of teaching.

#### ***3.4 Making rational use of textbooks for unit teaching***

Textbooks are just one type of teaching material. Teachers need to flexibly use various teaching materials. When necessary, teachers can create teaching materials that suit students' actual needs, organize various teaching materials under the same unit theme, conduct unit-style teaching, promote students' overall understanding of the discourse, comprehensive application of knowledge and skills, and innovation in the transfer of unit content.

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