

# 大学英语教材评估 及实证研究

COLLEGE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK EVALUATION  
AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

黄洁 著



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**【内容简介】** 本书的研究以梳理国内外教材评价理论为基础,结合中国英语教材的发展史,设计了一套适合我国教材评价的模型,并应用此模型进行实证研究,对《新视野大学英语》和《新标准大学英语》学生用书第一册进行全面深入的对比研究,旨在为学生和教师更加合理、有效地利用和选择教材提供依据和建议,并对大学英语教材评价研究提供一个新的思路。

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# 前 言

由于大学英语教育中缺乏自然的语言环境,因此教材成为教学和学习实践的有效工具。教学过程的中心就是学生在教师的指导下对教材内容的感知、理解、掌握和运用。在教学的实践过程中,教材的作用不容忽视。教材不仅能稳定教学秩序、保证教学质量、创新教学内容、还主导教学方向。然而,面对全国各家知名出版社推出的成百上千的大学英语教材,如何为学生选择一套合适的教材就成为一个迫切的问题,具体使用怎样的方法来科学有效的评价一本教材,知其优劣,这方面的研究相对教学研究的其它方面就显得非常少了。

鉴于此,本书的研究在深入分析国内外专家就教材评估理论及实践的基础之上,选择外语教学与研究出版社在 2005 年出版的《新视野大学英语》(以下简称《新视野》)和 2009 年新出版的《新标准大学英语》(以下简称《新标准》)学生用书第一册为研究对象,进行实证研究。在对西安工业大学本科非英语专业 2009 级 587 名学生的学习英语方式进行调查,发现其中 495 的同学选择自学或跟随老师通过使用《新视野》课本学习,占总人数的 73.1%(调查问卷 5 见第一章后),可见学生外语学习的主要途径是利用教材,因此本书的研究在该校有充分的现实基础和实际意义。同时,《新视野》是教育部普通高等教育“十五”国家级规划教材(第一版 2003 年出版),全国有近 2/3 的本科院校在使用,使用量达到了每年 150 万学生。《新标准》仅 2010 年全国就有 120 多所院校在使用,使用学生的人数达到 20 多万,可见本书的研究有广泛的实际意义。

本书的研究旨在对比评价这两本教材中,哪本教材编写得更符合《大学英语课程要求》,在使用中更好的实现了课程要求的目标,并从教师和学生实际对教材的使用情况总结每套教材本身存在的优点和缺点,采用了以《大学英语课程要求》及《大学英语四级考试要求》为依据,建立定量和定性方法相结合的双层结构课本评价应用模型进行实证研究,其中包括依据原有教材评估理论与实践设计的 4 个调查问卷,对 1 600 名学生,52 名教师实施了问卷调查以及共计 44 名学生、老师和编辑的访谈。具体而言,研究共分三个步骤:第一步是针对教材本身内容,进行内部评价,包括两本教材编写的指导思想,内容总量和设计,篇章和练习种类的比较分析,以及通过建立词汇和篇章的语料库,利用相关软件对篇章的平均长度,生词比例,词汇的总量,浮现率的比较分析,得出内部评估的结论。第二步,在学生、老师和编辑中,通过问卷和访谈形式对于教材各个方面使用过后的满意度进行考察,对教材进行外部评估,并得出结论。最后根据两个阶段得到的数据对比得出结论,定量定性研究相印证。

经过一个月对两本书的内部数据的收集和整理,以及分别在 2009 和 2010 年 11 月份实施

的问卷调查数据和访谈结果的收集和整理,两套教材学生用书第一册的具体对比结果如下:

总体来看《新标准》比《新视野》有着更为先进的指导思想,更艺术的外观,更多样的内容设计,更灵活实用的词汇学习方法,更丰富的篇章内容和类型,更充足的、新颖的配套练习。

通过内部评价,在编写宗旨上这两本教材基本符合课程要求,内容总量上也基本一致,两本教材的新词总量和复现率都是相当且恰当的,篇章的平均长度也没有太大区别,但《新标准》的宗旨更具有前瞻性,内容设计有更多的类型,新词在篇章中的比例较《新视野》更加恰当,主题的体裁和题材更加多样,练习总量较大,形式也较为多样精巧。通过外部评价,调查问卷显示编写宗旨上,内容总量和设计上,新词的总量和学习方式上,篇章反映文化的多样性上,练习的总量和设计上,阅读和写作技巧的训练上,满意《新标准》的师生的比例均或多或少高出满意《新视野》的师生。

最后,希望本书的研究方法和结果能补充和扩展适合我国大学英语教材评估提供一个实证范例,供学生、教师、教材研究和编写者在选择、使用、研究和编写其它教材时,提供实证参考和帮助。同时,对于本书不足之处,也希望对此课题感兴趣的同仁提出宝贵的意见和建议。

黄 洁

于西安工业大学

2011年5月

# Abbreviations

NHCE: New Horizon College English

NSCE: New Standard College English

ELT: English Learning and Teaching

FLTRS: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press

The CECR: College English Curriculum Requirements

XATU: Xi'an Technological University

The CES: the College English Syllabus

The CET4: the College English Test Band 4

TE: Textbook Evaluation

IE: the Internal Evaluation

EE: the External Evaluation

SB: Students' Book

SQ: Students' Questionnaire

TQ: Teachers' Questionnaire

SI: Students' Interview

TI: Teachers' Interview

EI: Editors' Interview

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# **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

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As we know, in English teaching and learning, textbook plays a very important role. In many China's universities, New Horizon College English (henceforth NHCE) and New Standard College English (henceforth NSCE) are chosen as their textbooks. This study endeavors to evaluate each one of books of NHCE and NSCE published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press theoretically and statistically within the framework of the newly-built evaluation model devised by the author herself on the basis of the theoretical foundation and statistic analysis.

The framework of the study is as following: it will begin with an introduction about the study, providing the background, the reason of choosing the research subjects, the aim and the significance of the study. Then there will be the literature review about some concepts and evaluation criteria. The third part is research methodology, in which there is a brief introduction of the subjects, the framework of the newly-built evaluation model, instruments and data collection. After this, the fourth part is a detailed analysis of the data, and then the results and findings will be reported through the discussion. Finally, the implication and the limitation will be summarized from the major findings and recommendations will be offered for further study and learning.

## **1.1 Significance of the textbooks in English education**

As is well known, English textbook plays an important role in English teaching and learning, like Harmer (1991) observes: "Where a textbook is involved there are obvious advantages for both teacher and students." He emphasizes that the textbooks help learning and teaching. Therefore, it is generally recognized that teaching materials can exert considerable influence over what teachers teach and how they do it. The role of textbooks in

ELT has always been a heated debate, yet no one can deny its positive value. The basic function of an English textbook is to improve students' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing by introducing language knowledge, including phonology, vocabulary, grammar, lexicon, communicative functions and situations, etc.

Hutchinson and Waters (2002) hold that ELT materials, as the primary carrier of the compiler's beliefs on English language learning, are the primitive reference for teachers to organize their classroom activities, and the core for students to construct their knowledge system and achieve their learning objectives. The growing importance of ELT has also generated an increasing number of textbooks either for general course or for more special areas. No teaching-learning is completed until it has its relevant textbooks, because textbooks serve as the primary carrier of school knowledge. The quality of English textbooks has become a main factor that affects English educational level. Therefore, one of the main points in English teaching reform is the development and reform of textbooks.

Harmer (1991) observes: Where a textbook is involved there are obvious advantages for both teachers and students. Good textbooks often contain lively and interesting materials; they provide a sensible progression of language items, clearly showing what have to be learnt and in some cases summarizing what have been studied so that students can revise grammatical and functional points that they have been concentrating on. Textbooks can be systematic about the vocabulary presented to the students and allow students to study on their own outside the class. Good textbooks also relieve the teachers from the pressure of having to think of original materials for every class.

According to University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (1995), textbooks have multiple roles in ELT: (1) embody a view of the nature of language and learning; (2) provide models of correct and appropriate language use; (3) provide stimulus to learning; (4) help to organize the teaching-learning process; (5) have a very useful function in broadening the basis of teacher training.

Alan Cunningsworth also discussed about the role of textbook, "Textbooks are best seen as a resource in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learner needs. They should not determine the aims themselves or become the aims." To be clear, in 2002, he said textbooks play multiple roles in ELT and can serve as: (1) A reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc; and a resource for presentation material (spoken and written). This is the basic but not the only function and objective of textbooks. Textbooks should not simply be the description of language usage but the approach and means of language acquisition. (2) A source of stimulation and ideas

for classroom language activities. Ideal textbooks are not used for “teaching” knowledge, but for “stimulating” learning. Ideal textbooks supply students with materials that can intrigue their interest, as well as activities that may arouse thinking, providing students with chances to use the knowledge and skills that they have acquired. (3) A syllabus. Textbooks are not merely the means of instruction. English textbooks, usually written by ELT experts or experienced English teachers, are often endowed with an integrated system of language knowledge and skills, and follow certain syllabus, thus represent certain teaching objectives, ideas and methodologies. (4) A resource for self-directed learning or self-access work, satisfying the “student-centered” need. The “student-centered” teaching mode aims to make students learn actively and undertake responsibility of learning. (5) A support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. Textbooks are the achievements of new teaching approaches. Textbooks with reasonable organization and substantial contents are not only helpful for teachers to save time and energy for preparing class, but also can expand teachers’ perspectives and improve their teaching abilities.

In addition, according to Chinese linguist Cheng Xiaotang, the textbook with high quality can make positive effort on teachers, students, teaching process and teaching result. It can be showed in the following aspects: (1) The textbook with complete system and logical structure are not only good for students to learn language knowledge systematically, but also helpful to develop their basic language skills; (2) Most textbooks are written by English teaching experts or teachers. Commonly speaking, these materials have complete knowledge and skill systems and follow proper syllabus; (3) The design of textbook can reflect some teaching methods and ideas. The regenerative textbooks are the most cogent spreaders of new teaching methods and ideas; (4) Textbook is not only the teaching tool, but always represents some teaching purposes, teaching objects and teaching methods. Choosing and using appropriate textbook can bring syllabus into effect easily; (5) Textbook provides both language materials and various cultures in different countries, which can make students better understand the culture all over the world in order to develop the skill of cross-cultural communication; (6) A well-structured textbook with ideal content can not only save the teacher’s time to prepare, but also can be used by teacher creatively.

The debate inevitably continues as it is at the heart of teachers’ professional concerns. The content and quality of textbooks will determine the extent to which teachers can make use of insights from research into learning and learners. Good instructional textbooks are an important part of the process of instruction. They set out to teach through the process of defining instructional objectives, setting learning tasks or activities to attain the objectives,

informing learners of what tasks they have to perform, providing guidance in how to perform tasks, providing feedback on performance, and enhancing retention of the skills the learner acquired through performing the task.

While many of the aforementioned theorists are quick to point out the extensive benefits of using textbooks, there are many other researchers who do not necessarily accept this view and retain some well-founded reservations on the subject. Allwright (1982), for instance, has written a scathing commentary on the use of textbooks in the ELT classroom. He suggests that the textbooks are too inflexible and generally inflect the pedagogic, psychological and linguistic preferences and biases of the author. Subsequently, the educational methodology that a textbook promotes will influence the classroom setting by indirectly imposing external language objectives and learning constituents on students as well as potentially incongruent instructional paradigms on the teachers who use them. In this fashion, therefore, textbooks essentially determine and control the methods, processes and procedures of language teaching and learning. Moreover, the pedagogical principles that are often displayed in many textbooks may also be conflicting, contradictory or even out-dated depending on the interests and exploitations of the sponsoring agent. In general, textbooks have brought with them a range of reactions. Responses often fluctuate between these two extremes. One position is that they are valid, useful and labor-saving tools. The other position holds that they are "masses of rubbish skillfully marketed" (Brumfit, 1980).

Actually, at the beginning of the study, the author carried out a survey (using Questionnaire 5) on what is the main way for the students to learn English. 587 students were involved, and 429 (73.10%) of them said they learned English mainly under the guidance of the teachers with the textbook. The result is true that in many cases teachers and students rely heavily on textbooks, and textbooks determine the components and methods of learning, that is, textbooks control the content, methods, and procedures of learning. Students learn what is presented in the textbook, and the way the textbook presents material is the way students learn it. In many cases, materials are the center of instruction and one of the most important influences on what goes on in the classroom. The textbook is structured, ideally, in such a way that it reflects the available insights, ideas, traditions, experience, and research data. For English language learners, the textbook becomes the major source of contact they have with the language beside the input provided by the teacher. It serves as the basis for the language input students receive and the language practice in the classroom. It serves as an important tool for students to shape their knowledge, attitudes and principles. It is the center of the curriculum and syllabus in most

class activities.

All in all, the most significant changes of materials are not in the content they teach, but in the information which is closely related to life and needs of learners, which triggers intrinsic motivations for future study, in the uses which learners themselves will make of the language for the present or future, and in the teacher's guidance for self-development. These considerations put a lot of pressure on material producers. It is true that in many cases teachers and students depend greatly on textbooks, and in turn textbooks dominate the methodology and procedures of teaching and learning.

From what we have discussed, we can get the conclusion that the quality of a textbook is a decisive factor affecting English teaching and learning. Therefore, how can we know if the textbook is qualified or not? Yes, textbook evaluation is a way.

## **1.2 Development of English teaching materials**

In China, English is taught as a required subject and is regarded as an important academic subject in universities. English is the primary language of the Internet in the new digital age; it is also the language of commerce, technology, science and international communication; it is the prerequisite for higher and further learning both at home and abroad; and it is one of the requirements for better job opportunities. Since Chinese universities started teaching English as a foreign language to non-English major students, with fast development of Chinese society and high requirements on English proficiency, English teaching in China has been experiencing tremendous changes and there is an increasing need to learn English among Chinese people of different levels.

Usually, before the first semester of the first grade in universities, English teachers have to select one version of textbooks which are going to be used for the following two years for the non-English majors. One representative group of people is the large number of college students which leads to an unbalanced ratio of students to teacher. Teachers of English in most of the universities in China are facing greater challenges than before because they have to teach much larger classes. At the same time, thousands of College English textbooks from different presses sprang up to meet the needs of teaching and learning English, which brought about another challenge to teachers and students, that is how to select the right textbook. Since textbooks play such an important role in college English teaching in China, and it is difficult to choose the most suitable textbooks, it is necessary to have a brief review of the historical development of the college English textbooks in China.



Over five decades ago college English evolved in China, and since then college English textbooks have been renewed again and again. Actually the college textbooks have undergone tremendous changes in their content, forms and functions. According to Professor Dong Yafen, college English textbooks in Mainland have experienced four generations since 1961: the resurrection stage before 1978, the exploration stage from 1978 to 1985, the stage of standardization from 1985 to 1999, and the last stage of adjustment and reform from 1999 till now. Each stage has its features.

The first generation textbooks, from 1961 to the Revolution of Culture, focused on the analysis of text and grammar, mainly developing the students' abilities of reading, which was a traditional mode and one for each grade issued by the government. In certain historical period, the use of unified textbooks plays positive roles in national education; But with the reform and opening-up program, together with the continuous deepening of global economic globalization, the traditional teaching material management system is existing malpractice, and is difficult to meet the demands of different areas and elementary education reform. During this time and the first version of college English textbooks, English edited by Ling Weimin, was published.

From 1979 to 1985, the second-generation textbooks still follow the traditional mode with a few breakthroughs in teaching methods. The first and second generation of materials before 1985 was dominated by grammatical syllabus and behavioral learning model under the guidance of the 1962's syllabus, which claimed: "analysis of text is the focus of classroom teaching." The mastery of language was regarded as good command of vocabulary and grammar. Among the four skills, only reading skill was given overwhelming attention. To address this problem, the nation's educational departments proposed to diversify the teaching materials under the basis of unified requirements, as a result the rigid framework of "one syllabus one textbook" is smashed and teaching materials in our country show diversification. The representative college English textbook at this time is Technical English published by Dalian Marine Institute. It was compiled according to the principles of the National English Syllabus of the 1980 version for college English which was revised by Peking University and Tsinghua University. Some key principles are set out in the syllabus, for example: "College English should have at least 240 hours." "College students are required to master 1,400 words, to be able to read and translate articles of general science with the help of dictionaries." At the same time, English teachers were encouraged to study teaching methodology and to use visual aids. Foreign equipments for learning language such as sound labs were imported into China as well as foreign teaching methods and materials.