

A Contrastive Analysis between 2012 and 2024 Editions of PEP Junior English Textbooks—Focusing on Grade 7 Textbook (Second semester)

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Abstract

Textbooks are what teachers and students used in their teaching and learning. Most English teachers in junior high school start using the new textbook recently. They are confused about how to use this book better and make the best use of it. In order to solve these problems, this essay compares the new textbook with the pre-vious textbook from the whole structure and the inner content. It shows that the new textbook keeps the topic of the old textbook, while it adjusted the layout, tasks, language use and etc. Based on the comparisons, the essay provides some teaching suggestions for teachers.

Keywords

Contrastive analysis; Junior high school English; Teaching suggestions

1. Introduction

The textbook is the basis which teachers and students depend on. Whether the textbook is fully explored or not, closely related to students' English performance. The new junior high school English textbook of People's Education press has been promoted since 2024. But many teachers are not familiar with the new textbooks and not used to teach based on it. New textbooks have higher requirements towards both teacher and students. This essay tend to compare the previous textbook (PT) with the new book(NB), so that to provide some teaching advice to English teachers. This essay will analyze from two broad aspects: structure and language.

2. Structure Comparison

2.1. Comparison between the whole structure

The new textbooks has 8 units, 4 less than the previous textbook. New textbook

presents the idea of reducing burden. Too many units make teachers tired of chasing the teaching process. For the content of each unit, PB has 6 pages and NB has 8 books. The content of each unit increase two pages. Through observing the contents, the contents of PB has 7 parts, including units, topics, functions, structures, target language, vocabulary and recycling. Meanwhile, NB has only four parts including unit, section A, Section B and project. PB attach more importance on language knowledge. The contents of NB is more simple and clear. It clearly states four English skills and pronunciation and grammar knowledge. The whole unit has a big topic, while section A and Section B also has a sub-topic. For example, the title of Unit one is Animal Friends. The whole topic is why are animals important. The topic of section A is why do you like animals. The topic of section B is how are animals part of our lives. The topic of section B has a deeper meaning. Both sub-topics are guided under the whole topic, which presents the idea of under the guidance of thematic meaning in English Curriculum Standard of Compulsory Education.

NB has 9 parts, which are contents, 12 units, notes on the text, tapescripts, pronunciation, grammar, words and expressions in each unit, vocabulary index and irregular verbs table. Compared with NB, it adds reading plus of each unit and vocabulary from primary school while it deletes notes on the text. Reading plus provides eight passages which are longer and more difficult than the text in each unit. Teacher can choose to teach or require students to read according to their abilities or interest as a supplement. Vocabulary from primary school can connect what students have learnt in primary school and reduce the pressure of words in the texts.

2.2. Comparison between the inner content

PB attach more importance on language knowledge and language use, while NB stress language use in the specific context, pragmatics function of language.

2.2.1. Title and topics

Titles in NB are more concise, as phrases, like Animal Friends, Keep Fit, Eat Well. While titles in PB are sentences, like Can you play the guitar? What time do you go to school? Titles in NB is easy for students to understand and remember. NB put a big question under the title, guiding students to think about deeper meanings. After learning this unit, students can get the answer. Before the study of each section, there is also a question. These questions lead students to learn and think, so that students can get the main goals of this class and will not miss the theme. Moreover, the topics of NB are more complex than PB. The topics in PB are joining a club, daily routines, transportation, rules, animals in a zoo, everyday activities etc. While the topics in NB are animal friends, keep fit, eat well, here and now, rain or shine, a day to remember etc. The expressions of the topics and their meanings are more comprehensive.

2.2.2. Construction of each unit

Taking Unit one of NB Animal Friends as an example, the first page of each unit is the lead-in part. There is a thematic picture, above which is a big question related to the theme. At the left corner, there are objectives of this unit. At the right corner, there are some questions based on the picture. Students need to observe the picture and answer the questions. Next page is listening and speaking part. The first activity 1a helps students to consolidate the vocabulary. 1b and 1c are listening activities. Then students can talk with their classmate surrounds the topic. 1d provides some examples. In this unit, students should talk about their favorite animals. Next page is pronunciation part. A table presents the pronunciation knowledge. Then two activities are used to consolidate the activity. Then there is a short conversation. Students can practice their pronunciation in this conversation. At the same time, students can listen and read the conversation and finish reading activities. Next page is grammar focus. The first part presents some sentences which involve the grammar point. Then two mechanical activities are used to consolidate. Finally, a meaningful activity is designed at the end of the page. For Section B, a longer text appears and then its related activities. While these activities are used to promote writing. Followed by the activities, there is a writing task. For the last page, there is a Project and a Reflecting. Many projects like drawing, reporting, writing stories and etc. Students can use English to transfer and innovate. As the New Curriculum requires, students need to learn English and use English to do things. Last part is the Reflecting part. Three levels are provided to students to reflect their learning condition of this unit. This part help students to reflect themselves and to manage their own learning, develop their metacognitive strategies. Compared with PB, pronunciation part is added. The activities are more various, comprehensive and contextual. Activities are presented in context but not single. They are more interesting and comprehensive in NB. NB adjust the listening part. In PB, there are two parts of listening, which are in Section A and Section B. However, listening part just exists in Section A and mixed with pronunciation and reading. New Standard requires students can talk with each other, describe their own experience and express their thoughts flexibly. NB stress the combination of reading and writing, rather than imitating the fixed structure or pattern. As the PB writing in Unit 2, it requires students to number some sentences in order to make a story about a daily routine then they need to write their own daily routine. Most students just imitate these sentences rather than writing down something authentically.

NB has higher requirements for students' vocabulary. Compared with PB, Vocabulary in PB is more in amount and much more difficult than PB. The decrease of elementary vocabulary, the increase of words beyond New Standard and difficult words learned ahead of time can be seen in NB. Vocabulary related to Chinese traditional culture and festivals increase. The amount of vocabulary increase to 1600 to 2000 words, which has higher demands on students' ability to remember words and broadening their reading after class.

NB stress the language use in specific context, which highlights the authenticity and integrity. Taking the unit which learn the present continuous tense as an example, the passage in Section A sets a context which is Jane and her family talking on the phone. There is a picture near the text in NB. However, in PB, there is only a short conversation and it requires students to role play the conversation. It is clear that PB lack a context. Teachers should make full use of the pictures to set a context for students to learn and use English.

2.3. Teaching suggestions

2.3.1. Learning about the New Standard

The newest English Curriculum Standard of Compulsory Education(2022 edition) is the leading guide of compulsory textbooks. There are many ideas and suggestions about how to teach English. New Standard divides the English course into three levels. The third level is from grade 7 to grade 9. Different level has different requirements in different aspects. English course content is consistent of theme, discourse, language knowledge, cultural knowledge, language skills and learning strategies. New Curriculum gives clear explanation to each items. There is also curriculum objectives, the quality of learning, teaching advice and evaluation suggestions. In the appendix, there are tables of voice, vocabulary and grammar. Teaching examples are also presented. Teachers should make full use of the book. This book can help teachers solve their problems.

2.3.2. Updating Teaching Methods

The changes of the textbook require teachers to update their teaching methods. The past grammar-translation method is not appropriate for the New Standard and new textbook. NB has many group work, pair work, role play, situational dialogue, guessing activities and other various activities, which can raise students' interest and involvement. Teachers need to prepare well and guide students to do these activities. Carrying out Activity-based approach to English learning, designing activities from learning and understanding, applying and practicing to transferring and innovating.

2.3.3. Making full use of the illustrations

The illustrations in NB are more colourful and vividly. At the lead-in part, there is a thematic picture, which set the theme of this unit and take students to experience the topic initially. At the start of Section A, there are some pictures which help students to understand the words or phrases. According to the New Standard, teachers need to cultivate students' five skills, which are listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. The ability to observe the picture is also one of the abilities. Teachers need to make full use of the illustration. And in the reading part, there are also illustrations. Through these illustrations, teachers can guide students to predict the

main idea of the text, so that to raise students' reading interest and reduce the reading difficulty. The illustration in reading part of Section B can help students to catch the textual characteristics. With the help of the illustrations, students can better understand the theme and the context.

2.3.4. Building up theme, discourse and context awareness

Building up theme awareness is the premise of using the text well. NB change the content of each unit. So teachers should pay more attention to the theme content and theme meaning. An English curriculum with thematic meanings should regard the exploration of thematic meanings as the core task of teaching and learning, and use it to integrate the learning content and lead students to integrate the development of their language proficiency, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. Taking Unit 2 No Rules, No Order as an example, the theme of this unit is the importance of rules. With learning the rules, students can realize that they need to obey the rules in their lives. For language proficiency, rules are expressed by imperatives and modal verbs. So in this unit, teachers guide students to learn and use the grammar of imperatives and modal verbs correctly. For cultural awareness, different places like families, schools, even countries have different rules, teachers can cultivate students to understand and respect different rules, recognize our own rules. For thinking quality, in Section B, Alice complains that there are too many rules and write letter to Dr Know for help. Teachers can guide students to think about whether rules can help us or not. Whether there are unreasonable rules and discuss about them. To discuss the function of rules and imagine if there is no rules, how would the world be. Through the discussion and analysis, students can understand that proper rules can help us and the world better. For learning ability, students can learn how to write a letter of asking for help and how to reply the letter. Students also need to work in groups to design a poster for class rules.

3. Conclusion

All in all, the new textbook retains the excellent features of the old textbook, and the changes in the content and structure of the textbook are more in line with the requirements of the New Curriculum. The knowledge system has been built up more closely and the teaching content has been enriched and perfected. The knowledge system is more rigorous, the teaching content is more rich and perfect, and it emphasizes the cultivation of students' reading and writing skills, which is more conducive to the enhancement of students' quality of thinking and the formation of the core qualities of the subject. At the same time, the new textbook also puts forward higher requirements for teachers' teaching. Teachers should continuously improve their teaching level and professionalism, carefully read and correctly understand the content of the New Curriculum and utilize the teaching materials reasonably and effectively.

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