

A Comparative Study of the Writing Sections in the New and Old Editions of the People's Education Press High School English Textbooks

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Abstract: Writing reflects students' comprehensive language proficiency, textbooks play an indispensable role in enhancing students' writing skills. This essay intends to take the writing sections of Compulsory One in the 2007 and 2019 editions of the People's Education Press's high school English textbooks as the research objects. Utilizing literature review and comparative analysis methods, to analyze the differences of writing sections between the two editions of the textbooks from three aspects: content, section design, and writing process. The conclusion shows that the new textbook is more hierarchical and logical, pays more attention to the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, and emphasizes quality education and lifelong education more than the old textbook. Therefore, teachers should adjust their writing teaching strategies, make rational use of textbooks, and supplement teaching resources to develop students' writing abilities.

Keywords: People's Education Press high school English textbooks; writing; comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

The "General High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020)" emphasizes the specific goal of the general high school English curriculum is to cultivate and develop students' English subject literacy. [1] The core competencies of the English subject include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. Among them, language ability is the basic element which constitutes the core competencies of the English subject. Language ability includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is a comprehensive reflection of students' language ability, which can assess students' language application ability, logical thinking ability, etc. Writing plays a great role in improving language ability. In traditional writing classes, teachers tend to focus on "outcome-based writing", repeatedly practicing certain types of practical writing, and paying too much attention to the accuracy of sentence patterns, vocabulary, and grammars. Over time, this teaching method not only erodes students' interest and enthusiasm in writing, but also hinders the cultivation of right writing thoughts and strategies.

Textbooks are an indispensable component of the educational process and an integral part of educational reform. The 2019 edition of the People's Education Press's high school English textbooks (hereinafter referred to as the "new textbooks") have undergone significant changes from the 2007 edition (hereinafter referred to as the "old textbooks"). Each teaching module now features independent writing content with clear hierarchical structure, placing greater emphasis on gradual study. Making full use of textbooks can effectively enhance teaching effectiveness. This essay intends to use the writing sections of the 2007 and 2019 editions of the People's Education Press's high school English compulsory textbook 1 as the research subjects. By employing literature review and comparative analysis methods, it analyzes the differences in content, section design, and writing process between the two editions of the textbooks.

2. Comparison of Differences Between the Writing Sections of The New and Old Editions of The Textbook

After analyzing the content of the new and old editions of the textbook, it is found that the topic of B1U2 [2] in the new textbook is "Travelling Around", which corresponds to the topic of B1U3 [3] in the old textbook, "Travel Journal". Moreover, both writing sections require students to write emails. Therefore, the author conducted a comparative study of these two units to analyze the differences in the writing sections between the new and old textbooks.

(1) Comparative analysis of content

The main content of the "Travel Journal" unit in the old textbook is about the sights and feelings experienced by Wang Kun and his group while cycling along the Mekong River. This unit includes two reading materials. The first material, "The Dream and The Plan," is designed in the Reading section, whose main content is about the preparations made by Wang Kun and his group before departure. The second material, "A Night in The Mountain," mainly describes the beautiful scenery and local customs experienced by Wang Kun and his group when they traveled south along the Mekong River and passed through Xizang. The Writing section designed behind these two reading materials, requires: Imagine you are a friend of Wang Kun, writing an email to ask him about Laos.

The new textbook's "Travelling Around" unit is also about tourism. It includes two reading materials. The first reading material is a tourism brochure consisting of four small paragraphs, which introduce four tourist attractions in Peru respectively. The second reading material is designed in the "Reading for Writing" section, which is an email from Richard to Xiao Li, describing Richard's plan to visit Xi'an and discussing several preparations of the travel plan. The writing requirement is: If you were Xiao Li, write a reply to Richard's email, providing your evaluation and feedback on his letter, and then discussing your own holiday plans.

From the perspective of content, two reading materials in

the old textbook are both about the Mekong River, while the new textbook covers the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures, one about Peru and the other about Xi'an, China. From the students' perspective, the Reading for Writing section in the new textbook involves the Terra Cotta Warriors in Xi'an, most students know that the Terra Cotta Warriors are a treasure of Chinese culture and "one of the Eight Wonders of the World". In contrast, as for the old textbook, most students are not familiar with the Mekong River and Laos, so it's hard for them to write something about

this topic. Writing based on the students' own knowledge can not only provide them with something to write about but also stimulate their interest in writing. Therefore, it can be concluded that the new textbooks place greater emphasis on Chinese culture, which can enhance national self-confidence. Besides, the writing topics are more closely aligned with students' existing knowledge and more in line with teaching principles.

(2) Comparative analysis of section design

Table 1. Comparison of Writing Sections in the New and Old Editions of the People's Education Press High School English Compulsory Course 1

Comparison item	Old Edition	New Edition
Unit Title	Travel Journey	Travelling Around
Writing Content	Write an email	Write an email
Writing Section Design	1. Imagine that you are a friend of Wang Kun. Write a short email asking about Laos. (1) Brainstorming: Work in pairs to discuss questions such as: What is the food like in Laos? What do you think of this country? (2) Select two to three questions from the following and use each question to write a new paragraph. 2. You can start your email like this. This section provides the three parts of an email format: greeting, opening sentence, and closing signature.	1. Read Richard's email to his friend and the brochure that he found. Do you think his plan sounds interesting? Why? The textbook provides a complete email from Richard outlining his travel plans; Below the email is a detailed description of the history and scale of the Terracotta Army. 2. Study the organization and language features. (1) Analyze the text structure of the email by filling in the table. (2) Highlight phrases and vocabulary expressing emotions in the email and complete the sentences using words from the email. 3. Use the tables above to help you write a travel plan. (1) Pretend you are Xiaoli and reply to Richard with an email. (2) Peer review: Evaluate your partner's draft based on the criteria below and provide suggestions. (3) Revise your essay based on peer feedback. 4. The teacher selects outstanding essays to present to the entire class.

The old textbook designed two sections for the writing section. The first section outlined the writing requirements: write an email to Wang Kun asking about Laos. This section first had students discuss in pairs and think about what questions they would ask in the email, then select two to three questions from the list provided in the textbook and write new paragraphs based on each question; the second section provided the basic format for an email, allowing students to begin writing based on this format.

The new textbook has four parts in the writing section. The first part provides Richard's email, which outlines his travel plans to Xi'an and provides detailed information about the Terracotta Army below the email. The second part guides students to organize the basic structures of the email by filling out a table, and encourage them to consider the functions of these sentences when they use words and phrases from the email to complete sentences. In the third section, students begin writing. After completing the first draft, they conduct peer reviews based on the evaluation criteria in the textbook and revise the first draft according to peer suggestions. The fourth section showcases excellent works.

From the section design, it is evident that the activities in the new textbook are more closely integrated and follow a progressive sequence. The old textbook directly presents writing requirements and brainstorming exercises to help students clarify the article's theme, then completes the article based on the given prompts. However, it overlooks the fact that first-year high school students have relatively weak writing skills and may have never written an email before. Without providing an email text, directly asking students to

start writing can leave them feeling confused. On one hand, they may not know how to organize the article's structure, and on the other hand, they may be unfamiliar with Laos and have nothing to say about the topic. Additionally, there is no evaluation or correction section after students complete their assignments. In this situation, both teachers and students may overlook the importance of evaluation, correction, and showcasing outstanding work. Therefore, the old textbook has significant flaws in its writing section design.

The new textbook addresses these issues from three aspects: In terms of content, since the textbook already provides a travel plan for Xi'an, students can propose their own suggestions based on this plan, giving them something to write about. Additionally, students can freely choose a location to write their own travel plan, which helps stimulate their interest in writing; In terms of structure, although students' writing skills are relatively weak, the second part of the new textbook effectively helps students clarify the structure of the text through analysis, allowing them to write a reply email by following the example provided; In terms of evaluation, the new textbook emphasizes the importance of peer assessment. During the peer evaluation stage, the textbook provides six scoring criteria for students to reference. Under these circumstances, peer evaluation becomes more standardized and objective, while also allowing students to notice whether their own essays meet the scoring criteria. Such activities not only enhance students' writing skills and techniques but also foster their communication abilities.

(3) Comparative analysis of writing processes

The Input Hypothesis Theory proposed by American

linguist Krashen [4] states that in the process of second language acquisition, learners should receive input that is above their current proficiency level but still comprehensible and acceptable, in order to effectively acquire the second language. In order for students to produce meaningful output, rich and comprehensible input is key to language learning.

The old textbook neglects the importance of language input in this unit. On the surface, the writing requirements seem to be related to the previous two reading passages, but upon closer examination, it can be found that the writing topic has little connection with the preceding text. The teaching process is as follows: Brainstorming questions that may be asked in the email → writing new paragraphs based on the questions → drafting the first draft. From this teaching process, it can be seen that there is no corresponding reading material provided before drafting, and students do not have sufficient language input. Though this process attempts to adopt "process-oriented writing", it omits many teaching steps, effectively making it "result-oriented writing". Under such a process, students struggle to produce well-structured, logically coherent, and fluent language, which is not conducive to developing students' writing abilities and skills.

The new textbook excels in this regard by providing students with ample background knowledge and writing materials before formal writing begins: Ensuring sufficient language input → conducting text analysis to understand writing structure and sentence construction → brainstorming activities where students discuss the feasibility of Richard's travel plans, offer relevant suggestions, and propose their own travel plans → drafting → peer review → revision and editing → presenting outcomes. The entire teaching activity design falls under 'process-oriented writing,' following the cognitive process of 'understanding—development—practice' that conforming to students' cognitive patterns. This approach not only promotes effective language output but also cultivates students' divergent and innovative thinking. It demonstrates that the new textbook not only develops students' writing skills and techniques but also fosters their writing thinking and habits, emphasizing "teaching someone to fish" rather than "giving someone fish", and prioritizing quality education and lifelong development.

3. Results

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the new textbook has undergone significant changes from the old one, which can be summarized in the following three aspects.

(1) The new textbooks are more hierarchical and logical.

Both the design of the writing section and the students' writing process demonstrate that the new textbooks' writing section design better aligns with students' information processing patterns. First, There is sufficient language input to ensure students have sufficient language knowledge. Then progressing from easy to difficult, allowing students to produce language output based on their understanding. Finally, peer evaluation is conducted. engaging in peer review. The entire writing process is gradual, hierarchical, and logical.

(2) The new textbooks place greater emphasis on the integration of Chinese and Western cultures

Not just this unit, but also through analysis of the entire new high school textbooks, the author has found that the proportion of Chinese culture in the new textbooks has significantly increased. The old textbooks placed more emphasis on cultivating students' international vision and cross-cultural awareness. In recent years, with the

enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength and the introduction of new curriculum standards, the new textbooks have also increased the proportion of Chinese culture. This not only enhances students' interest in learning English, but also strengthens their patriotism and cultural self-confidence.

(3) The new textbooks place greater emphasis on quality education and lifelong learning.

In response to the problems of exam-oriented education, quality education emphasizes the comprehensive development of individuals and aims to improve the overall quality of the nation. [5] Therefore, it is an educational process that aims to improve the quality of those receiving education. The development of the new textbooks aligns with the objectives of quality education. In the writing section, while cultivating students' language skills, activities such as discussions, brainstorming, and peer reviews are incorporated to develop their writing techniques, innovative thinking, collaborative abilities, and communication skills, thereby promoting their all-round development. These writing processes help foster students' writing thinking, enabling them to develop good writing habits and skills throughout their educational journey and even throughout their lives, thereby achieving the goal of lifelong education.

Addressing the issues of current exam-oriented education, quality education emphasizes the comprehensive development of individuals, aiming to enhance the overall quality of the entire nation. Therefore, it is an educational process aimed at improving the quality of the educates. The new textbooks are written in line with the goals of quality education. The writing sections not only cultivates students' language abilities but also fosters their writing skills, innovative thinking, cooperation abilities, and communication skills through activities such as discussions, brainstorming, and peer evaluation, thereby promoting their all-round development. [6] These writing processes help foster students' writing thinking, enabling them to develop good writing habits and skills throughout their educational journey and even throughout their lives, thereby achieving the goal of lifelong education.

4. Suggestions

With changes in the "Curriculum Standards", core competencies, and educational philosophies, the writing sections of the new textbooks have also undergone significant modifications from the previous edition. This necessitates that English teachers update their teaching methods and utilize the textbooks in a flexible, diverse, and creative manner. The writing sections of the new textbooks are closely integrated with the overall unit themes and contexts, emphasizing reading to facilitate writing while slightly expanding upon it. Therefore, teachers should provide students with sufficient background knowledge during the writing preparation stage to ensure they have something to write about. Additionally, based on students' language ability and proficiency levels, teachers should design reasonable teaching processes, teach writing methods, develop students' writing skills, and build students' confidence and ability to engage in writing.

However, not everything included in the textbooks needs to be completed step by step. Teachers can flexibly adapt the content in the textbooks based on students' learning situations and actual teaching conditions. By comparing the writing sections of multiple editions of textbooks, teachers can select appropriate teaching steps and utilize multimedia and online

resources to conduct effective teaching design.

In addition, teachers should guide students in mastering basic vocabulary, sentence structures, and expressions to ensure the accuracy of their essays. [7] At the same time, teachers should also increase the frequency of writing exercises, teach the structures, characteristics, writing techniques, and skills of different genres. What's more, encouraging students to read extensively and accumulate knowledge, continuously enriching their writing material repository, and cultivating students' good writing habits. Finally, teachers should provide frequent feedback, including teacher evaluations and student self-assessments and peer assessments, and encourage more sharing, ensuring students can improve their writing skills through peer interaction.

5. Conclusion

By comparing the writing sections of the new and old textbooks, it can be concluded that the new textbook has made significant improvements over the old one in terms of content, section design, and writing process. In summary, the new textbook is more structured and logical, pays more attention to the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, and places greater emphasis on quality education and lifelong learning.

The improvement of new textbooks can develop students' language abilities in various aspects, which also poses higher requirements on teachers. Teachers still have a long way to go in the future. They need to follow the new curriculum standards, update their teaching methods, use textbooks flexibly, and supplement appropriate resources, so as to maximize the effectiveness of the new textbooks and achieve

good teaching results.

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