



CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

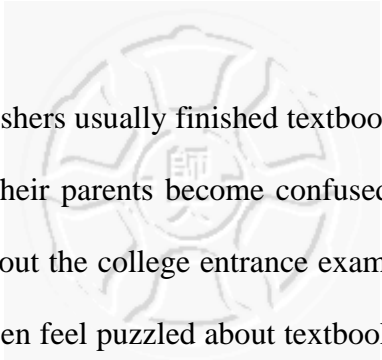
1.1 Motivation

In Taiwan, the textbook policy has recently gone through a drastic reform (Lan, 1998, 2003; Tang, 1994). In the forty years before 1999 (1953~1995), textbooks throughout the country were all published by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation (NICT) (Shen & Chou, 2001; Lan, 2003). However, with the liberalization of the curriculum, the control on textbook compilation¹ and selection has been released by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Since 1999, the production of senior high school textbooks has been completely open to qualified publishers, and each individual school has been empowered to select its own textbooks. English textbooks are no exception, which have also shifted from a unified version by the NICT to various versions by publishers.

To weigh gains and losses from the textbook revolution, more and more researchers have been devoted to the studies of textbooks in use (Chou, 2003; Lan, 2003, 2004; Tsai, 2001). Regarding the English textbooks, the advantages of the open editorial and censoring system include the enhancement of textbook quality, teachers' professional knowledge, teaching methods, and students' abilities (Chen, 2000; Chen, 2002; Hsu, 2004; Lan, 1998; Lin, 1998; Shen & Chou, 2001; Yeh, 2003).

However, numerous problems also emerged. For instance, an inconsistent quality was detected among English textbooks on the market (Chang, 2002; Chen, 2003; Cho,

¹ "Textbook compilation" in the present study is similar to "materials development," which means "anything which is done by writers, teachers or learners to provide sources of language input and to exploit those sources in ways which maximize the likelihood of intake" (Tomlinson, 1998:2). In other words, it is a process of "materials writing" and/or "textbook editing" mentioned in the literature (e.g. Cheng, 2003). For the sake of variety, "textbook compilation/editing" and "materials development/writing" will be used interchangeably. For detailed process, see Jolly and Bolitho (1998) and Cheng (2003).



2002; Yeh, 2003). The publishers usually finished textbook editing within a short time (Lan, 2002). Students and their parents become confused when encountered various versions and are anxious about the college entrance examination (Huang, 2002; Shen & Chou, 2001). Teachers even feel puzzled about textbook selection, and then usually base their hasty decision on a fragile evaluation framework or insufficient training (Chen, 2002; Hsu, 2004; Ko, 2005; Leu, 2004).

To date, a great deal of effort has been made on the developmental process of the textbooks² (Chou, 2003; Lan, 2004), especially on textbook selection and evaluation³ (e.g., Chen, 2000; Cheng, 2003; Hsu, 2004; Ko, 2005; Leu, 2004). Parts of them focused on textbook content analysis (e.g., Chang, 2002; Chen, 2003; Cho, 2002; Yeh, 2003; Su, 1990). Yet, little attention has been paid to the process of textbook compilation, which is a critical issue to understand the pros and cons of the open editorial system⁴, and their impact on teachers, learners and textbooks (Chou, 2003; Lan, 2004). Moreover, none of the previous studies mentioned above tackled writers', teachers', and researchers' evaluations at the same time. Hence, the focuses of the present study, as shown in Figure 1-1, are to investigate the compiling processes of the top three sets of senior high school English textbooks in use, and to evaluate their production from teacher users' views⁵ and supplemented with the researcher's analysis.

² According to Lan's (2004) and Chou's (2003) classification, there are two types of studies on textbooks: content analysis and developmental process analysis. The content analysis focuses on seven categories: teaching materials, curriculum design, illustration and text layout, language usage, and ideologies (political, gender-related, and ethnic-group related). The other studies on the developmental process of textbooks are policy, market mechanisms, editing, examination, selection, usage, and evaluation.

³ "Textbook selection" and "textbook evaluation" are similar in the attempts and the criteria to measure the value of materials (Cunningsworth, 1995; Tomlinson, 1998: 3), but are different in the evaluating time (Ellis, 1997, 1998). "Selection" is done before the materials are used, while "evaluation" is conducted after the materials are used. To gather more information after the textbooks are used, the present study distinguishes these two in terms of the time to conduct evaluation.

⁴ After comparing the contemporary research on textbooks in Taiwan and abroad, Chou (2003) and Lan (2004) both found the analysis of compilation process remained obscure. Understanding the producing process of textbooks was claimed to be critical for determining their influence on education.

⁵ "Teacher users" in the present study refer to the teachers who adopt textbooks. They are slightly different from "teachers as writers," who develop textbooks on teachers' and students' needs.

Then, the relationship between textbook compiling process and product will be explored. Finally, the teaching implications on senior high English teaching and learning will be discussed.

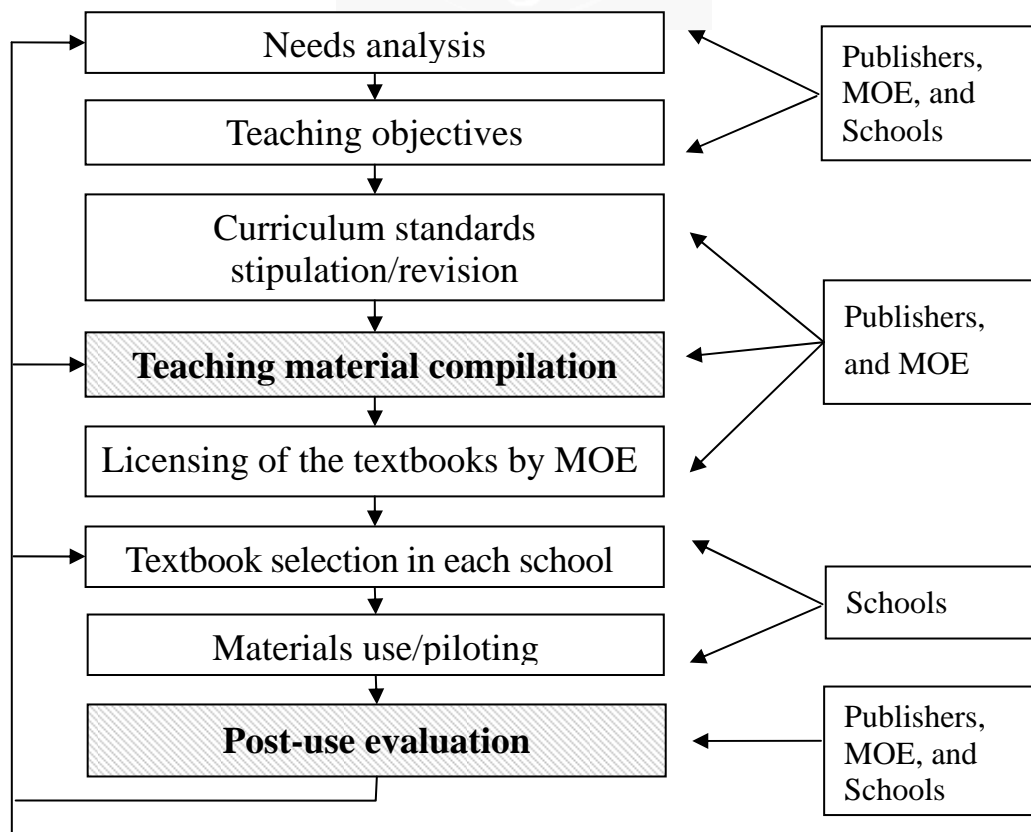


Figure 1-1: Procedures for Curriculum Design, Materials Compilation, and Materials Evaluation in Taiwan (translated from Shih, 2000)

1.2 Theoretical Background

A “textbook,” according to Richards and Schmidt (2002), is “a book on a specific subject used as a teaching learning guide, especially in a school or college” (p.550). For English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) learning, textbooks are often part of a graded series covering multiple skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar) or a specific skill (e.g., reading). It is also termed as “coursebook,” which typically comprises integrated or multiple skills. Another term “materials” is commonly mentioned as well. However, it is a broad term, referring to anything used

by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language. It can be in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a CD-Rom, a video, etc. (Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Tomlinson, 1998). In the present study, the three terms will be used interchangeably.

The role of textbooks in language teaching and learning has been defined by Cunningsworth (1995) as a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities, and of activities for practice and communicative interaction. It also serves as a reference on what should be taught or learned, a resource for presentation. Moreover, it provides less experienced teachers with support (Richards, 1998). Beyond this, it reflects the major issues concerning the current language program (Richards, 1998; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). It has a dynamic interaction with the overall goals of a language teaching program deriving from an analysis of language learners in a particular learning environment (McDonough & Shaw, 1993).

A path of textbook production is shown below (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998), where the needs and interests of teachers and learners should be identified and explored first, and be contextually and pedagogically fulfilled. After materials being printed out, evaluation just starts the way, followed by a cycle of adaptation.

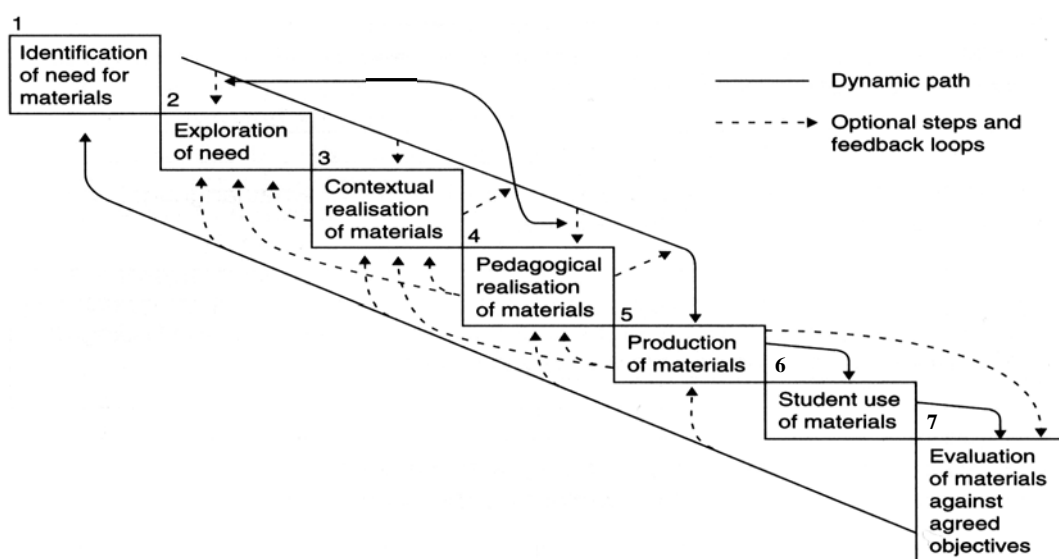
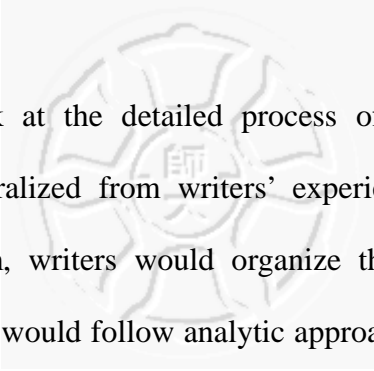


Figure 1-2: A Path through the Production of New or Adapted Materials
(adapted from Jolly and Bolitho, 1998: 98)



To have a close look at the detailed process of materials writing, certain principles have been generalized from writers' experiences⁶ by Bell and Gower (1998). According to them, writers would organize the materials in natural and authentic language. Or they would follow analytic approaches for designing grammar exercise or activities and then try to find a balance among them. Moreover, students' interests and needs are always writers' top priority. In this line, they would engage generative texts that would motivate students to talk or write, and integrate different language skills with students' learning development. Other key principles will be detailed in Chapter Three.

In practice, textbook writers usually compromise from time to time with publishers and market users, with the purpose to "cater for a wide range of students, teachers and classroom contexts" (Bell & Gower, 1998: 116). Even though writers are relatively familiar with the theoretical path and principles of materials production, they have to strike a balance between publishers' and users' interests (Byrd, 1995; Richards, 1998; Werner, Church, Gill, Hyzer, Knezevic, Niedermeier, & Wegmann, 1995). Thus, materials producers often try to harmonize their voices with materials users.

In Taiwan, the production of the English textbooks has undergone a similar path (see Figure 1-1), with various needs and principles to attend. First of all, the ultimate goal of the current ESL/EFL curriculum should be significantly achieved (McDough & Shaw, 1993: 5). Shih (2000, 2002b) and Tang (1994) also highlighted that the current English language curriculum and the contemporary language pedagogy come in first and foremost basis for ESL/EFL textbooks. In line with this, the production of the textbooks in use followed the curriculum criteria published by the MOE (1995).

⁶ The term "textbook writers" in the present study only refers to people who compose or adapt the texts (i.e., authors and teacher writers), which is different from "textbook compilers" in Cheng (2003) and Leu (2004), who include people who compile all the materials at a final stage (i.e., editors or compilers). "Textbook publishers," who publish the whole set of materials (Tomlinson, 1998), are also distinguished from "textbook writers."

The features have been characterized by Shih (1998: 44-46)⁷:

1. Textbooks are structured for the communicative syllabus, where four language skills should be equally developed in a communicative context.
2. The contents are designed to meet learners' needs and interests.
3. Learning strategies and styles are emphasized in order to cultivate active attitudes and efficient learning process.
4. Grammar learning is for real-life communication, rather than drills practice. Hence, grammar should be taught through the meaningful contexts.
5. Vocabulary learning is dichotomized into words for production and words for recognition. The former category is built for students to learn the usage of new vocabulary, while the latter is simply for learners to understand the meaning.
6. More concerns are presented with the material linkage between junior and senior high courses, with the coordination of teaching methods, and with the practicality of teacher's manual.

Another vital concern for the production of ESL/ EFL textbooks lies in whether the users' (teachers' and learners') needs are satisfied. In view of this, numerous evaluation frameworks have been proposed (e.g., Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997, 1998; Leu, 2004; Li, 2003; Pan, 2004; Skierso, 1991; Su, 1998; William, 1983). Considering the different needs among different educational systems, Cunningsworth (1995) has highlighted two important components of language textbooks that teachers would concern most: language contents and language skills. Detailed components and example self-checks are summarized in Table 1-1 (see Appendix A for a complete checklist). Based on Cunningsworth's framework, Shih (2000) has also provided a handy checklist for teachers in Taiwan.

⁷ The features are originally presented in Chinese and now translated into English by the researcher.

Table 1-1: A Checklist for an Ideal Language Textbook (cited from Cunningsworth, 1995)

The language content		The language skills	
Item	Example	Item	Example
Grammar	-- <i>What grammar items are included? Do they correspond to students' language needs?</i> -- <i>How balanced is the treatment of form and use?</i>	All four skills	-- <i>Is practice in all four skills included? If so, is it balanced?</i> -- <i>Do the presentation and practice activities include the integration of skills in realistic context?</i>
Vocabulary	-- <i>How much vocabulary is taught?</i> -- <i>Is there any principled basis for selection of vocabulary?</i>	Listening	-- <i>Is the listening material set in a meaningful context?</i> -- <i>Are there pre-listening tasks, questions, etc?</i>
Phonology	-- <i>Is the phonemic alphabet used?</i> -- <i>Is the pronunciation work built on to other types of work, such as listening practice?</i>	Speaking	-- <i>How much emphasis is there on spoken English?</i> -- <i>Are there any specific speaking strategies, e.g., debating?</i>
Discourse	-- <i>Does the coursebook deal with any aspects of discourse?</i> -- <i>Do the examples of spoken and written discourse presented by the material provide good models for the learners?</i>	Reading	-- <i>Is there a focus on the development of reading skills and strategies?</i> -- <i>Is there emphasis on reading for pleasure and for intellectual satisfaction?</i>
Appropriacy	-- <i>Is there any attempt to match language style to social situation?</i> -- <i>Does the coursebook identify situations of language use?</i>	Writing	-- <i>Is paragraphing taught adequately?</i> -- <i>Is there appropriate progression and variety of task?</i>

Even though some of the aforementioned principles and functions of textbooks have been satisfied after the textbook reform (Chen, 2000; Chen, 2002; Chung, 2003; Hsu, 2004; Ko, 2005; Li, 2003; Pan, 2004; Su, 2003; Wang, 2004), the diverse quality of the textbook has also triggered negative impact on learning (Chang, 2002; Chen, 2003; Cho, 2002; Yeh, 2003). In consequence, the present study attempts to integrate voices from materials producers and users, and to further examine whether both sides can meet their needs. The materials to be examined will involve three sets of senior high English textbooks on the current market. Simultaneously, contents in each version will be analyzed and compared to elicit more similarities and differences in their textbook compiling process.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions for the present study are as follows:

1. Do the current senior high English textbook writers follow any specific procedures and principles in compiling their textbooks? What do they concern most about their textbooks in the process?
2. Are senior high English textbook users (i.e., school teachers) satisfied with textbooks in use? If yes, what aspects are they satisfied with? How do they feel about the NICT version?
3. Do textbook writers and English teachers have the same perceptions about textbooks? If yes, what aspects do they agree upon most?

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter Two discusses the issues in textbook compilation and evaluation, including the influence of the Communicative Language Teaching, learners' learning process, and teachers' perceptions. In addition, four empirical studies of textbook compilation and evaluation will be reviewed (Chen, 2002; Cheng, 2003; Ko, 2005; Yeh, 2003).

Chapter Three discusses the research design. The participants, instruments, and analysis procedures will be reported, followed by the illustration of the research plan. The results of the study will be described in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five provides a more in-depth discussion about the research questions and Chapter Six is concerned with the conclusion, pedagogical implications, and limitations of the study.