



A Comparative Analysis of Literary Elements Junior High School English Textbooks with Special Reference to The People's Education Edition, Shanghai Education Press and Foreign Language Press

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ABSTRACT

According to the "English Curriculum Reform for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition)" formulated by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, the nature and orientation of compulsory education are combined with the emphasis on adjusting and optimizing the curriculum to cultivate socialist builders and successors with comprehensive development of moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic skills. This paper focuses on the problems of low level of content and a single form of literary elements in junior high school English textbooks and the lack of emphasis on existing literary elements in the current textbooks. The study also aims to find out the actual usage of the textbooks among front-line teachers and students through questionnaires and interviews, summarize the form of presentation of literary elements in the three editions, analyze their shortcomings through comparison, and learn from and supplement each other.

Keywords: Middle school English textbooks, literary elements, nurturing value, quality education

I. Definition of Related Concepts

Literary elements are the means and techniques used by authors in the literary work itself and to create certain effects or convey information to readers, including all kinds of literary works and other forms of expression that are supplemented and expanded to help students understand the literary work, such as illustrations, annotations, etc. The author broadly classifies literary elements into two categories: literary expressions and literary means of expression. The former includes novels, poems (couplets), essays (reportage, fiction), plays, operas, folklore, fables, wild histories (introduction to classroom teaching), fairy tales, jokes, biographies, myths, and illustrations; the latter mainly includes literary criticism, etc.

1. Research and Design

1. Research Questions

(a) The standard sample of the students' questionnaire

1. Your self-assessment of learning English

A excellent B good C qualified D more room for improvement

2. How do you feel about English textbooks?

A The teaching materials are boring and uninteresting B The teaching materials are interesting and colorful C No feeling

3. How did you feel when you studied the P.S.C. section in the first grade?

A No feeling B Too simple, easy to learn

4. Do you feel that the illustrations do not match the content of the textbook? (e.g. do the illustrations help you understand the text)

A No feeling, no attention to the illustrations

B Interesting but not very relevant to the text

C matches the text

5. Would you find the generalization section of the textbook helpful for your prep and review? (e.g. grammar section)

A Yes B A little C No

6. How much did you learn about science and technology in the textbook that you did not know before? (e.g. AI, space stations, etc.)

A The book is full of new and exciting knowledge

Most of the B book is known, but not the details

Most of the C book know and know the details

The D book is all I have fully mastered

7. How much did you learn about the humanities that you did not know before in the textbook? (e.g. foreign customs, habits, etc.)

A learned a lot about it

B understands the general

C learned very little about it

8. Did you draw any spiritual strength (e.g., strength, optimism) from the textbook texts and to what extent?

A none B only a little C most of it but not much for the spiritual world D all from the text

9. For the practical part of the textbook, does the teacher let the students practice in class? (e.g. group work to design the content of an email)?

A will B basically will C basically will not D will not

10. Are you willing to take the initiative to explore English materials after completing the class assignments? (Interest in learning English, English materials)

A English materials are interesting and will be actively explored after class

B English textbooks are boring and simply complete the task

11. How much of what you have learned in English class is applied in your life? (e.g., know the volunteer process or how to keep a pet, etc.)

A Almost none B Only a little C Mostly D All

12. What is the most appealing aspect of the textbook to you?

13. If you were to edit a textbook, what content would you most like to design?

(b) Questions of teachers' interviews

1. Please review your teaching experience and tell us what you know about the elements in the textbook (what are the more influential elements or forms then explain our definition of the elements to teachers)

2. In your regular classroom teaching, apart from using the files to teach students basic subject skills, do you have any intentional extensions (e.g., guidance for the development of students' personality)

3. How many elements are contained in the textbook you are using?

4. Do you think that some of the elements that appear in the text have contributed to the development of students' personalities, in addition to helping them learn basic skills?

6. Have you implemented any open-ended activities using textbook elements (e.g., finding differences based on illustrations) in your classroom (if so, how often and how well students responded?)

7. Do you have the impression that there is a lot of content in the existing textbooks that deal with different textual comparisons, and in what way do you cover this content?

According to our preliminary research, the teaching materials of the People's Education Edition are designed to learn and consolidate the grammar and other knowledge learned through a large number of basic dialogues and exercises.

2. Research Object

Students using all three versions of the textbook, predominantly from Jingzhou Middle School and the front-line middle school English teachers who teach with all three versions of the textbook

Research Methods

(a) Questionnaire Survey

The main content and form of the questionnaire: The student questions are divided into three different versions, each with 13 questions, 2 open-ended questions and 11 objective multiple-choice questions, each designed according to the problems that existed as a result of the analysis. The results are as follows

Aspects	Student feelings about the materials		
	Humanities Education Edition	Foreign Research Service Edition	Shanghai Education Edition
The most attractive parts of the textbook	1 Novelty knowledge 2 Illustrations and stories 3 Character Dialogue 4 Knowledge that can be applied in practice 5 Grammar section 6 Knowledge summary board in the textbook	1 Classic characters in film and television works 2 Exotic locales 3 Illustrations of exotic landmarks 4 Natural Science Knowledge	1 Knowledge of science and technology 2 Introduction to exotic locales 3 Knowledge of environmental protection 4 Comparison of Chinese and foreign cultures
The most desired literary elements in the textbook	1 Texts related to foreign customs and traditional Chinese culture and comparison 2 Interesting stories and illustrations 3 Inspirational Sex Stories 4 English Jokes 5 Slang in everyday conversation 6 English expressions of proverbs	1 Traditional Chinese Drama and Customs 2 Mythology 3 Increase the share of domestic introduction	1 More innovative content 2 Content with a more international perspective

Table 1 Assignment of Questions for Student Papers

(b) Faculty Interviews

All interviews were conducted offline, with five English teachers from Jingzhou Middle School. A total of 6 questions were designed, mainly related to "feelings of using teaching materials" and "teaching of literary elements", and the results of the interviews are as follows

Aspects	Teachers' feelings about the materials		
	Humanities Education Edition	Foreign Research Service Edition	Shanghai Education Edition
Shortcomings of the teaching materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Insufficient interesting content 2 Lack of content to exercise students' oral language 3 Conversations that are relevant to life 4 Less knowledge of English involving humanistic literacy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Too much content, not easy for students to understand and absorb 2 Fewer issues related to Chinese reality 3 Less knowledge of traditional Chinese culture is involved 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Content is not new enough 2 Less content related to real-life issues in China
Advantages of the teaching materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Fit the reality of life and reflect the current situation of society 2 Clear logic and organization 3 Focus on communicative etiquette in dialogue 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Wide range of knowledge 2 A wide variety of literary elements are involved 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Involves multidisciplinary knowledge 2 Rich variety and genre of literary elements

Table 2 Teacher interview results

3. Results and Analysis

I. People's Education Edition

The design of a single literary text format and tasks in the basic knowledge section of the People's Education Edition is not conducive to stimulating learning interest to correct utilitarian motivation and develop students' thinking quality. For example, in the listening section of the first unit (Wise men in history) in the first book of the ninth grade of the Shanghai Education Press, the form of the listening section mainly introduces the ancient Olympics, while using non-verbal literary elements such as illustrations to expand the introduction of boxing, racing, and wrestling. In the listening section of the first unit (Wise men in history) of the first-grade book, the athletic events of the ancient Olympics are introduced, and the non-verbal literary elements of illustrations are used to expand the introduction of boxing, racing, wrestling, and running. According to the questionnaire on the use of the textbook, junior high school students strongly requested the textbook to list test points to improve their test-taking ability. Therefore, the People's Education Edition can learn from the Shanghai Education Press to make appropriate integration, which is conducive to changing students' stereotypical perception that listening is "just picking out the options they hear" and not focusing on the transmission of text content enhancing students' interest in listening text content, revising students' learning motivation, and developing students' core appreciation ability of English literacy in the process of absorbing text contents.

The textbook of the People's Education Edition lacks literary elements to export authentic expressions, which is not conducive to breaking the shackles of "Chinese English".

II. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press*

Although the literary elements of the Foreign language teaching and research press are richer in contents and diverse in forms (including novels, jokes, poems, interviews, news broadcasts, etc.), they are less involved in literary elements that reflect China's national conditions and social reality. By contrast, when choosing textual themes, the People's Education Edition pays more attention to guiding students to pay attention to Chinese social reality issues and cultivating their awareness of understanding the current social development of contemporary China in a multidimensional and deeper way. For example, Unit 10 in the second book of Grade 8 of the People's Education Edition mentions the current social problems such as many Chinese farmers immigrating to the cities for work, which leads to the lack of development incentives and the decline economy of the countryside; and the education problem of left-behind children, which enables students to understand the current situation of the country's development from different levels. Although the literary elements in the Foreign language teaching and research press are more diverse than those in the People's Education Edition, both of them lack the expansion and extension of existing literary elements and fail to maximize the nurturing value of literary elements.

III. *Shanghai Education Press*

Whereas the literary elements in the textbooks published by Shanghai Education Press are in various forms, the content is difficult, and the results of the questionnaire indicate that "students who are struggling" are under great pressure to learn, and teachers have difficulty in making full use of the literary elements in the classroom. The literary elements in the textbooks of Shanghai Education Press are not up-to-date and do not meet the needs of students to understand the changing society from an international perspective through the textbooks. In particular, the textbooks of Shanghai Education Press are primarily used in developed regions of the country, where society is changing rapidly; however, the literary elements in the textbooks are outdated and cannot help students gain an insight into the rapidly developing international world.

4 . Conclusion of the Study

I. *Status quo and existing problems*

(a) The practical activities in the People's Education Edition lack innovative and unit-specific types of practical activities, and partner dialogues for the purpose of training Basic English knowledge account for a relatively large proportion;

(b) Although the practical activities from the Shanghai Education Press are novel, appropriate to the target students and have the function of testing learning outcomes, it is worth considering the effectiveness of such modules in improving performance and the effectiveness of real classroom implementation in the classroom under the current educational model where examination results is the main way of evaluating performance;

(c) The practical part of the project in the Shanghai Education Press, as an extension of classroom teaching, has high requirements for the content of practical activities and is difficult to implement, and the questionnaire data show that it is really difficult for teachers to carry out relevant practical activities in the real classroom teaching.

II. *Suggestions for different subjects*

(a) For Teachers

Firstly, change the traditional concept and break the stereotypical view of teaching. In the current situation where too much emphasis is placed on exam-oriented education, the author found in the survey that many junior high school English teachers focus their teaching on the learning and training of exam-oriented skills, and the measurement of students is often limited to the test scores that are closely related to these basic skills, which affects students' learning purpose to a great extent. In a questionnaire survey of junior high school students, I set the question "If you were the author of the junior high school English textbook, what elements would you like to see added to the textbook", and most of the students answered that they would like to see more content related to test points. This reflects the fact that many junior high school students' learning mindset has been solidified and that the test-only theory has replaced the real meaning of English learning - to enhance literary literacy through the immersion of diverse cultures on the basis of skill mastery; to understand the world from a broader perspective, and to keep the motivation to explore and learn from external things.

Secondly, pay attention to the use of existing literary elements in teaching materials

As one of the important components of textbooks, literary elements have a unique role in classroom teaching. However, in the actual teaching situation, teachers often tend to neglect the use of this section. Through questionnaire surveys and interviews of the front-line teachers, I found that many junior high school English teachers do not pay enough attention to literary elements in textbooks, which is reflected in two aspects: first, many teachers do not have a comprehensive understanding of literary elements, and the literary elements they consider are confined to the form of novels, poems and other common literary elements, but they neglect illustrations and other literary elements that exist in textbooks are also significant; second, they do not fully understand the role of literary elements in teaching and education. They fail to fully understand the unique function of literary elements in the process of teaching and educating students as well.

Thirdly, improve teachers' cultural cultivation and innovative teaching methods.

To take advantage of literary elements in the process of teaching, teachers must have a thorough understanding of the literary elements. If they simply tell students about the contents and grammar of the fragmented part that appear in the textbook and fail to interpret and expand the teaching materials in depth, they are not able to show the unique linguistic charm and profound meanings of the literary elements. Therefore, if teachers want to dig deeper and guide students to a further understanding of literary elements, they need to have a comprehensive understanding of the literary elements involved in the textbook in the preparation procedure.

(b) For Editors

Appropriate deletion of textbook content

At present, China is implementing a Double Reduction Policy in primary and secondary schools, in the case of the curriculum content remaining unchanged, the class time is greatly shortened. In the process of interviewing the front-line middle school teachers in Jingzhou Middle School, I found that most of the teachers responded that the current curriculum tasks are heavy and they have to "catch up" in order to complete the teaching tasks. Hence, many English teachers are focusing on teaching basic vocabulary and grammar points, and many practical activities and literature-related panels in the textbook are simply skimmed over, despite these contents are considered as meaningful. These contents can enhance students' interest in learning, increase their enthusiasm for learning literary and improve their learning efficiency. For example, in Unit 2 of the first book of Grade 7 of the People's

Education Edition, students are asked to bring a picture of their own family and introduce their family members in class. If this kind of activity can be carried out practically, it will not only enable students to master the method of introducing others in a practical application situation and achieve the purpose of communication but also develop students' courage and ability of public speaking.

Add necessary literary elements to better realize the educational value of teaching materials

Through questionnaire surveys and preliminary research on the physical and mental characteristics of junior high school students, I found that junior high school students are curious and curious, and they are more eager to learn about more aspects and countries' cultures through various literary elements than the dull basic knowledge and skills. The most distinctive feature of the literary elements in the textbook are highly compelling and appeal to students' interests, and they are the part of the textbook that students mostly expect.

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