

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background and Motivation

The importance of English learning has long been discussed and stressed in non-native English speaking countries. In Taiwan, in particular, one's level of English proficiency can affect their competitive edge either at school or in the workplace. The English learning frenzy, therefore, has never seemed to subside. The Taiwan government has also recognized the need to improve the English proficiency of the Taiwanese people, so the Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented a new curriculum in 2001. The Grades 1-9 English Curriculum not only extends English education to elementary schools, but also lists competence indicators that clearly show the abilities students should possess at two learning stages: grades 3-6 and 7-9.

The competence indicators in the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum can be applied for various purposes. One of them is to help guide private publishers to compile teaching materials (MOE, 2008). In junior high school English classrooms, teaching materials are an essential resource for teachers' instruction and students' learning. If teaching materials can include all the competence indicators, students are supposed to have a greater chance to acquire the abilities needed for successful English learning.

According to the Screening Standards of Grades 1-9 Teaching Materials (MOE, 2009), teaching materials should include a textbook and a student workbook. In Taiwan junior high school English courses, workbooks are commonly used as a source for

students' homework (Chen, 2005). Through the use of workbooks, students can practice what they have learned in class. By checking student workbooks, teachers can then assess students' learning outcomes. Since student workbooks serve as indispensable course materials for teachers and students, it is highly worthwhile to evaluate them.

In fact, several researchers have recognized the need to analyze student workbooks. For instance, Huang (2010) explored the reading literacy of questioning instructions in elementary school Chinese workbooks; Kuo (2009) investigated scientific cognition and inquiry in 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade science workbooks; and Lee (2009) probed high-order thinking in elementary school social-studies workbooks. There are other studies on elementary school workbook analysis centered on the aforementioned learning subjects. Unfortunately, there is limited research concerning junior high school English workbooks, so this is an area that needs investigation.

Although previous studies on workbook analysis have adopted a repertoire of coding schemes, few researchers and educators, aside from Hsu (2006), have evaluated workbooks through the Grades 1-9 competence indicators. Nonetheless, Hsu only investigated whether or not the competence indicators were completely displayed in elementary school social-studies workbooks. Hsu discovered that, even though most of the indicators were completely displayed in the workbooks, there were still a few not presented. Unfortunately, Hsu failed to further examine which indicators were completely displayed and which were not. What's more, interviews conducted in Hsu's study only discussed whether teachers felt the indicators were completely shown in the workbooks.

The interview data, however, did not pinpoint which indicators were emphasized or neglected. Provided that competence indicators illustrated the abilities students should possess, whether or not a specific indicator was shown in workbooks could affect the development of students' abilities. For this reason, a closer examination of this aspect was seriously needed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was three-fold. The first purpose was to investigate how the Grades 7-9 competence indicators in the English Curriculum were distributed in junior high school English workbooks. The English workbooks consisted of two major sections—reading/ writing and listening. To conduct an in-depth analysis, the study focused on the reading/ writing exercises in the workbooks; thus the listening section was excluded. Then this study further aimed to explore which indicators were shown more frequently and which were less.

Lastly, the present study intended to conduct interviews with in-service English teachers who had the experience of using the workbooks. As workbooks exhibited great importance in teaching contexts, how teachers actually used and valued the workbooks was worth exploring. Likewise, as competence indicators entailed abilities that students should acquire, teachers' viewpoints on this issue were also investigated. It was expected that through the interview, the teachers' perceptions or suggestions could be made to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

## Research Questions

Based on the research purposes, the present study aimed to answer the following questions.

1. How are the Grades 7-9 reading/ writing competence indicators in the English Curriculum distributed in the junior high school workbooks?
2. Which competence indicators are emphasized or deemphasized?
3. How do the in-service English teachers use and value the workbooks?
4. How do the in-service English teachers view the competence indicator distribution in the workbooks?



### Significance of the Study

This study attempted to help educators and teachers gain a better understanding of how competence indicators were incorporated into junior high school English workbooks. It is hoped that the research findings of this study may serve as an important reference for English teachers when selecting course materials so that students can benefit from the use of workbooks. In addition, this study may also provide sincere suggestions for workbook editors and commercial publishers so that they would like to make constant efforts to edit high quality English workbooks. Moreover, it is also expected that the research findings may further provide education policy makers with an alternative perspective regarding the competence indicators in the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum. Most important of all, with the considerable attention given to the competence indicators in English workbooks,

students can actually be the greatest beneficiaries in this study.

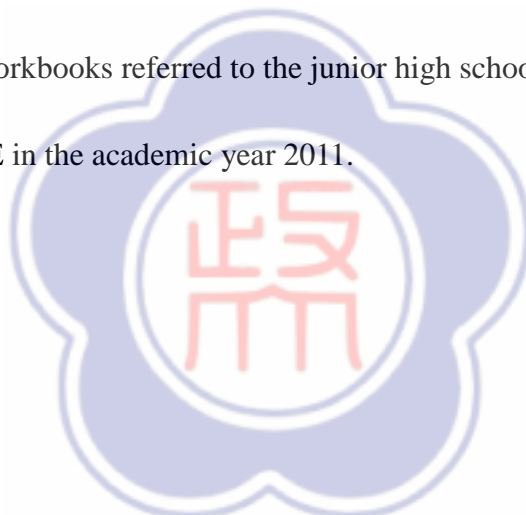
### **Definition of Terms**

#### ***Competence Indicators***

In the present study, the definition of competence indicators was grounded on the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines published by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan in 2008.

#### ***Student Workbooks***

In this study, workbooks referred to the junior high school English workbooks approved by the MOE in the academic year 2011.





## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on competence indicators and competence indicators are reviewed in the following five sections. The first section depicts competence indicators in education. The second section connects competence indicators with teaching materials. The third section delineates previous studies on teaching material analysis based on competence indicators. The fourth section highlights the importance of student workbooks in teaching contexts. The fifth section summarizes related studies on workbook analysis.

#### Competence Indicators in Education

##### *Definitions of Competence*

The term “competence” can be heard in various contexts. In the educational context, numerous definitions of competence have circulated in the literature (Judith, 2006). In the literature, researchers and scholars have interpreted the concept differently, thereby “causing some confusion” (Judith, 2006; Knott, 1975; Westera, 2001). As Westera (2001) noted, “There is a growing interest in the concept of competence learning in various areas of education.... Unfortunately, along with the trend, the term competence is being used in many different ways, causing quite some confusion” (p. 1). Similarly, Judith (2006) suggested, “It is in fact a rather complicated concept for the educational context” (p. 384). In an attempt to find a clear and definite interpretation of competence, the present study frames the term in the context of the Grades 1-9 Curriculum in Taiwan. In

the curriculum, ten core competences are designed for achieving the curriculum goals (MOE, 2008). The ten core competences are categorized as follows:

1. Self-understanding and exploration of potentials
2. Appreciation, representation, and creativity
3. Career planning and lifelong learning
4. Expression, communication, and sharing
5. Respect, care and team work
6. Culture learning and international understanding
7. Planning, organizing and putting plans into practice
8. Utilization of technology and information
9. Active exploration and study
10. Independent thinking and problem solving

According to Yang (2000), “core competences are abilities that an individual, as a citizen at the same time, should possess.” In other words, the Taiwan government highlights the ten core competences in the curriculum in order to cultivate able citizens who can then “foster national competitiveness” (MOE, 2008).

### ***Functions of Competence Indicators***

To materialize the aforementioned ten core competences, the Grades 1-9 Curriculum sets detailed competence indicators (CI) for each of the seven major learning areas. In the English learning area, competence indicators specify that students should be



able to master language skills, develop interest and motivation in English learning, and understand cultural differences across countries.

The use of CI, in fact, is not exclusive to Taiwan. In the US, the Departments of Education in different states specifically list proficiency benchmarks to gauge students' learning outcomes (Michigan DOE, 1996; Ohio DOE, 2009). The Massachusetts Department of Education (2003), for instance, described competence benchmarks as "specific knowledge, skills, and concepts that lead to attainment of the outcome." In Taiwan, a large body of literature has similarly depicted the functions of CI (Lan Y.H., 2006; Lee, 2002; Lu, 2004; Wang, 2001; Yeh, 2002). Lee (2002), for example, proposed six functions of CI: (1) publishers editing teaching materials, (2) teachers setting teaching objectives, (3) teachers assessing students' learning, (4) MOE evaluating school performance, (5) MOE directing the Basic Competence Test for junior high school students, and (6) schools evaluating students' improvement. Lan Y.H. (2006) also concluded that competence indicators can be used as guidelines for: (1) commercial publishers and teachers to compile teaching materials, (2) schools to design curriculums, (3) teachers to set up teaching goals and methods, and (4) teachers to evaluate students' learning progress.

Considering the amount of research and effort that has been put into determining how competence indicators should be formed and implemented, it is evident that both foreign and local educational bodies highly value competence indicators.

## Competence Indicators and Teaching Materials

Because the Taiwan government has acknowledged the importance of constructing competence indicators, the 2001 education reform first introduced the concept of competence indicators into the Grades 1-9 Curriculum. The curriculum specifies that teaching materials, including student workbooks, should be designed according to the indicators. In addition, research on the functions of CI has demonstrated that CI can frame the development of teaching materials so that commercial publishers and teachers can design teaching materials that meet the curriculum goals (Lee, 2002; Lu, 2004; Wang, 2001). In other words, if teaching materials are ideally designed based on CI, then it is believed that teachers will not have to be concerned with whether they are teaching in the proper direction or whether students can acquire the competence as is intended.

### *Related Studies on Textbook Analysis Based on Competence Indicators*

As can be seen from the literature stated above, the connection between CI and teaching materials is evidently significant. It is expected, therefore, that researchers can attempt to investigate whether teaching materials are really designed according to CI. In most studies, the correspondence between CI and textbooks did not appear to be satisfactory (Chung, 2009; Lan Y.H, 2006; Liang, 2009; Lin, 2008). For example, Chung (2009) discovered an unequal focus on the CIs in elementary integrative-activities learning field textbooks. Another finding from Liang's study (2009) also showed discrepancies between CI and learning objectives in elementary life curriculum textbooks.

Similarly, other researchers have cautioned that: (1) the distribution of competence indicators varies in different versions of textbooks; (2) some indicators are emphasized while others are neglected; (3) teaching objectives in textbooks do not always correspond with competence indicators listed by publishers. Clearly, the above findings have proved that textbooks do not faithfully present competence indicators. So how about the relationship between CI and English workbooks?

### **Importance of Student Workbooks**

The importance of student workbooks has been frequently highlighted in various educational contexts. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) — has reported that textbooks, workbooks and teachers' manuals are the most basic printing materials in schools (cited in Lee, 2009, p.73). In the *Blue Ribbon Schools Program* proposed by the US Department of Education, the use of student workbooks has also been stressed (2010). For instance, Kosciusko Middle School has stated that in the reading, language and mathematics programs, student workbooks were used to “provide extra practice on skills” (US DOE, 2010).

In Taiwan, the use of workbooks has also been mentioned in educational policies. First, the Grades 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines states that, “...In addition to textbooks, there should be a set of accompanying teachers' manuals, student workbooks, and tapes/CDs...” (MOE, 2008). Second, the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Education* edited by MOE (2000) has noted that “teaching materials, such as textbooks, workbooks, teachers' manuals,

worksheets, test papers, are used for teaching knowledge and concepts...” (cited in Lan Shuen De, 2006,p.7). The role of student workbooks can be seen clearly in Figure 2.1.

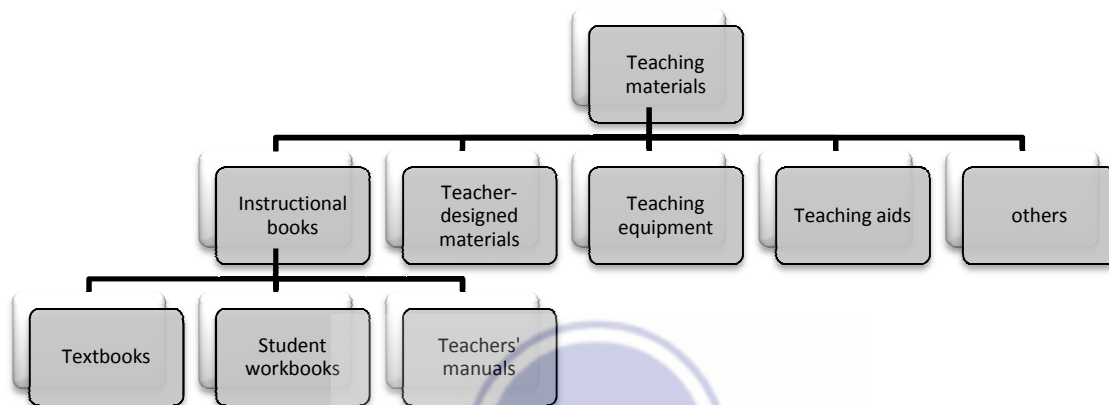


Figure 2.1 *The Role of Student Workbooks* (Adapted from Lan Shuen De, 2006, p.7)

Besides in educational policies, the importance of student workbooks has been constantly addressed by scholars and researchers in Taiwan (Jeng, 1994; Huang, 2003; Lan Shuen De, 2006; Lin, 200 ; Wang, 1998). Lin (2003), for instance, has noted that “workbooks, textbooks and teachers’ manuals comprise learning contents in a curriculum” (cited in Yang, 2007, p. 34). Jeng (1994, p. 62) has specifically stated that Mandarin workbooks can not only reinforce learning but also help teachers understand students’ learning progress. To conclude, from international organizations to Taiwanese local studies, we can see the role and importance which student workbooks play in the teaching context.

## *Functions of Student Workbooks*

### *Student Workbooks as Homework*

Student workbooks, also called student exercise books, serve to provide students more practice (Cunningsworth, 1995). Cunningsworth has suggested that “workbooks are intended to give students extra practice in items already introduced in class.” That is to say, workbooks can function as homework. Similarly in Taiwan, workbooks are also considered a type of homework (Chen, 2005; Hsu, 2001; Lee, 2009). For example, in Chen’s empirical study investigating types and functions of homework in junior high school English classrooms (2005), Chen has discovered that student workbooks are often assigned as homework. As Chen has concluded, “workbook exercising doing” fulfills the four major functions of homework: “practice, preparation, participation, and personal development” (Chen, 2005, p.77). To be more specific, several sub-functions of homework can be found in “workbook exercising doing”: (1) “reinforcement of the skills learned in class; (2) studying for tests; (3) preparation for future lessons; (4) checking if students have understood; (5) completion of the work started in class; (6) participation; (7) development of independent study skills; (8) development of responsibility; (9) development of perseverance and self-discipline; and (10) development of initiatives” (Chen, 2005, p. 80).

Student workbooks as homework can also be seen in homework inspection rules conducted by many schools in Taiwan (Bali Elementary School 2007; Lujiang Junior High School, 2010). Homework inspecting rules are set up to make sure that students can

finish homework assignments and teachers can check students' learning processes. In these policies, student workbooks in different learning areas such as science, math and English are almost always the main homework item to be examined. On this point, it is clearly seen that student workbooks are often taken as homework to help both students learn and teachers teach.

### ***Student Workbooks as Assessment***

According to the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum, homework assignments “should be included in assessment” (MOE, 2008, p. 10). In this sense, student workbooks, mostly used as homework, can be considered a form of assessment.

In Kuo's study on investigating elementary school science workbooks, a survey was conducted to probe whether elementary school science teachers “regarded science workbooks as part of assessment” (Kuo, 2010, p. 81). The research findings in Kuo's study have showed that a majority of teachers have agreed that elementary school science workbooks can be used to assess students' learning progress. In sum, student workbooks not only function as homework but also as a form of assessment.

### ***Related Studies on Workbook Analysis***

Given the importance of student workbooks mentioned above, a number of researchers have tried to examine workbooks in different learning areas (Chang, 2005; Chang, 2006; Cheng, 2007; Hsu, 2001; Hsu, 2006; Hsu, 2008; Huang, 2010; Kuo, 2009;

Lee, 2009; Shen, 2008; Wang, 2004; Wang, 1996; Yang, 2007). In the Chinese learning area, elementary school Chinese workbooks have been the most widely investigated.

Wang (2004), for instance, analyzed the content of elementary and junior high school Chinese workbooks. Wang's study has discovered that some improvements, such as insufficient practice on compositions and punctuations, should have been made on the workbooks.

In the social-studies learning area, the second most-investigated learning area, Hsu (2008) examined critical thinking reflected in elementary school social studies teaching materials. In Hsu's study, interviews with seven experienced elementary school social studies teachers have indicated that student workbooks are the main concern for them to choose teaching materials because if the workbooks are well-designed for critical thinking, teachers can more easily teach critical thinking through workbooks. Based on the previous studies on workbooks analysis, a lot of findings have been made to either provide suggestions for teachers or for workbook writers. It is hoped that these research findings can somewhat benefit students' learning.

While research on workbook analysis has focused on many learning areas such as Chinese, social studies, and science, no research has yet been conducted on content analysis on junior high school English workbooks (see Table 2.1). Thus, there is a need to analyze them to gain some perspectives.

Table 2.1 *Related Studies on Workbook Analysis*

Learning Areas	Research Topics
Chinese	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analysis on the Questioning instruction of Reading Literacy in Mandarin textbooks for the fourth grade (Huang, 2010)</li> <li>2. Content Analytic of Summary Exercises for Chinese Language Workbooks (Shen, 2008)</li> <li>3. Study on The Grammar of Phrases in Chinese Workbooks (Yang, 2007)</li> <li>4. An analysis of the internal structure of phrases and elements to constitute sentences with subject–predicate constructions in the Mandarin workbooks of the Kang-hsuan version in the elementary school (Cheng, 2007)</li> <li>5. Study on Teaching Material of Primary School Grade 1 Chinese Exercise Book’s Picture Composition in Grade 1-9 Curriculum (Chang, 2006)</li> <li>6. An Errors Analysis of the Performance in Mandarin Workbooks of the Upper-grade Students in Elementary School (Sun, 2005)</li> <li>7. Study on writing teaching of Mandarin workbooks in elementary schools (Chang, 2005)</li> <li>8. An Analysis Study on the Content of Mandarin Workbook in Grade 1-9 Curriculum (Wang, 2004)</li> </ol>
Social Studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A content analysis of the ability of high-order-thinking in social studies workbooks in primary school: taking the cognitive process dimension in a revision of bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives as analysis framework (Lee, 2009)</li> <li>2. A Study on Critical Thinking Instruction in Social Studies Learning Area— Taking Workbook Re-writing for example (Hsu, 2008)</li> <li>3. The Content Analysis and Designing of The Social Studies Workbooks in Primary Schools for Grade1-9 Curriculum (Hsu, 2006)</li> <li>4. A Survey on Teachers’ Use of Junior High School Geography Workbooks in Kaohsiung City and County (Hus, 2001)</li> </ol>
Science	<p>Analysis of science workbook content in elementary school and survey of teacher current usage status (Kuo, 2009)</p>



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The present study aimed to investigate how competence indicators (CI) were reflected in junior high school workbooks. This study also intended to explore how junior high school English teachers used and valued workbooks and their viewpoints of the CI distribution in the workbooks. The following discussion includes four sections: subjects, instruments, the research procedure, and data analysis.

#### Subjects

There were two types of subjects in this study. The first was the workbooks, which provided the analysis corpora; the other was interview participants, who provided viewpoints for the workbooks and competence indicators.

#### *The Target Workbooks*

In this study, a set of junior high school English workbooks—*Workbooks A* (published in 2011) was analyzed based on the Grades 7-9 competence indicators stated in the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines. This set was chosen for three reasons. First, it was approved by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation (MOE, 2011). That is, *Workbooks A* were edited in accordance with the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines. Second, *Workbooks A* were the most widely used in the city where the researcher taught. By examining this set, it was expected that the research

findings could be immediately shared with the teachers who also used the same set of workbooks. Finally, as this was a one-man project with limited resources, it would be more feasible to focus on one set.

### ***Focus Group Interview Participants***

To supplement the workbook analysis data, a focus group interview with in-service teachers was conducted. Namely, three junior high school English teachers were invited to evaluate the workbooks. All of the three teachers were the researcher's colleagues, and had been using *Workbooks A* for quite some time. The three teachers had taught English for more than ten years and had had experiences of evaluating and using commercially-published teaching materials. For these reasons, their experiences in using workbooks were certainly valuable.

The benefits of using group interviews have been emphasized in the literature. For instance, Kreuger (1998) recommended that smaller groups are preferable if participants have rich experiences to share about the topic under discussion. Stewart and Shamdasani also notes that group interviews can be used to “stimulate new ideas and creative concepts” (cited in Gibbs, 1997).

Similarly, group interviews can compensate for the deficiency of individual interviews. In other words, group interviews are not confined to the conversation between the researcher and a specific interviewee. Instead, through interaction among different interviewees, issues can be examined from various angles, thus developing new insights

and inspiration (Zhuo, 2010).

### **Instruments**

Two types of instruments were used in this study. First, converting formats of the competence indicators were adopted to analyze the workbooks (see Appendix 1). Second, a list of semi-structured interview questions and an interview guide were employed to conduct the focus group interview (see Appendix 6&7). Each instrument is explained as follows.

#### ***Converting Formats of Competence Indicators***

The Grades 7-9 English reading and writing competence indicators in the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum were employed as the coding scheme. To help ensure an accurate interpretation, each of the 14 indicators was supplemented with core meanings stated in the curriculum guidelines (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 *English Reading and Writing Competence Indicators for Junior High School Students (Published by MOE, 2008; translated by the researcher)*

Skills	Competence indicators	Core meanings
Reading	R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Identify the cursive writing of upper and lower case letters.</li> <li>✧ Read words and phrases in cursive writing.</li> <li>✧ Read short passages written in cursive writing.</li> </ul>
	R2 To use a dictionary to find out the pronunciations and meanings of words.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Understand the format of a dictionary and how to look up unfamiliar words.</li> <li>✧ Pronounce unfamiliar words by checking the phonetic system in a dictionary.</li> <li>✧ Choose the appropriate meanings of words in a dictionary by referring to contexts in sentences or articles.</li> </ul>
	R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Interpret common English signs used in daily life such as “No Smoking”.</li> <li>✧ Identify common English signs used at schools such as “Language Lab,” “Toilet” or Restaurant.”</li> <li>✧ Understand charts such as pie charts, bar graphs or tables.</li> </ul>
	R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Interpret moods and tones of speakers in short passages or stories.</li> <li>✧ Adjust intonations, volumes, speeds to read short passages and stories aloud.</li> </ul>
	R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Grasp main ideas by skimming.</li> <li>✧ Construct main ideas with details in an article.</li> </ul>
	R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short passage, letter, story, and short play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Look for information conveyed by speakers in a dialogue.</li> <li>✧ Grasp main ideas of a short passage.</li> <li>✧ Identify the relationships between a letter sender and receiver.</li> <li>✧ Identify plots and relationships between characters in a story or short play.</li> <li>✧ Grasp key messages by scanning.</li> </ul>
	R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Infer meanings of words with contextual cues, word structures, pictures.</li> <li>✧ Infer meanings of a passage with clues such as contexts, transition words.</li> </ul>

		pictures or contextual cues.	
	R8	To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Understand the basic elements of a story: beginning, development, and ending.</li> <li>✧ Know places and scenes of a story.</li> <li>✧ Identify characters in a story.</li> <li>✧ Understand events and endings of a story.</li> </ul>
	R9	To read simple articles in different genres and topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Read articles in different genres such as diaries, biographies, letters, announcements, advertisements, and news.</li> <li>✧ Read simple articles on various topics and perspectives.</li> </ul>
Writing	W1	To fill out simple forms based on clues.	✧ Fill out a form with words, phrases, and sentences based on provided hints.
	W2	To combine, change and make sentences according to clues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Based on hints, use proper conjunctions (and, but, or, when, after, before, etc.) to combine sentences.</li> <li>✧ Based on hints, rewrite sentences properly.</li> <li>✧ Based on provided words or sentence patterns, make proper sentences.</li> </ul>
	W3	To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.	✧ Write greeting cards or letters in a correct format such as the correct placement of senders, receivers, and greetings.
	W4	To translate simple Chinese sentences into English ones.	✧ Understand the full meanings of a Chinese sentence and translate it into a fluent English sentence.
	W5	To write simple paragraphs based on clues.	✧ Use punctuation and conjunctions correctly.

In addition, Tzeng's (2001) CI converting strategy was referenced and modified to create a format that facilitated later workbook analysis. Tzeng's CI converting strategy, by definition, served to aid CI interpretation. To that end, each indicator was first diagrammed into key concepts— (a) verbs and (an) objects. To simplify the workbook analysis in this study, key words were further extracted from the key concepts (i.e. verbs and objects) so

that raters could easily match the CI with the workbook exercises. To ensure the objectivity of CI converting, each CI converting format was discussed with a second rater to come to a better agreement on CI interpretation. Table 3.2 exemplifies the sample CI converting formats. More details about the converting formats see Appendix 1.

Table 3.2 *Sample CI Converting formats (Adapted from Tzeng, 2001)*

<i>Reading 1</i>	To recognize English letters in cursive writing.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	Recognize	English letters in cursive writing
Key words	Cursive writing	

<i>Reading 2</i>	To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	find out	pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary
Key words	In a dictionary	

### *Semi-structured Focus Group Interview*

As for the focus group interview, a list of semi-structured interview questions was designed to elicit the teachers' viewpoints. The interview, neither an open conversation, nor a highly structured questionnaire, focused on certain issues highlighted in the research purposes. Meanwhile, a couple of follow-up questions were developed in the midst of the interview to further investigate minor relevant issues that the researcher deemed important. Through the semi-structured interview questions, it was expected that a greater depth of data related to the teachers' experiences in using the workbooks and perceptions of CI distribution in the workbooks could be obtained, and hence might avoid obtaining

superficial facts or confirming the researcher's personal opinions only.

In addition to the interview questions, an interview guide was added to ensure the information obtained did not deviate from the research purposes. The interview guide was comprised of sub-questions related to the original interview questions (Kavle, 2009). The guide was employed to establish more interviewer control over the questions and was used when the respondents digressed too far from the interview questions or encounter difficulty expressing themselves freely.

Basically, the interview questions covered the following issues (Adapted from Hsu; 2001; Hsu, 2006; Kuo, 2010). More details about the interview questions see Appendix 6 and 7.

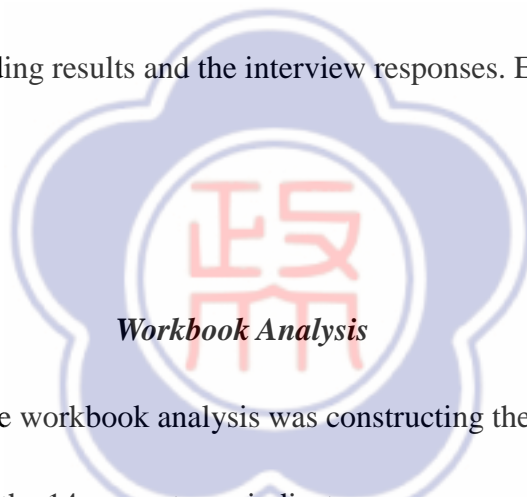
1. How teachers used workbooks in their teaching contexts.
2. How teachers perceived functions of workbooks.
3. How teachers valued workbook contents.
4. How teachers perceived CI distribution in the workbooks.
5. Which aspects of CI teachers thought were emphasized in the workbooks.
6. Which aspects of CI teachers felt were neglected in the workbooks.
7. What suggestions could be made to improve workbook contents.

After the questions were formulated, advice from the thesis advisor and an experienced junior high school English teacher, who also could be a potential interviewee,

were consulted to identify and correct the questions that were ill-worded, offensive, or biased. By so doing, it was expected that the validity of the interview questions would be assured.

### **Procedure**

The research procedure was divided into three major phases. The first phase was to analyze the workbooks, the second to conduct a focus group interview, and the third to analyze the workbook coding results and the interview responses. Each phase was elaborated as follows.



The first step in the workbook analysis was constructing the workbook coding scheme. That is, each of the 14 competence indicators was converted into key concepts and key words. Next, *Workbooks A* were collected as the analysis corpora. Then, the number of CI occurrences in each section of exercises of one lesson was counted. To be specific, one section of exercises was examined indicator by indicator, as one section might correspond to more than one CI. If a correspondence was found, a check was marked to record it. Then the frequency with which each indicator appeared in one lesson was calculated. Table 3.3 shows a blank coding sheet.



Table 3.3 A Blank Coding Sheet of CI Occurrences

Workbook Exercises	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VI I	VI II	F	%
Competence indicators with <b>key words</b>										
R 1 To recognize English letters in <b>cursive writing</b> .										
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a <b>dictionary</b> .										
R3 To understand frequently-used <b>English signs and charts</b> .										
R4 To <b>read</b> short passages and simple stories <b>aloud</b> with appropriate intonation and rhythm.										
R5 To understand <b>the main ideas of readings in textbooks</b> .										
R6 To understand <b>the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short passage, letter, story and short play</b> .										
R7 To guess <b>the meanings of words</b> and/or to infer <b>meanings of reading passages</b> based on pictures or contextual cues.										
R8 To identify <b>the elements of a story</b> , such as its background, characters, events and endings.										
R9 To be able to read <b>simple articles</b> in different genres and topics.										
W1 To <b>fill out</b> simple <b>forms</b> based on clues.										
W2 To <b>combine, re-write and make sentences</b> based on clues.										
W3 To <b>write simple greeting cards, letters</b> (including <b>e-mails</b> ) etc.										
W4 To <b>translate</b> simple <b>Chinese sentences into English sentences</b> .										
W5 To <b>write</b> simple <b>paragraphs</b> based on clues.										

\*F= Frequency

### ***Inter-rater Reliability***

To ensure the reliability and objectivity of the coding results, a second rater, who was an experienced in-service junior high school English teacher, was invited to analyze the workbooks. This rater was qualified because she was at that time using *Workbooks A*, thereby better understanding the workbook content. Prior to the formal coding procedure, a trial analysis was conducted by both raters (including the researcher). First, the coding

framework was explained by the researcher. Then, lessons 1-2 in Volume 1 were selected from *Workbooks A* for a trial analysis. If any discrepancy was found in the analyzed results, the raters would converse again to reach a consensus.

After common ground was reached, lesson five chosen from each volume were coded by each rater independently. Therefore, there were six lessons examined by both raters. As each rater finished the coding, the results were compared to calculate the consistency and agreement rate.

In this study, the inter-rater reliability was calculated with the following method proposed by Prof. Yang (1993).

$$P = \frac{2M}{N1+N2}$$

P: agreement rate

M: items on which two raters have agreed

N1: items on which the first rater should have agreed

N2: items on which the second rater should have agreed

Table 3.4 Coding results of CI frequencies in Lesson 5, Volume 1

CI \ Raters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	W	W	W	W	W
										1	2	3	4	5
Rater1 (researcher)	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Rater 2	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	3	1	0	1	0	1	0

Table 3.4 presents the two raters' coding results of Lesson 5, Volume 1. Two raters agreed on 13 CIs, with Reading 8 (to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings) showing a slight difference. So the agreement rate between the two raters was:

$$P1 = \frac{2 \times 13}{14 + 14} = 0.92$$

Table 3.5 Coding results of CI frequencies in Lesson 5, Volume 2

CI \ Raters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	W	W	W	W	W
										1	2	3	4	5
Rater1 (researcher)	1	0	0	0	0	2	5	1	1	0	2	0	1	0
Rater 2	1	0	0	0	0	3	4	1	1	0	2	0	1	0

Table 3.5 shows the two raters' coding results of Lesson 5, Volume 2. Two raters agreed on 12 CIs, with Reading 6 (To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short passage, letter, story and short play) and Reading 7 (To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues) showing a slight difference. So the agreement rate between the two raters was:

$$P2 = \frac{2 \times 12}{14+14} = 0.86$$

Table 3.6 Coding results of CI frequencies in Lesson 5, Volume 3

CI \ Raters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	W	W	W	W	W
										1	2	3	4	5
Rater1 (researcher)	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
Rater 2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	2	0	1	0

Table 3.6 shows the two raters' coding results of Lesson 5, Volume 3. Two raters agreed on 13 CIs, with Reading 8 (to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings) showing a slight difference. So the agreement rate between the two raters was:

$$P3 = \frac{2 \times 13}{14 + 14} = 0.92$$

Table 3.7 Coding results of CI frequencies in Lesson 5, Volume 4

CI \ Raters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5
Rater1 (researcher)	0	0	1	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Rater 2	0	0	1	0	0	1	6	3	0	0	0	0	1	0

Table 3.7 shows the two raters' coding results of Lesson 5, Volume 4. Two raters agreed on 12 CIs, with Reading 7 (To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues), and Reading 8 (to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings) showing a slight difference. So the agreement rate between the two raters was:

$$P4 = \frac{2 \times 12}{14 + 14} = 0.86$$

Table 3.8 Coding results of CI frequencies in Lesson 5, Volume 5

CI \ Raters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	W	W	W	W	W
										1	2	3	4	5
Rater1 (researcher)	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Rater 2	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	1	0	1	0	0	0

Table 3.8 shows the two raters' coding results of Lesson 5, Volume 5. Two raters agreed on 13 CIs, with Reading 7 (To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues) showing a slight difference. So the agreement rate between the two raters was:

$$P5 = \frac{2 \times 13}{14 + 14} = 0.92$$

Table 3.9 Coding results of CI frequencies in Lesson 5, Volume 6

CI \ Raters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	W 1	W 2	W 3	W 4	W 5
Rater1 (researcher)	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
Rater 2	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	1	1	0	1	0	0	0

Table 3.9 shows the two raters' coding results of Lesson 5, Volume 6. Two raters agreed on 12 CIs, with Reading 8 (to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings), and Reading 9 (to be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics) showing a slight difference. So the agreement rate between the two raters was:

$$P6 = \frac{2 \times 12}{14 + 14} = 0.86$$



$$\text{Inter - rater Reliability} = \frac{N \times P \text{ average}}{1 + (N-1) \times P \text{ average}} \quad N: \text{Number of raters}$$

$$\begin{aligned} P \text{ average} &= (P1 + P2 + P3 + P4 + P5 + P6) \div 6 \\ &= (0.92 + 0.86 + 0.92 + 0.86 + 0.92 + 0.86) \div 6 = 0.89 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Inter - rater Reliability} = \frac{2 \times 0.89}{1 + (2 - 1) \times 0.89} = 0.94$$

According to Yang (1993), once the inter-rater reliability ratio reaches 90 percent or above, the inter-rater reliability is assured.



### *Focus Group Interview*

Once the workbook analysis was completed, a follow-up focus group interview with three in-service teachers ensued. Before conducting the interview, permission to participate was first sought from the teachers (The consent form is in Appendix 5&6). Then, the interview date, time and place were scheduled with the three teachers' consent. Afterwards, the Chinese version of interview questions and a list of the 14 competence indicators were given one week before the interview so that the interviewees could think about the interview content beforehand.

As mentioned, a focus group interview was conducted in this study. That is, the three teachers were interviewed simultaneously for about one and a half hours. Through

the group interview, it was expected that the interviewees could interact with each other to generate more insightful ideas.

Since the interviewees' native language is Chinese, the interview was conducted in Chinese so that the interviewees could express their thoughts freely without language barriers. Then, with the interviewees' permission, the interview was digitally-recorded for later transcription and analysis.

### ***Analysis of Workbook Coding Results and Interview Data***

Right after the interview, the final step of the research procedure was to analyze and compare workbook coding results and interview data. Finally, the implications of the research findings and suggestions for future research were further discussed. The procedure of the present study is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

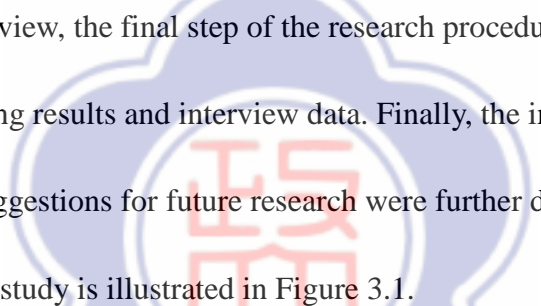
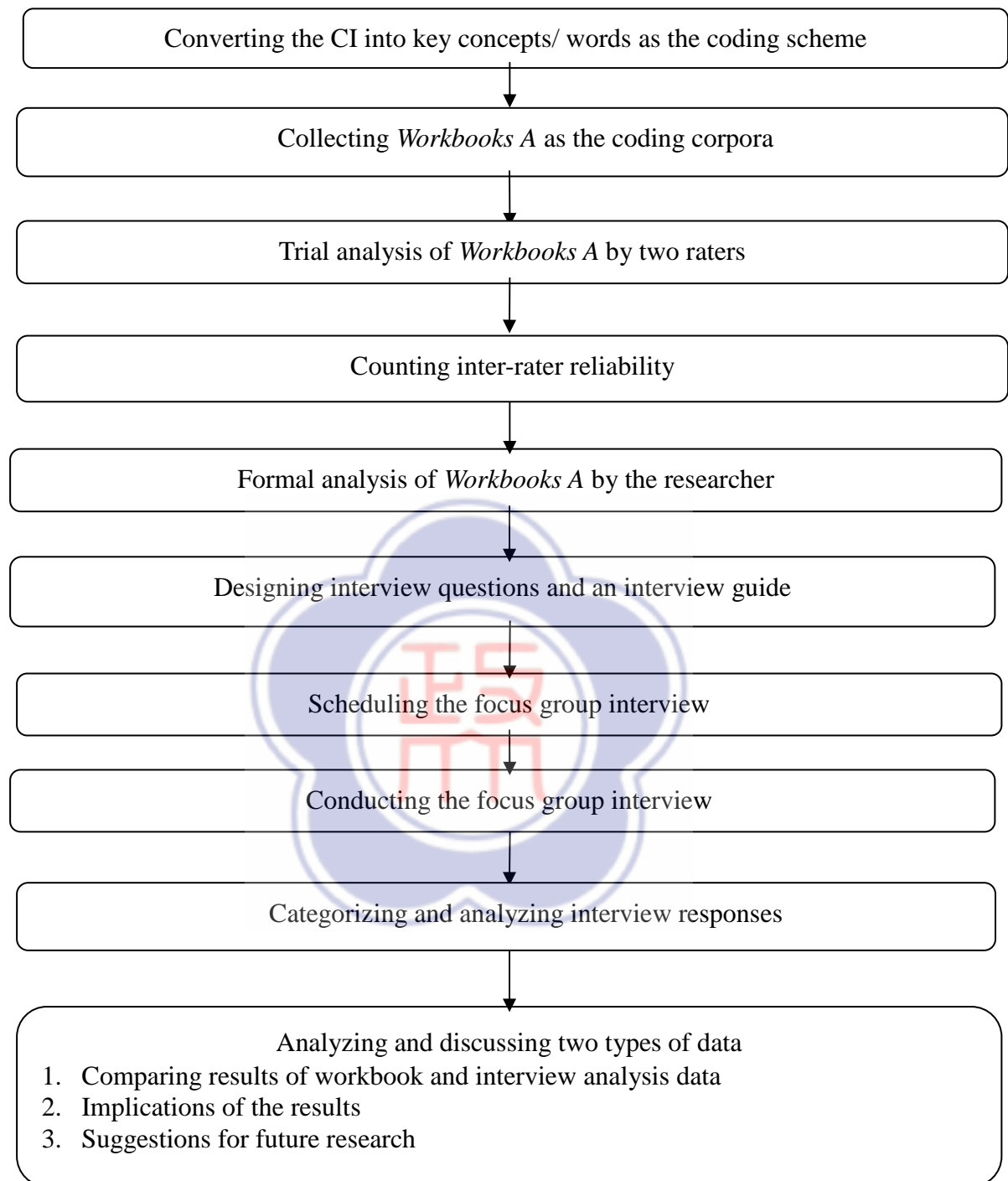


Figure 3.1 *Procedure of the Study*

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was grounded on the research questions proposed in the present study.

Four research questions were answered in the following fashion.

*RQ1. How are the Grades 7-9 reading/ writing competence indicators in the English Curriculum distributed in the junior high school workbooks?*

In order to determine the distribution of the competence indicators in each volume of *Workbooks A*, the occurrence times of each CI appearing in lessons 1-9 were added up. Afterwards, the CI distribution in each volume was compared and contrasted.

*RQ2. Which competence indicators are emphasized or deemphasized?*

After comparing the CI distribution in each volume, which indicators were emphasized or deemphasized throughout the workbooks were examined.

*RQ3. How do the in-service English teachers use and value the workbooks?*

*RQ4. How do the in-service English teachers currently using the workbooks view the competence indicator distribution in the workbooks?*

Research questions 3 and 4 were answered by the following interview data analysis. As McCracken (1998) proposed, the objectives of data analysis in qualitative research are to “determine the categories, relationships, and assumptions that inform the respondents’ views of the world” (p.42). To achieve the above objectives, the steps in analyzing the

interview data were taken in the following order.

1. Transcribing: As the interview is conducted in Chinese, the recorded responses were thus transcribed verbatim in Chinese.
2. Member checking: Member checking was the process of ensuring that the researcher's personal explanation or interpretation correctly reflects the participants' statements and viewpoints (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the interviewees were invited to revise, add, or delete information in the verbatim transcripts.
3. Categorizing: The transcribed interview responses were then categorized in accordance of the interview questions.
4. Analyzing: Once the interview responses were categorized, an examination of each category was conducted.
5. Comparing: The analysis of the interview responses was further compared with the results of the workbook analysis.
6. Translating: To be effective and efficient, only the analyzed interview responses were translated into English.
7. Member checking: The translated scripts were checked by the three interviewees. In so doing, the English transcripts could stay true to the interviewees' intended meanings.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

In this chapter, two sections are included to report the results of the data analysis. The first section presents the analysis results where the Grades 7-9 English reading and writing competence indicators were counted frequencies in the most-widely used set of junior high school English workbooks, *Workbooks A*. The second section recounts the focus group interview data based on three in-service junior high school English teachers' viewpoints of *Workbooks A*.

#### **Distribution of Competence indicators in the Workbooks**

This section presents how the Grades 7-9 English reading and writing competence indicators were distributed in *Workbooks A*.

#### ***The Analysis of CI Frequency: Each Volume***

In *Workbooks A*, each lesson in a total of six volumes was examined based on 14 English competence indicators. Tables 4.1-4.6 present the analyzed data.

Table 4.1 *Competence Indicator Distribution in Volume 1 of Workbooks A*

Lesson \ CI	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	N	%
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.										0%
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.										0%
R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.										0%
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.										0%
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.										0%
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play.	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	3	16	17.9%
R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues.	5	6	5	5	6	5	6	6	44	49.4%
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings.	1	1		1	1	1	1		6	6.7%
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		7	7.8%
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.										0%
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	1	13	14.6%
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.										0%
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.					1	1		1	3	3.3%
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.										0%

Note. "Blank" means the analyzed lesson does not contain the CI.



Table 4.1 shows the frequencies of CIs in Volume 1. In Volume 1, eight lessons were analyzed and only six competence indicators were found. To be specific, CI Reading 7 (49.4%)—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues—was the dominant indicator in this volume.

The second highest CI was Reading 6 (17.9%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play, followed by CI Writing 2 (14.6%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues; CI Reading 9 (7.8%)—to be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics; CI Reading 8 (6.7%)—to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings; and Writing 4 (3.3%)—to translate simple Chinese sentences into English ones.

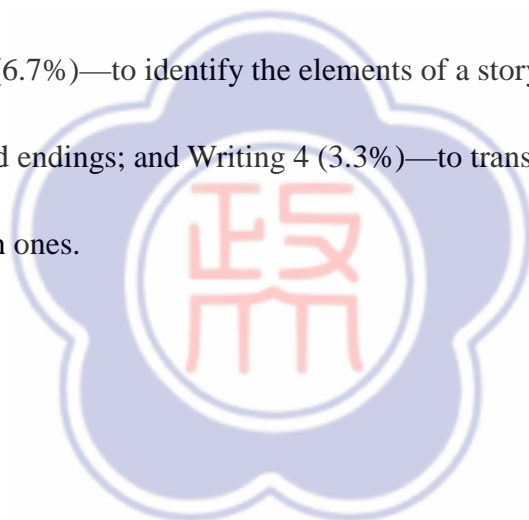


Table 4.2 *Competence Indicator Distribution in Volume 2 of Workbooks A*

Lesson \ CI	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	N	%
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.					1					1	1%
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.											0%
R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.			1				1			2	2%
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.											0%
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.											0%
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play.	2	3		1	2	3	1	2		14	14.2%
R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues.	5	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	5	43	43.8%
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	1			1	1	1		1		5	5.1%
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		7	7.1%
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.											0%
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.	3	2	3	2	2	3	1	2	2	20	20.4%
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.											0%
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.		1	1	1	1		1		1	6	6.1%
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.											0%

Note. "Blank" means the analyzed lesson does not contain the CI.

In Volume 2, nine lessons were examined. Similar to Volume 1, CI Reading 7 (43.8%)—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues—was incorporated in a plurality of workbook exercises in Volume 2.

After CI Reading 7, CI Writing 2 (20.4%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues came as the second most frequently incorporated CI, followed by Reading 6 (14.2%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play; Reading 9 (7.1%)—to be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics; Reading 8 (5.1%)—to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings; and Writing 4 (6.1%)—to translate simple Chinese sentences into English ones.

Different from the CIs found in Volume 1, CI Reading 1 (1%)—to recognize English letters in cursive writing, and CI Reading 3 (2%)—to understand frequently-used English signs and charts, were for the first time found in Volume 2, but only with very low frequencies.

Table 4.3 Competence Indicator Distribution in Volume 3 of Workbooks A

Lesson \ CI	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	N	%
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.											0%
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.											0%
R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.							1		1	2	2.2%
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.											0%
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.											0%
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play.	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	13	14.7%
R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues.	5	4	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	38	43.1%
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	10.2%
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	11	12.5%
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.											0%
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.		2	1	2	2		2	1	1	11	12.5%
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.											0%
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.	1		1			1	1		1	5	5.6%
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.											0%

Note. "Blank" means the analyzed lesson does not contain the CI.

Similar to Volumes 1 and 2, Volume 3 was again predominated by CI Reading 7 (43.1%)—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues, followed by Reading 6 (14.7%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play; Reading 9 (12.5%)—to read simple articles in different genres and topics; and Writing 2 (12.5%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues; Reading 8 (10.2%)—to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings; Writing 4 (5.6%)—to translate simple Chinese sentences into English ones; and Reading 3 (2.2%)—to understand frequently-used English signs and charts.

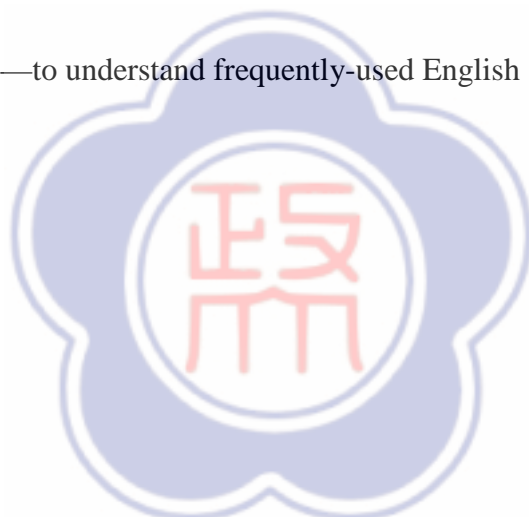


Table 4.4 Competence Indicator Distribution in Volume 4 of Workbooks A

Lesson \ CI	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	N	%
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.											0%
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.											0%
R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.					1			1		2	2%
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.											0%
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.											0%
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play.	2	2	3	2	1	1	2	2	1	16	17%
R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues.	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	6	44	46.8%
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	1	1	1	1			1		1	6	6.3%
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.	1	1	1	1		1	1	2	1	9	9.5%
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.											0%
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.	1	2	2	2		2	1	1	1	12	12.7%
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.											0%
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.	1				1	1	1		1	5	5.3%
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.											0%

Note. "Blank" means the analyzed lesson does not contain the CI.

As predicted, CI Reading 7 (46.8%)—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues—covered the most workbook exercises in Volume 4.

Besides CI Reading 7, the CIs found in Volume 4 included: Reading 6 (17%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play; Writing 2 (12.7%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues; Reading 9 (9.5%)—to read simple articles in different genres and topics; Reading 8 (6.3%)—to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings; Writing 4 (5.3%)—to translate simple Chinese sentences into English ones; and Reading 3 (2%)—to understand frequently-used English signs and charts.

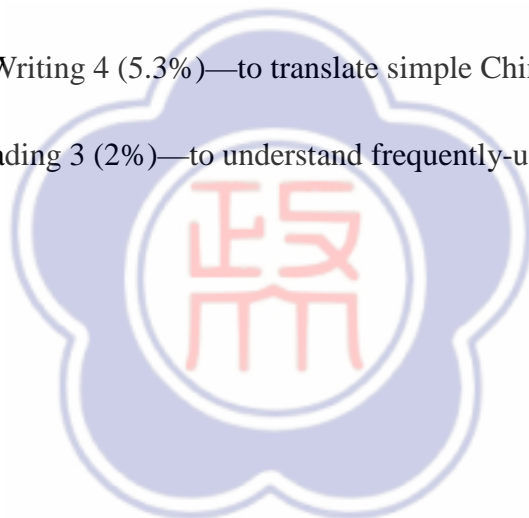


Table 4.5 Competence Indicator Distribution in Volume 5 of Workbooks A

Lesson \ CI	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	N	%
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.											0%
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.											0%
R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.								1		1	1.1%
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.											0%
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.											0%
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play.	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	12	13.8%
R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues.	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	6	6	45	51.7%
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	8	9.2%
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.	14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	10.3%
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.											0%
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	12	13.8%
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.											0%
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.											0%
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.											0%

Note. "Blank" means the analyzed lesson does not contain the CI.



In Volume 5, CI Reading 7(51.7%)—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues—once again placed the first in CI occurrences. Then Reading 6 (13.8%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play—came as the second. After that, the following competence indicators were also incorporated: Writing 2 (13.8%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues; Reading 6 (13.8%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play; Reading 9 (10.3%)—to read simple articles in different genres and topics; Reading 8 (9.2%)—to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings; and Reading 3 (1.1%)—to understand frequently-used English signs and charts. It should be noted that Writing 4—to translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences—was for the first time not included in the workbooks.

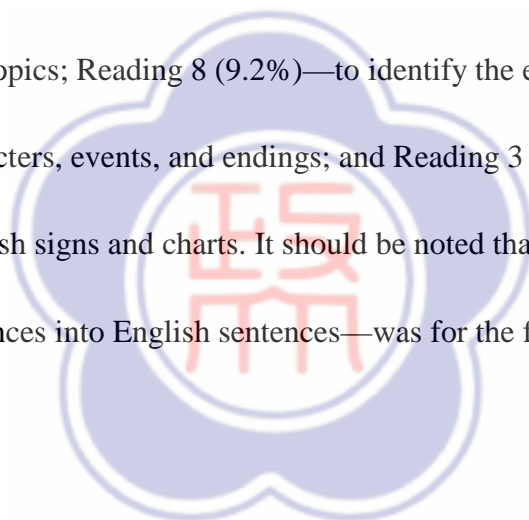


Table 4.6 Competence Indicator Distribution in Volume 6 of Workbooks A

Lesson \ CI	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	N	%
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.								0%
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.								0%
R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.	1						1	1.5%
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.								0%
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.								0%
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play.	1	1	1	2	2	2	9	13.4%
R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues.	5	5	4	7	6	7	34	50.7%
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	1	1	1	2	2	2	9	13.4%
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.		1	1	2		2	6	9%
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.								0%
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.	1	1	2	1	1	1	7	10.4%
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.								0%
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.			1				1	1.5%
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.								0%

Note. "Blank" means the analyzed lesson does not contain the CI.

The number of lessons in the final volume of the workbooks was reduced to only six. The reason was that in the last semester of junior high school, students needed more time to review previously learned materials so as to prepare for an upcoming senior high school entrance exam.

As for the CI occurrence times, Reading 7 (50.7%)——to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues——remained the competence indicator of the highest frequency, followed by Reading 6 (13.4%)——to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play; Reading 8 (13.4%)——to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings; Writing 2 (10.4%)——to combine, change and make sentences based on clues; Reading 9 (9%)——to read simple articles in different genres and topics; Writing 4 (1.5%)——to translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences; and Reading 3 (1.5%)——to understand frequently-used English signs and charts.

Chart 4.1 *CI Distribution by Percentage in Workbooks A: Broken Out by Volume*

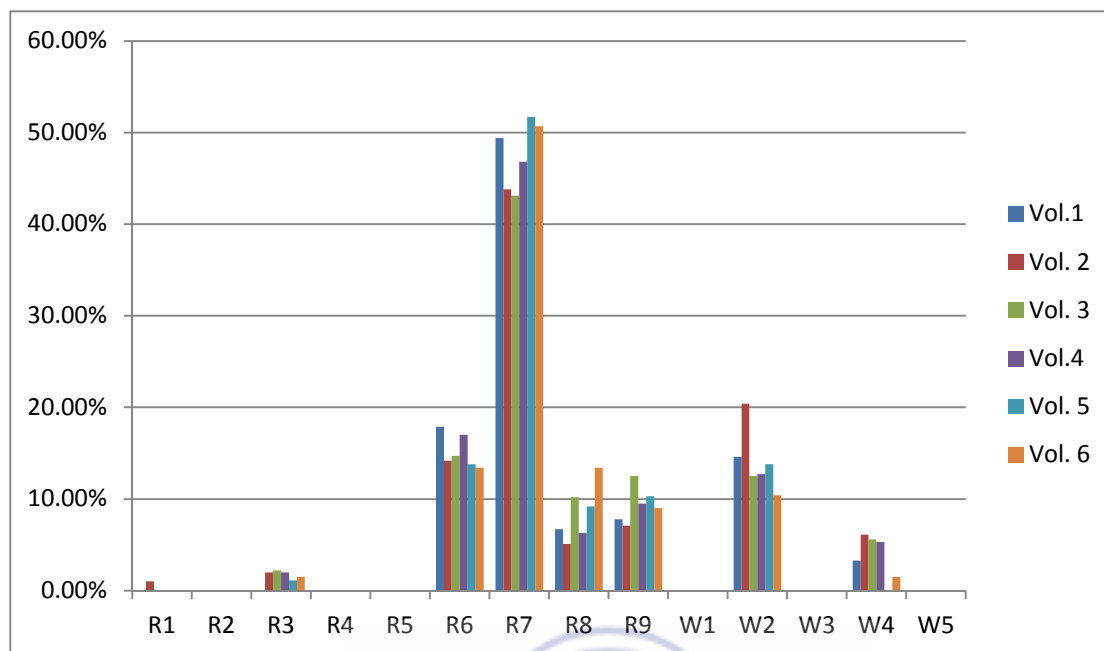


Chart 4.1 summarizes the CI distribution in each volume of *Workbooks A*. Of the 14 competence indicators, only 8 were found appearing in the workbooks, with a relatively heavy emphasis on CI Reading 7—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues. Following Reading 7 were Reading 6 (to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play); and Writing 2 (to combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues).

As for the completely overlooked CIs (0%), there were six of them, including Reading 2 (to find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary); Reading 4 (to read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm); Reading 5 (to understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks); Writing 1 (to fill out simple forms based on clues); Writing 3 (to write simple greeting cards, letters,

e-mails, etc); and Writing 5 (to write simple paragraphs based on clues).

As for how the competence indicators were incorporated in the workbook exercises, several examples are illustrated in the next section.

### ***CI Frequencies in All Volumes and Exercise Examples***

Table 4.7 shows the frequencies where the competence indicators were incorporated in all the six volumes of *Workbooks A*.



Table 4.7 CI Distribution across Volumes 1-6 of Workbooks A

Volume \ CI	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	F	%
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.		1					1	0.1%
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.								0%
R3 To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.		2	2	2	1	1	8	1.5%
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.								0%
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.								0%
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play.	16	14	13	16	12	9	80	15.3%
R7 To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues.	44	43	38	44	45	34	248	47.3%
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	6	5	9	6	8	9	43	8.2%
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.	7	7	11	9	9	6	49	9.4%
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.								0%
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.	13	20	11	12	12	7	75	14.3%
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.								0%
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.	3	6	5	5		1	20	3.8%
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.								0%

Note. "Blank" means the analyzed volume does not contain the CI. F=Frequency

In *Workbooks A*, certain competence indicators were found to be more emphasized than the others. Similar to the results found in each volume, the frequency of Reading 7 (47.3%), the ability to guess meanings of words and reading passages, largely outnumbered the other CI occurrences. Take *Lesson 5, Volume 1* for example, students were asked to spell words based on the pictures (Figure 4.1). Another example was in *Lesson five, Volume 3*, showing that students had to infer meanings from a reading passage based on contextual cues (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.1 A Sample Exercise in Lesson 5, Volume 1

## Lesson Five

# Be Quiet and Sit Down, Please

**I Look and Write** (12分, 每題2分)

看圖填入適當的單字。

<p>1 </p> <p>run</p>	<p>2 </p> <p>factory</p>	<p>3 </p> <p>movie theater</p>
<p>4 </p> <p>chocolate</p>	<p>5 </p> <p>rule(s)</p>	<p>6 </p> <p>trash</p>

Figure 4.2 A Sample Exercise in Lesson 5, Volume 3

**VI Read and Choose** (15分, 每題5分)

閱讀測驗。

Hi, I'm Richard. Good morning.  
 I plan to take care of animals. Why?  
 First, I like animals. In my free time, I go to the zoo to see tigers, lions, and elephants. Some are cute, and some are smart.  
 Second, some animals have no home, and they get sick. We need to take good care of them.  
 So, I want to work at a special center for stray animals. I can wash them and prepare food for them. I want to help animals when they get sick.

second 第二

( A ) 1. What does Richard like to do in his free time?  
 (A) He likes to visit the zoo.  
 (B) He likes to take care of plants.  
 (C) He likes to have happy dreams.  
 (D) He likes to prepare food for sick people.

( D ) 2. When Richard works at the special center, what is NOT his job?  
 (A) To treat sick animals.  
 (B) To wash dirty animals.  
 (C) To take care of stray dogs.  
 (D) To collect seeds and leaves.

( A ) 3. Why does Richard want to take care of animals?  
 (A) They have no home.  
 (B) They get sick every day.  
 (C) They like delicious food.  
 (D) They are cute but not smart.

Lesson 5

25

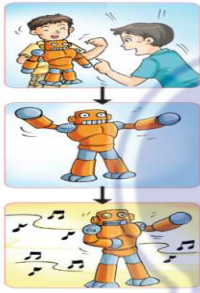


Distantly following CI Reading 7, CI Reading 6 (15.3%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play— came the second in all the CI frequencies. The workbook exercises where CI Reading 6 was incorporated are exemplified as follows.

In *Lesson 6, Volume 1*, students read the “dialogue” first and then filled in the blanks with the best answers (Figure 4.3). In *Lesson 7, Volume 3*, a “short reading passage” was provided for students to understand the main ideas of it (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.3 A Sample Exercise in Lesson 6, Volume 1

**VI Read, Look and Choose** (12分·每題2分)  
看圖並閱讀對話後作答。



Ivan: Hey, Joe. What is that?  
Joe: It's a toy robot, my birthday \_\_\_\_ 1. \_\_\_\_.  
Ivan: Cool.  
Joe: Yeah. It can do many things.  
Ivan: Really? Show \_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_.  
Joe: OK.  
Ivan: \_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_ is it doing now?  
Joe: It is \_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_.  
Ivan: Wow, \_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_ special!  
Joe: Listen! It is \_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_ “Happy Birthday to You.”  
Ivan: Great.

can 能 many 許多的 thing 事情 Really? 真的嗎?

( A ) 1. (A) gift	(B) house	(C) watch
( C ) 2. (A) I	(B) my	(C) me
( B ) 3. (A) How	(B) What	(C) Where
( A ) 4. (A) dancing	(B) painting	(C) swimming
( A ) 5. (A) How	(B) What	(C) Where
( C ) 6. (A) reading	(B) doing	(C) singing

Figure 4.4 A Sample Exercise in Lesson 7, Volume 3

**VII Read and Choose** (15分·每題5分)  
閱讀短文並作答。

Lillian is a famous singer. She sings a lot, but she seldom exercises. Last month, Lillian started to exercise because she had to prepare for an important concert. She went swimming for an hour every morning. She practiced her songs and the piano in the afternoon. She also went jogging twice a week, and went biking on Sundays. She hopes to have a successful concert!



concert 演唱會 successful 成功的

( D ) 1. Why did Lillian start to exercise?  
(A) Because she likes to exercise.  
(B) Because she is a famous singer.  
(C) Because she wants to be healthy.  
(D) Because she hopes to have a successful concert.

( C ) 2. How often did Lillian go biking last month?  
(A) Every day. (B) Twice a week.  
(C) Once a week. (D) Three times a week.

( D ) 3. Which is true? (何者為正確?)  
(A) Lillian is a famous movie star.  
(B) Lillian exercised for an important test.  
(C) Lillian practiced the piano in the morning.  
(D) Lillian went swimming every day last month.

Ranking the third highest of CI occurrences, Writing 2 (14.3%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues—was also frequently reflected in the workbook exercises. To help students practice combining (Figure 4.5), re-writing (Figure 4.6) and making sentences (Figure 4.7), exercises were designed in the following way.

Figure 4.5 A Sample Exercise in Lesson 4, Volume 2

#### IV Combine Sentences (12 分, 每題 4 分)

合併句子。

**Example** This is a pencil. It is short.

*This is a short pencil.*

1. It's a book. It's not heavy.

*It's not a heavy book.*

2. Snowball and Fluffy are bears. They are big.

*Snowball and Fluffy are big bears.*

3. Cathy is a girl. She is young and cute.

*Cathy is a young and cute girl.*

Figure 4.6 A Sample Exercise in Lesson 4, Volume 3

#### IV Make Sentences (30 分, 每題 5 分)

依提示造句。

1. She likes the boy. (加入 not... at all 改寫句子)

*She doesn't like the boy at all.*

2. The engineer can fix computers. (加入 not... at all 改寫句子)

*The engineer can't fix computers at all.*

3. dark circles / Sleepless Beauty / her / under / has / eyes.

(重組句子)

*Sleepless Beauty has dark circles under her eyes.*

4. at midnight. / had / Grandma / woke up / and / a bad dream

(重組句子)

*Grandma had a bad dream and woke up at midnight.*

5. I was wiping the windows when Dad entered the kitchen.

(依劃線部分造原問句)

*What were you doing when Dad entered the kitchen?*

6. { George was writing a letter.

{ Mary answered the phone. (用 when 合併)

*George was writing a letter when Mary answered the phone.*

Figure 4.7 A Sample Exercise in Lesson 5, Volume 2

## VI Make Sentences (15 分, 每題 3 分)

依提示造句。

1. Let's talk. (改為否定句)

Let's not talk.

2. Don't close your book. (改為肯定句, 並加入 please)

Please close your book. / Close your book, please.

3. Turn off the TV. (改為否定句, 並加入 please)

Please don't turn off the TV. / Don't turn off the TV, please.

4. { Please follow the rules. (用 Larry 開頭合併為一句)

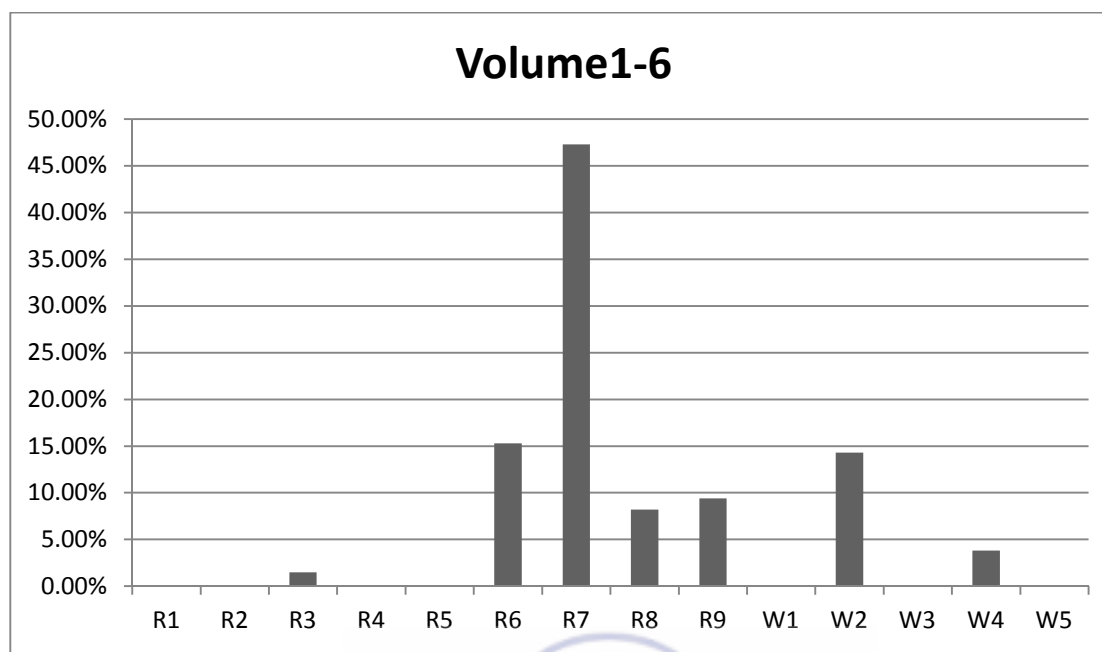
{ Larry, follow the rules.

Larry, follow the rules, please. / Larry, please follow the rules.

5. Jenny is a good student. (以祈使句改寫)

Jenny, be a good student. / Be a good student, Jenny.



Chart 4.2 *CI Distribution by Percentage across All Workbook Volumes*

As Chart 4.2 shows, CI Reading 7 (47.3%)—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues; Reading 6 (15.3%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play; and Writing 2 (14.3%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues, took up 76.9% of the total CI frequency, leaving other competence indicators being less emphasized or even neglected.

As for the neglected competence indicators (lower than 1.5%), eight were found: CI Reading 1 (0.1%)—to recognize English letters in cursive writing; Reading 2 (0%)—to find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary; Reading 3 (1.5%)—to understand frequently-used English signs and charts; R4 (0%)—to read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm; Reading 5 (0%)—to understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks; Writing 1 (0%)—to fill out simple forms based on clues; Writing 3 (0%)—to write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.; and Writing 5 (0%)—to write simple paragraphs based on clues.

## **Junior High School English Teachers'**

### **Use and Viewpoints of the Workbooks**

This section chronicles three in-service junior high school English teachers' perceptions of the English workbooks previously analyzed by the researcher. More specifically, a focus group interview was conducted to explore the teachers' viewpoints on the following five issues: (1) ways of using the workbooks in class, (2) functions of the workbooks, (3) evaluation of the workbooks' contents, (4) English reading and writing competence indicators reflected in the workbooks, and (5) comments on the researcher's workbook-analysis results. The teacher interviewees' responses to each issue will be classified and recounted with some interview excerpts.

#### *Ways of Using the English Workbooks*

The first issue concerning teachers' ways of using the workbooks includes two interview questions: (1) how they used the English workbooks in their classes, and (2) how they graded the workbooks.

#### *Ways of Using the Workbooks*

Among the three teachers, two of them used the workbooks to assign homework to students. Both of them taught 9<sup>th</sup> graders who were facing the pressure of the senior high school entrance exam (the BCT, Basic Competence Test), so there was no spare class time for using the workbooks for tests or classroom activities. For example, Teacher A (TA) commented:

The 9<sup>th</sup> graders are facing the BCT (Basic Competence Test). So I don't think there is much time for classroom activities. So I always assign workbooks as homework.

Then Teacher B (TB) agreed:

Time is indeed a concern. Besides, if I use workbooks as tests, students

can memorize the answers from reference books in advance, so it may cause some trouble and result in unfair grades. To be time-efficient and fair, I prefer to use the workbooks for students' homework.

Despite the fact that Teachers A and B tended to use the workbooks as homework, Teacher C (TC), who taught 8<sup>th</sup> graders, was inclined to use materials from the workbooks as class activities:

The 8<sup>th</sup> graders do not have the problem of having little class time, so I usually like to integrate workbook writing as part of my teaching procedure. I guide my students to write workbook exercises, so my students can practice right after they learn new vocabulary or sentence patterns.

### *Ways of Grading the Workbooks*

In terms of how to check the workbook answers, Teachers B and C preferred to display the answers on the projection screen. In this way, the teachers did not have to spend time writing the answers on the blackboard. On the other hand, Teacher A would write down the answers on the blackboard herself, as she did not normally teach with E-books.

After examining the workbook answers, the students would hand in their workbooks to be graded by the teachers. All of the three interviewees believed that the grading criteria should focus on students' handwriting and carefulness, as exemplified by the following interview excerpts:

TB: Since the students check the workbook answers in class, my grading criteria would focus on whether the workbook answers are written neatly and have no mistakes.

TA: Even though the students have checked the answers in class, some, mainly low-achievers, still make mistakes. It's very annoying. So I am quite strict about whether the students are being careful or not.

TC: Students are always like that, so I set up the grading criteria where, If one mistake is found, five points are deducted. This works wonders because then my students tend to check their answers more carefully.



### *Functions of the Workbooks*

The second issue—the functions of the workbooks—attempted to discover the three teachers' ideas of how the workbooks benefit students' learning and the teachers' instruction. As presented below, each interviewee expressed that the workbooks functioned mainly as review materials:

TA: Workbooks are used as a review of what has been taught in the textbooks. Students can learn one more time and teachers can teach one more time. So, Workbooks are more like review exercises.

TB: For review, of course, especially for reviewing the vocabulary and sentence patterns that have been introduced in the textbooks. By writing in the workbooks, students can become more familiar with the learning content.

TC: The same, just for students to review.

Given the above discussion, three key points can be summarized. First, the workbooks were commonly used as students' homework. Second, the workbooks were mainly graded by the teachers. Third, the workbooks were only treated as review materials.

### *Evaluation of the Workbook Contents*

As proven in the Literature Review, student workbooks have played an indispensable role in class. Therefore, the third issue discussed in the focus group interview aimed to investigate how the interviewees evaluated the workbooks' content. Derived from the issue are three subcategories: (1) the difficulty level, (2) the number of the workbook exercises, and (3) diversity of the workbook exercises. Each subcategory is presented with the interviewees' responses and discussed in detail.

#### *Difficulty Level of the Workbooks*

Since the workbooks are part of the course books, whether the difficulty level of the

workbooks was properly suited to the students was crucial.

TA: Of course, the workbooks are too easy, just like the BCT (Basic Competence Test) for junior high school students.

TC: I also think the workbook exercises are too easy. However, most of the students in our school are low-achievers, so even though the difficulty level is low, it's ok. But for the students in the urban areas, the workbooks are definitely too easy.

TA: Wait, didn't you ever feel that the government has always tried to simplify junior high school materials? The government advocates that students should learn happily, with no stress, but once the junior high school students enter senior high schools, they have a hard time catching up. I don't know what you guys think, but I believe that our students should be given more challenging materials.

TB: I also think that the workbook exercises are too easy, especially for advanced learners. That's why I always give extra practice for them, things like test papers.

According to the above statements, the three teachers all shared the feelings that the difficulty level of the English workbooks appeared lower than it should have been.

### ***Number of the Workbook Exercises***

When asked whether there are a sufficient number of workbook exercises, two interviewees admitted that the workbooks did not suffice for students' maximum practice, while the other considered the workbook load acceptable:

TA: The workbook exercises alone are not adequate for students to get enough practice. That's why I always assign more exercise books to my students.

TB: They are not enough, so test papers are usually needed.

TC: I think it's ok because if there were too many exercises in the workbooks, my students may lose patience.

### ***Diversity of the Workbook Exercises***

In regard to whether the workbook exercises were diverse, the interviewees expressed slight differences in their views, but all showed dissatisfaction with the over-simplified workbooks:



TA: Like what I have mentioned earlier, junior high school students, especially the 9<sup>th</sup> graders, should be equipped with better English training so they won't be overwhelmed by the materials taught in senior high. I mean, of course, the workbook exercises should be more challenging. Not only the workbooks though, the textbooks should be more challenging as well.

TB: True, but I think the problem comes back to the BCT (Basic Competence Test) for junior high school students. As long as the exam targets more diversified questions, the workbook editors will follow suit. Like what we say all the time—the washback effect.

TC: Or maybe it's because the workbook editors are just simply lazy. Why should they spend time diversifying the exercises when workbooks are only supplementary materials? I don't think the publishers have put much thought into the design of the workbooks, as the exercise types are all very similar in every lesson and every volume.

In summary, three findings could be observed from the interviewees' evaluation of the workbook contents: first, the difficulty level should have been higher; second, the workbook load should have been heavier; and last, the diversity of the workbook exercises should have been increased.

### ***English Reading and Writing Competence Indicators in the Workbooks***

The fourth issue explored in the focus group interview delved into the interviewees' views on how the junior high school English reading and writing competence indicators (CI) were incorporated into the workbooks. To be specific, this section intends to uncover the following three questions: (1) which CIs the interviewees felt were emphasized more, (2) which CIs the interviewees felt were neglected, and (3) comparison between CIs in the textbooks and workbooks.

### ***Emphasized Competence Indicators***

When asked about the emphasized CIs in the workbooks, the interviewees mentioned the following ones which they encountered most often when using the workbooks:

TB: This one (Reading 6—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play)—is often seen in the workbooks.

TC: Also, this CI (Reading 7—to guess the meanings of words and infer the meanings of reading passages) is a common practice in the workbooks. Also, this one (Reading 8—to identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events, and endings) appears quite often as well.

R: How about the writing CIs?

TA: I think “to combine, change and make sentences based on clues” is frequently seen in the workbooks.

TB & C: That’s right.

Besides listing the CIs they felt were emphasized in the workbooks, the interviewees mentioned whether such emphasis was necessary:

TB: Yes, CI Reading 6 (to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play) is a skill that needs to be emphasized. Students need this skill to complete exams, especially the BCT, as it has many reading comprehension questions in it.

TC: As for CI Reading 7, to guess the word meanings is a basic skill for students. Students have to learn vocabulary, right? Besides, monthly exams and the BCT always test this skill.

TA: CI Writing 4 (to combine, change and make sentences based on clues) is overly emphasized in the workbooks, perhaps because this skill is basic and is regularly tested in the monthly exams.

R: How about CI Reading 8?

TC: To identify the elements of a story seems to be an important skill for students to practice in using the textbooks. The BCT also contains many reading passages that require students to identify story elements.

R: How about CI Writing 1—to fill out simple forms? Is it necessary to be emphasized?

TA: Filling out forms is an important skill. For example, checking out at customs at an airport.

### ***Neglected Competence Indicators***

After addressing the emphasized CIs, the interviewees proceeded to discuss the CIs they felt were deemphasized in the workbooks. In this regard, the following indicators were mentioned:

TC: The first one—cursive writing—is rarely seen in the workbooks. It does not even appear in the textbooks, right? And why is it such a high priority? The first CI on the list!

TA: Also, the second one—using a dictionary—doesn't appear in the workbooks, either, if I remember correctly.

TC: There is one more. Reading 4—to read short passages aloud—has never been seen in the workbooks. Isn't that supposed to be practiced with the textbooks? I've never seen any workbook exercises on reading aloud.

TB: Reading 1 (to recognize English letters in cursive writing), Reading 2 (to find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary), Reading 4 (to read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm), Writing 3 (to write simple greeting cards, letters, e-mails, etc.), and Writing 5 (to write simple paragraphs based on clues)—these indicators seem to appear less frequently than the others in the workbooks.

Since the competence indicators were regarded as guidelines to improve students' English proficiency, whether the in-service teachers had tried to or would like to make up for the neglected CIs was worth investigating:

TA: I seldom try to make up for the loss. Some CIs are not worth emphasizing. Like cursive writing, why waste time training students to practice this skill? People nowadays pretty much always use computers for writing.

TB: That's right, but if possible, I would like to help my students with the writing skills. However, as class time is always limited and the students in our school are not that good at English, it's infeasible to have the students to actually write a letter or an email. Therefore, I just use reading materials to teach about writing. I mean, when my students read some sample letters or e-mails in the textbooks, I would explain the their formats.

TC: I've never thought of making up for the loss. These CIs are seldom tested on either monthly exams or the BCT, so I guess it's ok to neglect them. After all, they're not that important.

### *Comparison between CIs in the Textbooks and Workbooks*

The last interview question regarding the teachers' perceptions of the CIs in the workbooks was designed to probe how the workbooks complemented the textbooks in terms of CI incorporation.

As the interview data revealed, that most of the CIs neglected in the workbooks were also overlooked in the textbooks:

TB: Some of the CIs are not emphasized in both the textbooks and workbooks, such as “recognizing cursive writing” and “using a dictionary”.

TC: Right, these CIs are not that important.

TB: As for writing, neither the textbooks nor the workbooks require the students to write a letter or a paragraph.

TA: No, they don't. The textbooks just present sample letters as reading passages, but do not provide letter-writing practice.

However, the workbooks could sometimes complement the textbooks:

TB: The “sentence making/ combining” exercises seem to appear quite often in the workbooks, but not in the textbooks. It seems that this kind of practice can be seen in every lesson of the workbooks.

TC: Also, students have to practice “translation” in the workbooks, but not in the textbooks.

Overall, the teachers mentioned only four CIs they felt appeared more frequently in the workbooks, and affirmed that these four skills were entitled to have such emphasis. As for the neglected CIs, the teachers mentioned five, but all considered that the neglected CIs were not worth being emphasized and that therefore, they rarely made up for the lost CIs. When it came to the CIs in the textbooks, the teachers mentioned that most of the CIs

neglected in the workbooks were also overlooked in the textbooks, thus making the workbooks fail to complement the textbooks.

### ***Comments on the Researcher's Workbook Analysis Results***

This final issue elicited the teacher interviewees' views on the researcher's workbook analysis results. To be exact, two aspects of the analysis results were explored: (1) three emphasized competence indicators, and (2) eight neglected competence indicators.

### ***Comments on Emphasized Competence Indicators***

Based on the researcher's analysis, three CIs were found emphasized: Reading 7 (47.3%)—to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer the meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues, Reading 6 (15.3%)—to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play, and Writing 2 (14.3%)—to combine, change and make sentences based on clues.

Each of the emphasized CIs was discussed by the interviewees:

*CI Reading 7(47.3%): to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer the meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues*

TB: To guess word meanings from pictures or contexts...I think because this ability is the most basic one, students can handle this kind of exercises more easily.

TC: And this ability is tested often, like on the BCT.

TA: Because it's the most basic. Understanding word meanings is a basic

skill, isn't it?

When asked whether the workbook exercises provided enough practice for the students to master this reading skill, the teachers all shook their heads:

TB: The workbook exercises are not enough.

TA: Definitely not enough.

R: So how do you usually give your students extra practice?

TB: By giving the students quizzes. The test papers contain such practice.

TA: By asking them to do exercises in reference books and test papers.

TC: Me too. Taking tests allow students to gain more practice.

*CI Reading 6(15.3%): to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story and short play*

The interviewees reported various reasons for the emphasis on this CI:

TC: This CI is commonly seen in the textbooks, so maybe that's why it is also emphasized in the workbooks.

TB: I think perhaps it's because this kind of exercise is related to daily life. For instance, dialogues occur in daily life, so students need to learn to understand what other people say.

TA: Or maybe because it's tested quite often on the BCT.

Even though this CI was already covered in the workbooks, two of the interviewees believed that their students still needed to practice more on this skill.

TA: The workbook exercises on this skill are absolutely not enough! That's why my students need reference books and test papers.

TB: Not enough. And my students (the 9<sup>th</sup> graders) usually get extra practice with the past BCT exam questions.

TC: I seldom give my students extra practice. I usually teach what's in the textbooks and workbooks. That's enough for my students. Too much practice would bore them to death.

*CI Writing 2(14.3%): to combine, change and make sentences based on clues*

The interviewees explained why this ability was emphasized in the workbooks:

TB: Combining sentences and making sentences are the basic types of practice that students need to become familiarized with sentence patterns.

TC: And it is often tested on the monthly exams. Like TB said, it's one of the basics or is a must.

TA: To practice sentence patterns, of course. This is a traditional way to do it.

When asked whether the workbook exercises on this CI were enough, the teachers reported:

TA: Not enough. My students need to do extra practice with reference books or test papers.

TB: The workbooks alone do not suffice. Students need more practice to master what they have to learn, so I usually give test papers to my students as either practice or assessments.

TC: Not really enough. I also test my students to improve their sentence-making skill.

Generally speaking, the teachers explained why these three CIs (to infer from context, to understand main ideas, to combine/change/make sentences) were emphasized: (1) they were basic skills for English learning, and (2) they were often taken as test questions on monthly exams or the senior high school entrance exam (the BCT). Even though these CIs were emphasized in the workbooks, the teachers still believed there was a need to give their students more practice to help them master these skills.



### *Comments on Neglected Competence Indicators*

After discussing the aforementioned three emphasized competence indicators, the interviewees continued to comment on the neglected ones. According to the researcher's analysis, there were eight CIs that were rarely reflected in the workbook exercises. Each of them is reported below.

#### *CI Reading 1(0.1%): to recognize English letters in cursive writing*

The interviewees indicated that this CI received little attention for the following reasons:

TA: Cursive writing is seldom used because people nowadays rely on computers. I think being able to write cursive letters is not a very important skill in English learning.

TB: It's not the most important skill when it comes to taking exams. As long as students can recognize cursive writing, that's good enough. Practicing too much is meaningless.

TC: Just as TB said, being able to recognize the cursive form is all the students need. There's no need for a lot of practice.

Since the teachers all believed that recognizing cursive writing was not the most important skill, they seldom took the initiative to help their students get more practice on this CI:

TB: I would introduce the form of cursive writing, but I wouldn't intentionally give my students extra practice.

TA: I just have them (the students) imitate writing the cursive letters once or twice. I just let them know what cursive writing looks like.

TC: Me, too. I let my students know what cursive writing looks like, and maybe have them practice it within one class hour—but I don't give my students any extra practice.

#### *CI Reading 2(0%): to find the pronunciations and meanings of words in a*



*dictionary*

The interviewees firmly believed that the ability to use a dictionary was not worth emphasizing, not to mention worth requiring extra practice:

TA: People nowadays use E-dictionaries. Just with a few clicks, the meanings of a word instantly show up. So there's no need to intentionally teach students how to use a dictionary.

TB: I don't teach my students how to use a dictionary in class. I just never thought of teaching that. Maybe because this is not one of the most important abilities at the present time.

TC: My views are quite similar. Since the textbooks and the workbooks ignore this ability, I just naturally ignore it as well.

*CI Reading 3(1.5%): to understand frequently-used English signs and charts*

Two major reasons why this CI was overlooked were expressed by the interviewees:

(1) a disconnect with the students' lives, and (2) workbook editors' negligence. To compensate for this neglected CI, the interviewees formed the habit of helping students gain practice through exams:

TB: For most of our students, understanding English signs seems unrelated to their daily lives. I know that in elementary schools, signs are purposefully translated into English, but in our school, English signs are seldom seen.

TC: The workbook editors do not put much effort into designing the workbooks. Maybe that's why there are so few such exercises.

TA: Right. Since the workbooks are supplementary, the book publishers don't care about editing the workbooks as much as they do with the textbooks.

TB: This kind of exercises can be found on the BCT, such as pie charts and bar graphs, so I usually give my students the past BCT exams to help them practice this skill.

TA: Me too. Students can practice this skill through test-taking.

*CI Reading 4(0%): to read short passages and simple stories aloud with*

*appropriate intonations and rhythms*

Based on the interviewees' common understanding, reading aloud was not a skill normally practiced in the workbooks:

TA: The teachers' manuals have suggested using textbook materials to help the students practice reading aloud. I guess that's why there are no such exercises in the workbooks.

TC: To be frank, even though reading aloud activities are listed on the teachers' manuals, I seldom have my students do that. This kind of practice just takes too much time.

TB: Students can practice reading aloud with the textbooks, and since there's little class time, having such exercises in the workbooks is not practical.

*CI Reading 5(0%)—to understand the main ideas of readings in the textbooks*

As for this CI, deemphasizing was considered reasonable by all the interviewees, as such exercises were already present in the textbooks:

TA: Understanding the main ideas of textbook reading passages...This kind of practice is already included in the textbooks, isn't it?

TB: I think so too. No need to practice again.

TC: When I check my elementary school daughter's Chinese workbooks, I find that some questions are related to the readings in the textbooks. Therefore, my daughter and I must refer to her Chinese textbooks to find the answers. However, when writing the English workbooks, my students don't really have to check the reading passages in the textbooks. The textbooks and the workbooks are just not very closely related.

R: Besides using the textbooks, have you ever tried adding more practice on this skill?

TB: Class time is always limited, so I seldom give my students more practice.

TC: Not really.

TA: No, never.

*CI Writing 1 (0%): to fill out simple forms*

The interviewees asserted that the lack of CI Writing 1 in the workbooks was due to

the fact that the textbooks did not even focus on this skill:

TB: There is no such practice in the textbooks, not to mention in the workbooks.

TA: I think it should be covered in both the textbooks and workbooks, for this skill is connected with our daily lives. For example, filling out forms when travelling is very common.

TC: Yes, filling out forms is a basic skill that needs some attention. I don't know why the workbooks do not contain such exercises. Maybe it's because this skill is not tested on the BCT.

Several responses were made when the interviewees were invited to elaborate on whether they had tried compensating for the loss of this CI:

TB: I never design this type of exercises even though this skill was ignored in the teaching materials. I just teach my students how to read a form. That's all.

TA: I think students can also learn how to read a form through test-taking.

TC: Filling out forms is an important skill, but not for the present time. I just think that, as long as my students can read and understand the forms, that's enough.

*CI Writing 3 (0%): to write a greeting card, a letter (including an e-mail)*

Interestingly, the interviewees' opinions differed regarding the lack of this CI. TB believed that writing a greeting card or a letter appeared to be beyond the students' proficiency level, while TA thought that such exercises should be designed for the 9<sup>th</sup> graders who were preparing themselves for senior high school English materials:

TB: My students don't seem to have the ability. They may be able to write what's necessary on an envelope, like the recipient's name and address, but not a whole letter.

TA: But I think the 9<sup>th</sup> graders can start to practice writing letters or e-mails. The workbook exercises for them are too easy, and I think more challenging exercises are needed.

TC: My opinions are in line with TB's. The students in our school can't write very well. Most of them even have problems completing a single sentence. So, for

me, I don't give my students opportunities to write letters; it just won't work for them.

*CI Writing 5 (0%): to write a simple paragraph*

Likewise, the interviewees also believed that the majority of their students lacked the ability to write a paragraph, but suggested that this type of exercises should be designed into the workbooks:

TB: Again, my students don't have the ability to write a complete paragraph.

Besides, it takes a lot of time to do the grading.

TC: Maybe the workbook editors can add this kind of exercises and make them optional. If some exercises are interesting, we can select one or two for the students to practice.

TA: This is needed for some students with more advanced abilities. Maybe this can be used as an extra bonus if the students are willing to write.

TB: To be honest, if this skill were to be tested on the senior high school entrance exams, I believe students would start practicing.

In terms of the neglected CIs, two conclusions can be made. First, some of the neglected CIs were not worth being incorporated into the workbooks. According to the teachers, for example, the ability to use a dictionary was not important to develop their students' English proficiency and the ability to read out loud a textbook passage was already present in the textbooks. Second, the other neglected CIs should be or could be incorporated into workbook exercises. For instance, the ability to fill out a form, a skill often used in daily life, should be designed as workbook exercises. To write a simple paragraph, a more advanced skill, could be designed as optional exercises for high achieving students. Even though the above mentioned CIs were severely neglected in the workbooks, the teachers still rarely provided their students practice on these skills.

## Summary

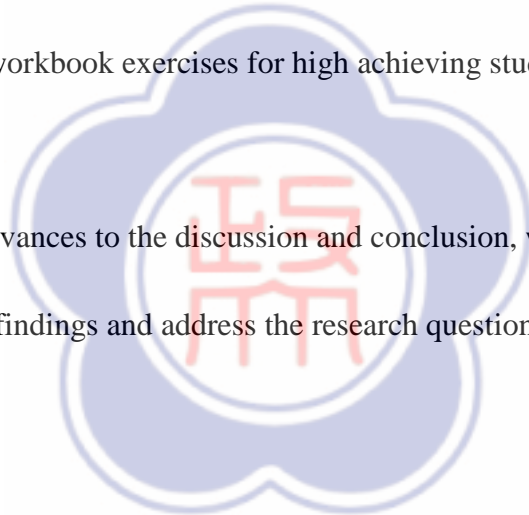
In this section, the major findings are summarized as follows.

1. In terms of CI distribution in the workbooks, an apparent discrepancy was found between the frequencies of the emphasized indicators and those of the de-emphasized ones.
2. With regard to the emphasized CIs, only three were accentuated: to guess meanings of words and reading passages; to understand main ideas; and to combine, change, and make sentences.
3. As for the de-emphasized CIs, there were eight which received little or even no attention. The eight ignored indicators included: (1) to recognize cursive writing, (2) to use a dictionary, (3) to understand signs and charts, (4) to read textbook passages out loud, (5) to understand textbook reading passages, (6) to fill out forms, (7) to write a greeting card or a letter, (8) to write a paragraph.
4. With respect to the teacher interviewees' use of the workbooks, the teachers tended to assign the workbooks as their students' homework for the purpose of reviewing learning contents in the textbooks.
5. Regarding the teachers' evaluation of the workbook contents, it was believed that the workbook exercises should have been more challenging, contained more exercises, and included various question types.
6. As for the teachers' perceptions of the three emphasized competence indicators in the workbooks (to guess meanings of words and reading passages; to understand main

ideas; and to combine, change, and make sentences), basically they agreed that the emphasis was necessary because they were basic skills and often tested on either monthly exams or senior high school entrance exams.

7. As for the eight overlooked CIs, the teachers' comments were three fold. First, lack of practice on some CIs, such as to use a dictionary, did not matter much, because these skills were impractical for their students. Second, some practices, such as to fill out forms, should be included into the workbooks because they were related to students' daily lives. Third, certain practice, such as to write a simple paragraph, could be designed as optional workbook exercises for high achieving students to master more advanced skills.

The next chapter advances to the discussion and conclusion, which further elaborate on the research findings and address the research questions.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, four sections are presented. First, the major findings are displayed and some possible reasons for the findings are also provided. Second, several implications of this study are presented. Third, the limitations of this study are listed. Finally, suggestions for future research are recommended.

#### Major Findings

The present study has two purposes. First, a widely-used set of junior high school English workbooks was analyzed to discover the distribution of the reading and writing competence indicators stipulated by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. Second, in-service teachers were invited to comment on the same set of workbooks. The following section addresses the major findings of the present study as well as the research questions raised in Chapter 1.

#### *An Imbalanced Distribution of Competence Indicators*

With respect to CI incorporation in the workbooks, the workbook exercises in each volume were examined in relation to the junior high school reading and writing competence indicators in the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines. More specifically, nine reading and five writing indicators were adopted to analyze the workbooks. As shown in the results of Chapter 4, there is a huge gap between the top

ranking CIs and those at the bottom. Namely, among all six volumes of the workbooks, it was found that certain CIs were heavily emphasized while others were left unattended. To explore the above-mentioned results more in depth, the section below further discusses: (1) the emphasized competence indicators, (2) the de-emphasized competence indicators, and (3) comparison with previous studies.

### ***Emphasized Competence Indicators***

In terms of the emphasized CIs, there were only three which respectively took up over ten percent of the total CI occurrence times: Reading 7 (to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues) at 47.3%; Reading 6 (to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story or short play) at 15.3%; and CI Writing 2 (to combine, change and make sentences based on clues) at 14.3%.

As for the first-ranking CI, Reading 7 (to guess the meanings of words and reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues) exhibited over 40 percent of appearance in each volume of the workbooks. According to the focus group interview, the teachers also regarded CI Reading 7, especially the ability to guess word meanings, as the most-practiced skill in the workbooks. Furthermore, the teachers believed that focus on this skill was necessary, as using context to infer meanings was a basic component of learning English and was often tested on senior high school entrance exams.

In fact, the workbook's emphasis on using context to infer the meanings of words



and passages can be supported by the following principles for teaching reading. In terms of “learning words from context,” Nation (2001) pointed out that “incidental learning via guessing from context is the most important of all sources of vocabulary learning” (p. 232). Nunan (2003) also suggested that “L2 readers should be taught to use context to effectively guess the meanings of less frequent vocabulary” (p. 74). Also, according to Brown (2004), one of the macroskills for accomplishing reading was to “develop and use a battery of reading strategies, such as...guessing the meaning of words from context...” (p.188). Thus, it can be concluded that guessing word meanings from context is a crucial reading skill. As for using context to infer the meanings of passages, Davis (1968) identified “drawing inferences from content” as one of the reading skills that led to comprehension. Similarly, Grabe and Stoller (1997) stated that “strategic readers make use of a wide repertoire of strategies,” one of which was “using context to maintain comprehension” (p.151). In sum, the discussions mentioned above can possibly explain why the ability to infer from context was so heavily emphasized in the workbooks.

With regard to the second most incorporated CI, Reading 6 (to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story or short play) was assumed by the teachers to warrant a heavy emphasis for a number of reasons. First, this kind of practice was commonly seen in the textbooks (Reading 5—to understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks). Secondly, the ability, especially to understand a dialogue, was related to students’ daily lives. Thirdly, reading for main ideas was often tested on the BCT (Basic Competence Test) for junior high school students. Indeed, the

importance of understanding main ideas can be found in Munby's (1978) taxonomy of reading skills, which suggested that "identifying the main point or important information" should be taken as a microskill in "material design as well as the design of language tests." Besides, according to Brown's (2004) "principal strategies for reading comprehension," language learners should be equipped with the ability to "skim the text for gist and for main idea." As a result, it is proved that being able to read for main ideas is an indispensable skill for language learners and sufficient practice is certainly needed.

As for the last emphasized CI, Writing 2 (to combine, change and make sentences based on clues), the teachers cited the following factors which they felt explained such an emphasis. They deemed it to be a basic skill, one that was frequently tested on monthly exams and was used as a traditional way to practice sentence patterns. Even though this writing skill received attention, the workbook exercises themselves seemed to be more "controlled" or "form-focused" (Brown, 2004, p.225). As shown in Figure 5.1, the sentence combining practice was not "contextualized, meaningful, and personalized, even when students are focusing on form" (Hadley, 2001, p.282). For beginning learners, such controlled practice can help "reinforce their growing knowledge of the linguistic system" (Hadley, 2001, 281). As the learners progress, however, "writing assignments should become less-structured..., and more creative in nature" (Hadley, p.282). Hence, it is suggested that the workbooks should include a variety of exercises that help students advance from mechanical, "impersonal" drills to the spontaneous use of language which more closely resembles real world usage (Hadley, p. 282).

Figure 5.1 A Sample exercise in Lesson 4, Volume 2

#### IV Combine Sentences (12分, 每题4分)

合併句子。

**Example** This is a pencil. It is short.

*This is a short pencil.*

1. It's a book. It's not heavy.

*It's not a heavy book.*

2. Snowball and Fluffy are bears. They are big.

*Snowball and Fluffy are big bears.*

3. Cathy is a girl. She is young and cute.

*Cathy is a young and cute girl.*

Even though the above mentioned three CIs (to guess meanings from context, to understand main ideas, to combine/change/make sentences) were emphasized in the workbooks, the teachers still expressed a need to give extra practice to their students because the workbooks alone were not sufficient enough to help students master those skills. However, the ways the teachers provided practice included no more than giving tests and assigning more exercise books for their students.

#### *Neglected Competence Indicators*

In terms of the neglected CIs, there were eight of them, each occupying lower than 1.5 percent of the total CI incorporation frequency. Among the eight neglected CIs, there were four where the teacher interviewees considered negligence acceptable: (1) Reading 1—to recognize English letters in cursive writing; (2) Reading 2—to find the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary; (3) Reading 4—to read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonations and rhythms; and (4)

Reading 5—to understand the main ideas of readings in the textbooks. In contrast, the teachers expected more workbook exercises on the other four neglected skills: (1)

Reading 3—to understand frequently-used signs and charts; (2) Writing 1—to fill out simple forms; (3) Writing 3—to write a greeting card, a letter, or an e-mail; and (4)

Writing 5—to write a simple paragraph. In the following section, the explanations of and possible reasons for this finding are presented.

*Negligence accepted.*

Based on the interview data, there were two major reasons which explained why these four CIs lacked emphasis: first, technological advances (to recognize cursive writing and use a dictionary); and second, similar practices in the textbooks (to read aloud and understand the main ideas of textbook passages).

With regard to technological advances, the teachers expressed a lack of practice on recognizing cursive writing did not matter much for their students because computers had made cursive forms rarely seen or used. Moreover, the teachers also mentioned that being able to recognize cursive forms was not the most crucial ability at their students' learning stage. What their students needed instead was the ability to do well on senior high school entrance exams, where recognizing cursive letters was seldom tested. This explained why the teachers did not want to spend much class time teaching cursive writing. In addition, the teachers believed that as long as their students could recognize the cursive form, the skill was acquired; hence, too much practice would be redundant. In fact, the teachers'

views were compatible with those of “cursive traditionalists,” suggesting that cursive writing was becoming an “endangered species given the rise of computers” (Carpenter, 2008, p.34). Supon (2009) also indicated that “standardized testing,” mostly in print form, was another reason why cursive was disappearing. Thus, it can be inferred that cursive writing, both in Taiwan and the US, is becoming “a casualty in the educational landscape” (Supon, 2009, p. 357); thus negligence on this skill has become unavoidable.

As for Reading 2 (to use a dictionary), the teachers also believed that the convenience of E-dictionaries had decreased the importance of this skill. Indeed, today’s E-dictionaries are so advanced that even the pronunciation of words are recorded by native speakers to show language learners correct pronunciations. In addition to the recent widespread use of E-dictionaries, the teachers also mentioned another two factors that minimized the importance of being able to use dictionaries: (1) compared with other skills, this one was not the most crucial for their students at their present learning stage; and (2) the textbooks themselves did not include this type of practice.

As for the reason for having similar exercises in the textbooks, Reading 4 (to read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonations and rhythms) and Reading 5 (to understand the main ideas of readings in the textbooks) were singled out by the teachers. These two skills, especially reading aloud, were mainly practiced with textbooks in class; therefore, it was reasonable that similar exercises were not found as homework in the workbooks. It should be noted that, even though practice on understanding the main ideas of textbook passages did not appear in the workbooks, the

skill of reading for main ideas (CI Reading 6) still remained the second highest CI incorporated into the workbooks. Thus, it can be concluded that the ability to read for main ideas, whether from textbook or workbook materials, was significantly valued.

*Negligence not accepted.*

While the interviewees agreed that the aforementioned four CIs did not need to be emphasized, the following four were expected to need more emphasis: (1) Reading 3—to understand frequently-used signs and charts; (2) Writing 1—to fill out simple forms; (3) Writing 3—to write a greeting card, a letter, an e-mail; and (4) Writing 5—to write a simple paragraph.

As for the abilities to understand signs/charts and to fill out simple forms, the interview data showed that these types of practice should have been increased for two main reasons. Firstly, the skills were closely-related to daily life. For instance, filling out forms and understanding signs could be necessary while at international airports.

Secondly, reading charts and forms were frequently tested on the Basic Competence Test for junior high school students. This reason indicated that the teachers seemed to be test-oriented, which was frequently seen among junior high school English teachers (Lin, 2009).

As for the abilities to write a greeting card/ letter/e-mail, and a simple paragraph, the teachers considered these two types of practice more challenging to the majority of their students. Even so, the teachers still believed that practice on such skills should be

included in the workbooks. For the ability to write a simple paragraph, in particular, the teachers suggested making the practice optional in the workbooks so that their students, especially those at an advanced level, could be equipped with the ability to prepare for the higher level learning materials during their senior high school years. In fact, the teachers' suggestion could be related to the MOE's English Curriculum Guidelines. That is, the guidelines stated that the asterisk CIs meant the schools could design curriculums or develop teaching materials based on their students' proficiency levels. Therefore, the ability to write a paragraph was indeed a challenging skill for students and optional practice could be added.

### *Comparison with Previous Studies*

Research has been done on CI incorporation into the teaching materials used in various learning areas. Compared with the previous researchers' works, there are some similarities and differences found.

As the major findings of the present study indicated, the competence indicators were not fully incorporated. This finding could be also found in a number of similar studies. Hsu's (2006) study, for example, analyzed elementary school competence indicators of social studies and discovered that some CIs were either partly or wholly ignored in the workbooks. In addition to the lack of certain CIs, her study also noted that the frequencies of the CIs often exhibited highly imbalanced proportions. Similarly, in Lin's (2008) study examining elementary school writing competence indicators of the

Chinese learning area, it was also discovered that some of the indicators took up much more of a percentage of overall instructional focus than the others.

In general, the previous studies which analyzed competence indicators in teaching materials all found an imbalance in distribution. That is to say, this is a common problem. In the present study, however, one new finding differs from the previous research conducted by Hsu (2006). Hsu suggested that since several CIs were lacking in the social studies workbooks, the editors should revise the workbooks by including all of the CIs. In the present study, however, the focus group interview data indicated that some of the junior high school English competence indicators were not worthy of being incorporated. For instance, CI Reading 2 (to use a dictionary) was neglected in the workbooks and the teacher interviewees embraced this omission, for they felt that with the popularity of E-dictionaries, this skill was impractical for their students to learn. As a result, it can be inferred that not all of the CIs are equally important and that some of them should be updated so as to meet a current trend.

### ***In-Service Teachers' Comments on the Workbooks***

In this section, the focus group interview data were discussed in two major aspects: (1) how the teachers used the workbooks, and (2) how the teachers commented on the workbook contents. Each aspect is presented with possible explanations and previous related literature.

The focus group interview data revealed that the majority of the teachers tended to



use the workbooks for students' homework as a means to help their students review the learning content in the textbooks. This finding was supported by several previous research studies. First, according to Lee and Pruitt (1979), the functions of homework could be categorized into: (1) practice/review, (2) preparation, (3) extension, and (4) creativity/integration. As Connor (1991) discovered, practice/review homework was assigned more frequently than the other types of homework, such as preparation and creativity. Similarly, Hsu's study (2001) investigating junior high school geography workbooks also concluded that 85% of the teachers who filled out the questionnaires recognized the workbooks as review materials (p.86). Nevertheless, LaConte suggested, "practice/review homework was overused, dull, and repetitive" (Chen, 2005, p.10). Therefore, it can be concluded that both workbook editors and teachers should look at homework functions of the workbooks from different angles so as to help students develop other skills.

As for the evaluation of the workbook content, three aspects were probed by the interviewees: the difficulty level, the number of exercises, and the diversity level. Firstly, in terms of the difficulty level, all of the interviewees agreed that the workbook exercises should be more challenging so that their students could be better prepared for senior high school materials. Secondly, regarding the number of exercises, the majority of teachers suggested that more exercises could be included into the workbooks so as to help students become familiarized with what they had learned in the textbooks. Lastly, concerning the diversity of workbook exercises, the teachers expressed a need for diversifying exercise types which were almost the same in the current workbooks. This finding echoed previous

studies on evaluating workbook contents of other academic subjects. In Kuo's (2009) study on elementary school science workbooks, it was discovered that the science workbooks accentuated knowledge memorization, resulting in a limited diversity of exercise types. Similarly, Huang (2010) found that the reading comprehension questions in fourth-grade Chinese workbooks were not diverse enough to help broaden students' critical thinking. In sum, current student workbooks, one type of homework, should function as more than "review" materials and be used to develop thinking/problem solving/organizing skills (Conner, 1991), and provide for creativity (North & Pilly, 2002).

### *Answers to the Research Questions*

The major findings displayed above are further extracted to answer the following four research questions proposed in Chapter One.

#### ***Research Question 1***

*How are the Grade 7-9 English reading/ writing competence indicators in the English Curriculum reflected and distributed in the junior high school workbooks?*

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the distribution of the CIs in each volume of the workbooks was imbalanced. Namely, the frequencies of CI incorporation varied greatly, ranging from 248 times to 0 (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 *Frequencies of CIs in the Workbooks*

Competence Indicators	F (%)
R1 To recognize English letters in cursive writing.	1 (0.1)
R2 To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.	0 (0)
R3 To understand English signs and charts.	8 (1.5)
R4 To read short passages and simple stories aloud.	0 (0)
R5 To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.	0 (0)
R6 To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story or short play.	80 (15.3)
R7 To guess the meanings of words and reading passages based on pictures or contexts.	248(47.3)
R8 To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, and endings.	43 (8.2)
R9 To be able to read simple articles in different genres and topics.	49 (9.4)
W1 To fill out simple forms based on clues.	0 (0)
W2 To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues.	75 (14.3)
W3 To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.	0 (0)
W4 To translate simple Chinese sentences into English sentences.	20 (3.8)
W5 To write simple paragraphs based on clues.	0 (0)

### ***Research Question 2***

*Which competence indicators are emphasized or de-emphasized?*

As shown in Table 5.1, three CIs were found to be emphasized in the workbooks. First, CI Reading 7 (to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues) accounted for 47.3 percent of the total CI occurrences in the whole set of workbooks, followed by CI Reading 6 (to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story or short play) at 15.3 percent and CI Writing 2 (to combine, change and make sentences based on clues) at 14.3 percent.

In terms of the de-emphasized indicators, there were eight in total, with each occupying lower than 1.5 percent. The neglected CIs are listed as follows: Reading 1 (0.1%)—to recognize English letters in cursive writing, Reading 2 (0%)—to find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary, Reading 3 (1.5%)—to understand frequently-used English signs and charts, Reading 4 (0%)—to read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm, Reading 5 (0%)—to understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks, Writing 1 (0%)—to fill out simple forms, Writing 3 (0%)—to write greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc., and Writing 5 (0%)—to write simple paragraphs based on clues.

### ***Research Question 3***

*How do the in-service English teachers use and value the workbooks?*

The three in-service junior high school English teachers who joined the focus group interview commented that they mainly used the workbooks as their students' homework so as to help their students review what they learned in class. What's more, the teachers suggested that: (1) the difficulty level of the workbook exercises should be higher so that their students' English proficiency levels could be boosted; (2) the number of the workbook exercises should be increased so that their students could get more practice; and (3) the workbook exercises should be more diverse so that their students could acquire various skills.

#### ***Research Question 4***

*How do the in-service English teachers currently using the workbooks view the competence indicator distribution in the workbooks?*

In the focus group interview, the teachers were invited to comment on the competence indicators incorporated in the workbooks. The interview results were categorized into three parts.

First, the majority of the indicators considered emphasized and de-emphasized by the teachers were in agreement with the workbook analysis results obtained by the researcher. Secondly, the teachers confirmed that the three emphasized CIs (Reading 7—to guess meanings from contexts; Reading 6—to understand main ideas; Writing 2—to combine/make sentences) undoubtedly needed to be incorporated frequently in the workbooks. Thirdly, when it came to the ignored CIs, the teachers believed that: (1) some, such as the ability to use a dictionary and understand cursive writing, should be converted to meet; (2) other indicators, such as the ability to fill out simple forms, should have appeared more often in the workbooks; and (3) still others, such as the ability to write a simple paragraph, could have been designed into optional workbook exercises for their students.

#### **Implications of the Study**

In this section, implications are provided for three interactive groups: (1) educational policy makers, (2) textbook/workbook editors, and (3) teachers/practitioners.

To address the problems found in the current study, policy makers are encouraged to revise the competence indicators according to the suggestions of textbook/workbook editors and teachers'. After that, textbook/workbook editors are required to design teaching materials based on the improved version of CIs and teachers' opinions. Finally, in-service teachers are urged to actively participate in both policy reform (i.e. CI revision) and instructional material development. It is hoped that, through a top-down and bottom-up collaboration of these three groups, a full range of expertise can be collected and a better education system will be realized. For each group, more in-depth implications are displayed as follows.



***For Educational Policy Makers***

In light of the findings of the present study, the educational policy makers are requested to update, classify, and prioritize the CIs.

As for updating the CIs, the educational policy makers can consider revising the CIs which do not fit the current English learning environment. In fact, since the implementation of the Grades 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines in 2001, there was only a slight modification in 2008. The 2008 version of the curriculum, however, seemed to have failed to update certain indicators that needed either a new interpretation or even an overhaul. For instance, one of the core meanings of Reading 2 (to use a dictionary) states that students need to understand the format of a dictionary. In reality, the present study shows that this ability is not valued by textbook/workbook editors and in-service teachers.

Thus, it is suggested that the policy makers should redefine this CI or even eliminate it.

As for classifying the CIs, the policy makers are encouraged to separate the CIs for in-class and after-class use. By so doing, textbook/workbook writers can design diverse workbook exercises to achieve other homework functions such as preparation and creativity. For example, the CI of writing a greeting card, letter or an e-mail can be classified as an after-class indicator to be incorporated in the workbooks. In this way, not only can the problem of insufficient class time be solved but students will have opportunities to practice this important skill as well.

As for prioritizing the CIs, the policy makers need to provide textbook/workbook writers with a guideline regarding the percentage of each CI that should be incorporated into teaching materials. That is, if a CI bears a high priority, it should be incorporated more frequently. Better still, the policy makers can even create regulations requiring that private publishers to produce textbooks/workbooks of different proficiency levels. According to Yeh (2009), to implement adaptive instruction, both basic and advanced materials are needed to narrow students' English proficiency gap. Therefore, the current senior high school English curriculum has clearly stated that textbooks should be separated into two tracks (A and B) so that students of different levels can progress at their own pace (MOE, 2010). Since Twelve Year Compulsory Education will be carried out in 2014<sup>1</sup>, it is suggested that this policy should also be applied to junior high school English textbooks and workbooks.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Twelve-Year Compulsory Education Program*. The Ministry of Education of Taiwan.  
[http://140.111.34.179/about01\\_origin.php](http://140.111.34.179/about01_origin.php)

### *For Textbook/Workbook Editors*

According to the research findings, there is still room for improvement in the workbook contents. Therefore, textbook/workbook editors are encouraged to: (1) design the workbooks based on the priority of the CIs, and (2) diversify the workbook contents.

In terms of following the priority of the CIs, the workbook writers should design the workbook exercises with a proportional emphasis on the skills that need attention. That is, after the MOE sets up the percentages for each CI, the workbook exercises should be compiled accordingly. For example, if CI Reading 8 (to identify elements of a story) is regulated as 10 percent, then the workbook writers should make sure that 10 percent of the workbook exercises cover this skill. What's more, the textbook/workbook editors can develop materials into two tracks, A track with basic materials and B with more advanced ones. By so doing, the problem of proficiency gaps can begin to be addressed (Yeh, 2009).

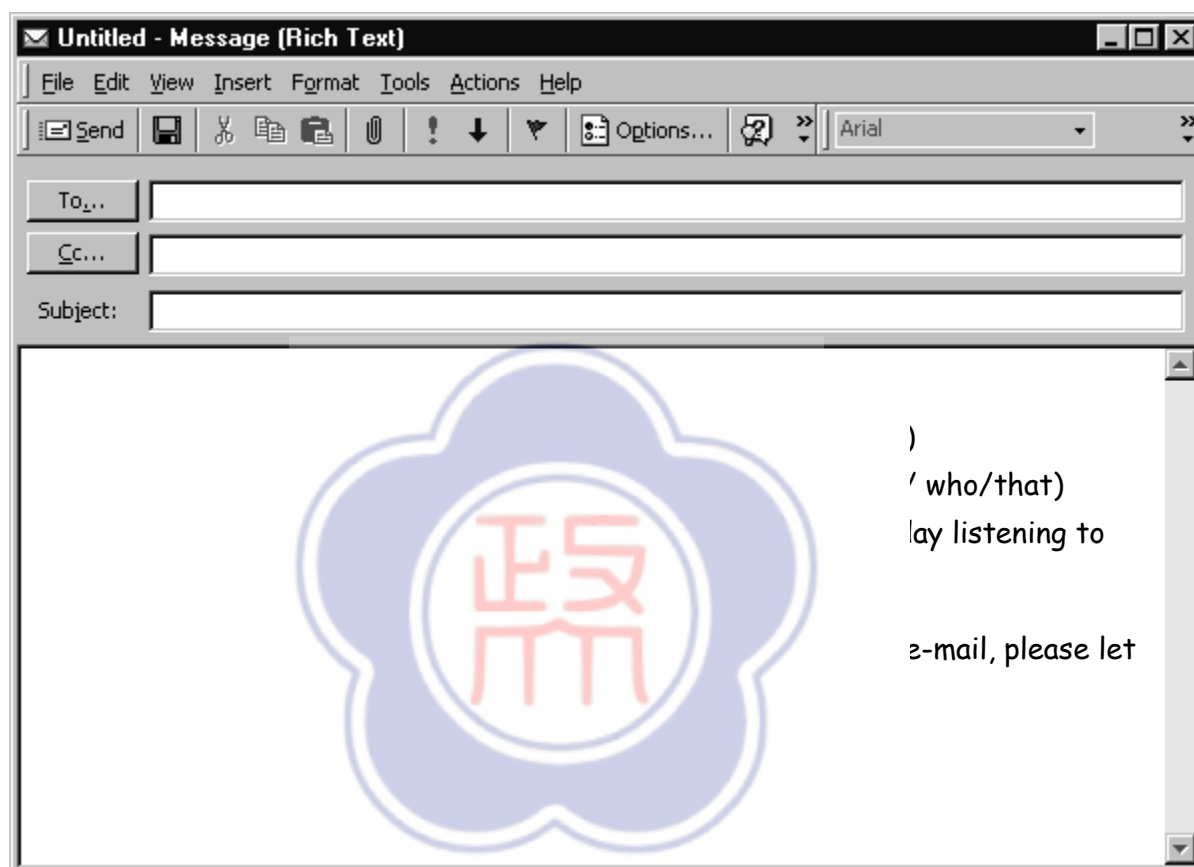
As for diversifying the workbook contents, the workbook writers should provide exercise types that not only include the review purpose but also the other homework functions such as preparation and creativity (Lee and Pruitt, 1979). As shown in Figure 5.2, CI Writing 3 (to write a greeting card, letter or an e-mail), practice of which is severely lacking in the workbooks, can actually be designed to both help students review sentence patterns and stimulate students' creativity.



Figure 5.2 A Sample Workbook Exercise Created by the Researcher

Write an e-mail to your favorite singer by

- 1.) circling the correct relative pronoun, and
- 2.) creating your own sentences.



### *For Teachers/Practitioners*

The research finding that the interviewees tended to be test-oriented when evaluating the CIs suggests that teachers should: (1) enhance students' English proficiency based on the CI priority stipulated by the MOE, and (2) employ various types of classroom activities while developing their students' proficiency.

First of all, according to the interview responses, the workbooks' emphasis on CI

Reading 7 (to infer word/passage meanings from context), and Reading 6 (to understand main ideas) could contribute to the fact that the BCT (Basic Competence Test) also tested such skills. This finding shows how the teachers were inclined to associate the importance of a CI with this major senior high school entrance exam. Nonetheless, with the introduction of 12 Year Compulsory Education, junior high school students will no longer need to take the BCT to get admitted to senior high schools. Instead, it is the students' academic and extracurricular performances at school that will be evaluated (MOE, 2012). To that end, teachers should otherwise adopt proficiency-oriented instruction by following the CI priority.

Secondly, the interview results showed that the teachers formed a habit of compensating for insufficient workbook practice by administering test papers or past BCT test questions to their students. This finding indicates that the teachers should adopt various materials or practices that can effectively build up their students' language competencies proposed in the curriculum guidelines.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the competence indicators in the junior high school English workbooks. Even though the present study was conducted with as much care as possible, there are still three major limitations. Each of them is discussed as follows.

First, due to limited time allowed for this study, only one set of English workbooks

was analyzed. For the same reason, only three in-service English teachers were invited to the focus group interview. As a result, the samples may not be large enough to be generalized to other research domains.

Secondly, because of insufficient human resources, only one inter-rater was invited to analyze the workbooks. To achieve higher inter-rater reliability, hopefully there will be more teachers available to analyze the workbooks in the future.

The final limitation is that, in the present study, only the in-service English teachers were invited to join the focus group interview. For the purpose of better understanding how the CIs were incorporated into the workbooks, it would be beneficial to survey workbook editors as well.



### **Suggestions for Future Research**

To solve the problems raised in the limitation section, several suggestions are made for future researchers.

First, to obtain more objective results, an overall examination of the workbooks of every set in the current market can be conducted to gain a full picture of how the workbooks are designed. Also, if more in-service teachers can be interviewed, more comprehensive opinions can be gathered.

Second, a consultation with workbook editors and perhaps educational policy makers can be conducted to help understand how the CIs are incorporated into the workbooks.

## Conclusion

In this thesis paper, a set of the most-widely used junior high school English workbooks was systematically examined based on the reading and writing competence indicators listed in the Grade 1-9 English Curriculum Guidelines. Furthermore, the same set of workbooks were discussed and analyzed in the focus group interview with three in-service junior high school English teachers.

As the English Curriculum Guidelines stated, teaching materials, including student workbooks, were compiled according to competence indicators (MOE, 2008, p.9). The present study, however, discovered that most of the competence indicators were severely neglected. In other words, of the 14 CIs, the majority of the workbook exercises featured only three: Reading 6 (to understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short reading passage, letter, story or short play), Reading 7 (to guess the meanings of words and/or to infer the meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues), and Writing 2 (to combine, change and make sentences based on clues).

When evaluating the CIs in the workbooks, the in-service teachers indicated that some CIs were not important (the ability to use a dictionary and recognize cursive writing); thus lack of practice in the workbooks was acceptable. Meanwhile, certain CIs should have been incorporated into the workbooks (the ability to fill out simple forms, and to write a simple paragraph) because these practices were crucial for developing their students' English proficiency.

Given the results of the present study, in-service teachers, workbook editors, and

educational policy makers are encouraged to collaborate so as to either improve the workbooks or fine-tune the competence indicators. By doing so, not only will it benefit students, but the whole English learning environment in Taiwan may move in a direction that is better able to cultivate competent English speakers.





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## Appendix 1

*Converting Formats of Grade 7-9 Reading and Writing Competence Indicators**(Adapted from Tzeng, 2001)*

<i>Reading 1</i>	To recognize English letters in cursive writing.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	recognize	English letters in cursive writing
Key words	Cursive writing	

<i>Reading 2</i>	To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	find out	pronunciations and meanings of words in a dictionary
Key words	In a dictionary	

<i>Reading 3</i>	To understand frequently-used English signs and charts.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	understand	English signs and charts
Key words	English signs and charts	

<i>Reading 4</i>	To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	read aloud	short passages and simple stories with appropriate intonations and rhythms
Key words	Read aloud	

<i>Reading 5</i>	To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	understand	main ideas of readings in textbooks
Key words	Main ideas of readings in textbooks	

<i>Reading 6</i>	To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, a short passage, letter, story, and short play.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	understand	main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short passage, letter, story, and short play
Key words	Main ideas of a dialogue, short passage, letter, story, short play	

<i>Reading 7</i>	To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages with pictures or contextual cues.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	guess, infer	Meanings of words, meanings of reading passages with pictures or contextual cues
Key words	Infer meanings of words and passages	

<i>Reading 8</i>	To identify the elements of a story, such as its background, characters, events and endings.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	identify	the elements of a story
Key words	Elements of a story	

<i>Reading 9</i>	To read simple articles in different genres and topics.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	read	simple articles in different genres and topics
Key words	Simple articles	

<i>Writing 1</i>	To fill out simple forms based on clues.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	fill out	simple forms
Key words	Fill out forms	

<i>Writing 2</i>	To combine, change and make English sentences according to clues.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	combine, change, make	English sentences
Key words	Combine, change, make English sentences	

<i>Writing 3</i>	To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	write	greeting cards, letters, e-mails
Key words	Write greeting cards, letters, e-mails	

<i>Writing 4</i>	To translate simple Chinese sentences into English ones.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	translate	Chinese sentences into English ones
Key words	Translate Chinese sentences into English ones	

<i>Writing 5</i>	To write simple paragraphs based on clues.	
Key concepts	Verb	Object
	write	simple paragraphs
Key words	Write simple paragraphs	











## Appendix 4

Interview Consent Form  
(The Chinese Version)  
訪談同意書

親愛的老師您好：

非常感謝您對本研究的協助，本研究旨在探討國中英語教師使用國中英語習作的方式，以及英語能力指標反映在習作的看法，並期盼此研究結果能提供有關教科書編輯者與英語教育決策者之參考。

本研究預計為一次的焦點團體訪談，歷時約一小時；訪談過程中，將予以紙筆及錄音記錄，但所有資料僅供學術研究參考，絕不會外流，敬請放心。

再次感謝您的協助！

敬祝

身體健康，平安順新



國立政治大學英語教學碩士在職專班

指導教授：葉潔宇 博士

研究生：王羿婷

日期：中華民國 100 年 12 月

- 本人**同意**相關資料做為學術研究之用
- 本人**不同意**相關資料做為學術研究之用

教師：\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

Interview Consent Form  
(The English Version)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to be interviewed for this research project entitled *A Study on Competence Indicators of Grade 1-9 English Curriculum in Junior High School English Workbooks* which is being produced by Yi-ting Wang of the ETMA program at NCCU.

I certify that I have been told of the confidentiality of information collected for this project and understand that the results of this study may be published in an academic journal or book.

I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any way thought best for this study.

---

Signature of Interviewee

Date



## Appendix 6

Interview Questions  
(The Chinese Version)

## 一、請談談在課堂上使用英語習作的情形。

1. 習作的使用方式?
  - 回家作業，考試或是上課活動?
  - 如何檢討答案?
2. 習作的批改方式?
  - 批改者是?
  - 給分方式?

## 二、您認為英語習作有何功能?

1. 學生學習方面?
  - 複習課本所學?
2. 教師教學方面?
  - 檢視教學成效?
3. 與課本的搭配情形?
  - 配合課本的單字與文法?

## 三、您對習作內容的評價為何?

1. 題目的難易度為何? 為什麼?
2. 題目的數量多寡為何? 為什麼?
3. 題目的類型是否多元? 為什麼?
4. 是否應增加或減少某類題型? 為什麼?
5. 英語習作內容的其他優缺點?

## 四、請談談國中英語讀寫能力指標在習作中的分布情形。(受訪者可參考能力指標的內容。)

1. 題型**偏重**哪些能力指標?
  - 為何會如此認為?
  - 這些能力指標是否真的需要被強調嗎?
2. 題型**忽略**哪些能力指標?
  - 為何如此認為?
  - 是否曾補充其不足? 例如，自編講義，增加課堂活動等。
  - 若不曾補充，是否覺得習作不需強調這些能力指標?
3. 習作中如何輔助課本所強調的能力指標?
  - 課本較偏重或忽略的能力指標為何?
  - 習作是否複習課本所強調的能力指標?

- 習作是否補足課本所忽略的指標?
- 若不曾補充，是否覺得課本不需強調這些能力指標?

五、根據研究者的分析，習作題型忽略下列能力指標:(受訪者可查看分析結果)

- 能看懂常用的英文標示和圖表(圓餅圖，長條圖)(1.5%)
  - 被忽略的原因為何? 例如，題目難以設計，此項能力並非最重要...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力，例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題...等?
  - 若不曾補充，原因為何?
- 能辨識英文字母的連續書寫體 (0.1%)
  - 被忽略的原因為何? 例如，非考試重點，非重要能力(使用次數不多)...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力，例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題...等?
  - 若不曾增加練習機會，原因為何?
- 能用字典查閱字詞的發音及意義 (0%)
  - 被忽略的原因為何? 例如，教學時數不足，非考試重點，此項能力並非最重要...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力，例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題、課堂活動...等?
  - 若不曾增加練習機會，原因為何?
- 能用適切的語調、節奏朗讀短文、簡易故事等 (0%)
  - 被忽略的原因為何? 例如，費時、非考試重點、此項能力並非最重要...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力，例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題、課堂活動...等?
  - 若不曾增加練習機會，原因為何?
- 能瞭解課文的主旨大意 (0%)
  - 被忽略的原因為何? 例如，課本已有此題型、此項能力並非最重要...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力，例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題、課堂活動...等?
  - 若不曾增加練習機會，原因為何?
- 填寫簡單的表格 (0%)
  - 被忽略的原因為何? 例如，題目難以設計、基測不考、此項能力並非最重要...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力，例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題、課堂活動...等?
  - 若不曾增加練習機會，原因為何?
- 寫賀卡、書信(含電子郵件)(0%)

- 被忽略的原因為何? 例如, 題目難以設計、費時、基測不考、此項能力並非最重要...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力, 例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題、課堂活動...等?
  - 若不曾增加練習機會, 原因為何?
- 書寫簡短的段落 (0%)
- 被忽略的原因為何? 例如, 學生能力不足、批改耗時、基測不考、此項能力並非最重要...等。
  - 是否曾額外加強此能力, 例如自製學習單、納入小考或段考題、課堂活動...等?
  - 若不曾增加練習機會, 原因為何?



## Appendix 7

Interview Questions  
(The English Version)

- A. How do you use English workbooks in class?
1. Do you use workbooks as homework, tests or class activities?
  2. How do you help students check the answers in workbooks?
  3. How do you grade workbooks?
- B. How do you perceive functions of English workbooks?
1. In terms of students' learning?
  2. In terms of teachers' instruction?
  3. How do workbooks complement textbooks?
- C. How do you value English workbook contents?
1. Are workbook exercises easy or difficult for students?
  2. Are there too many workbook exercises?
  3. Are workbook exercises diversified?
  4. Should there be more diversified exercises?
  5. Are there any other advantages or disadvantages of workbook contents?
- D. Please talk about the reading and writing competence indicators incorporated in junior high school English workbooks.
1. Which aspects of CI are emphasized in workbooks? Why? Necessary?
  2. Which aspects of CI do you feel are neglected? Why? How to make up for the loss?
  3. How workbooks complement textbooks in terms of CI?
- E. According to the researcher's analysis, the following CIs are emphasized:
- To guess the meanings of words and/or to infer meanings of reading passages based on pictures or contextual cues. (47.3%)
  - To understand the main ideas and/or overall plots of a dialogue, short passage, letter, story and short play. (15.3%)
  - To combine, re-write and make sentences based on clues. (14.3%)
1. What do you think about the results?

2. How may the emphasized CIs affect your teaching?
3. How may the emphasized CIs affect students' learning?

F. According to the researcher's analysis, the following CIs are neglected:

- To recognize English letters in cursive writing. (0.1%)
- To find out the pronunciations and meanings of words (0%)
- To read short passages and simple stories aloud with appropriate intonation and rhythm. (0%)
- To understand the main ideas of readings in textbooks. (0%)
- To fill out simple forms based on clues. (0%)
- To write simple greeting cards, letters (including e-mails) etc. (0%)
- To write simple paragraphs based on clues. (0%)

1. What do you think about the results?
2. How may the neglected CIs affect your teaching?
3. How may the emphasized CIs affect students' learning?

