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THE CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY CHINA'S NEW ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR SENIOR HIGH STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

English is an important subject throughout the educational experience of Chinese students. In 2019, the Chinese education department revamped English textbooks, in which vocabulary had been changed from American to British English, and more Chinese elements were added into contexts. However, these changes put some students in a dilemma, as they had studied the old versions of English textbooks for around six years but were suddenly exposed to the new English textbooks in high school. By investigating students' evaluations of the 2019 edition of English textbooks used in senior high school, this study aims to explore challenges caused by the new textbooks from the perspectives of senior high school students. Participants from a private school in Yunnan province, China, would provide data by finishing a bilingual questionnaire online. Then, a mixed research method is adopted to analyse the data collected and illustrate the challenges brought by the new English textbooks with the help of Vygotsky's sociocultural perspectives. The finding shows that the new English textbooks challenge students and make English learning much more difficult. However, the contents provided in the new textbooks focusing on world cultures are useful for students to broaden their horizons and enrich their knowledge of world cultures. This study also identifies the actual situations of educationally backward regions to draw more attention to students struggling to learn English. Besides, some practical suggestions for helping students to adapt to the new textbooks will also be mentioned.

Keywords: *English education, English textbooks, English learning, Vygotsky's sociocultural perspectives, Chinese students, Chinese curriculum reform*

INTRODUCTION

As China's economy grows rapidly and becomes a global economic power, English is playing an increasingly important role in China's education, international tourism and international trade (Bolton et al., 2020). Since the reform and opening up of China in 1978, English has gained more attention in China's education industry as a compulsory subject in the Chinese high school entrance examination, Gaokao. The Chinese Ministry of Education developed English language curriculum standards, learning materials and examination standards to make the development of English language education more systematic.

However, due to the universal influence of Gaokao in the Chinese education field, the original curriculum materials and textbooks gradually failed to meet the needs of students to learn English or improve their English performance in examinations. In order to meet the needs of the vast majority of Chinese people learning English, the Chinese English curriculum standards have shifted towards developing core English abilities, incorporating more constructivist methods than ever before (Luo et al., 2020).

China has been reforming its curriculum standards to better adapt to the changing world trends and make

individuals more competitive in practice (Wang, 2019). However, the redesign and reform of the English curriculum have left some students without a standardised or continuous effective English learning environment. The unified curriculum targets in China have not resulted in a unified educational environment; instead, the educational environment in various regions of China shows great variations (You & Dörnyei, 2016).

There was a shortage of English classes in certain Chinese rural primary schools. However, students who had never been introduced to English were directly provided with junior English textbooks. In addition, the primary and secondary school curricula arrangement has substantially less time for English than for Chinese and mathematics (Qi, 2016). These are very detrimental to the student's subsequent English learning experience. The shortcomings of China's English textbooks are gradually becoming apparent. To address this problem, enhance Chinese students' cross-cultural awareness and strengthen their national cultural self-confidence, a new version of the English textbook has been introduced nationwide in 2019. This new version combines traditional Chinese culture with English culture. The harmonisation of textbooks promotes fairness in education and incorporates more elements of world culture, just in time for China's process of globalisation.

Research Problems

English textbooks integrate a wide range of knowledge, which not only guides the learning of English but also acts as a medium for transmitting cultural diversity and tolerance (Huang, 2019). However, the introduction of the 2019 edition of the English textbooks brings obstacles to some senior students in vocabulary, reading and writing simultaneously. The essential learning material of English textbooks must be the language used in the textbook, which greatly affects the effectiveness of student learning (Huang, 2019). The new textbook adds English words from Chinese cultures in the vocabulary module, almost doubling the vocabulary and changing the spelling from American to British English. In the reading section, unlike previous pure British culture, the new textbook incorporates a lot of Chinese history, ethnic culture and students' campus life while retaining various foreign cultural contents. However, the current reading curriculum in China is highly purpose-oriented, which means learning is just for correct answers in examinations. Both teachers and students spend a great deal of time exploring reading skills in English examinations rather than learning about the content of the reading materials (Yu & Van Maele, 2018).

In the process of textbook evaluation, four items (content, user, learning, and development instruments) should be focused on (Pan & Zhu, 2022). However, in existing research on English education in China, many scholars focus on parsing the national curriculum reform, exploring the cultural aspects of textbooks and investigating the competence of English teachers and students' learning motivations. For example, to give a clear understanding of curriculum reform, Wang (2019) analyses the policy and design of the curriculum change in China and Li (2021) conducts textbook digitisation. In addition, Xu (2013), Huang (2019), Li and Lee (2021), Zhang and Su (2021) and Liu et al. (2022) explore cultural awareness, cultural varieties and cultural representations in China's English textbooks. Yuan (2017) and Zheng (2014) use empirical research from teachers' teaching experiences to reveal the current state of English teaching in China's secondary schools. Some researchers explore teachers' beliefs and knowledge under the influence of the new curriculum standards (Luo et al., 2020). Others examined students' assessments of English and conducted extensive surveys of English learning in Chinese secondary schools and universities to explore the English learning motivations of students (Qi, 2016; You & Dörnyei, 2016). A few research has been done to integrate students' learning experience with the content design of the textbooks.

China's English textbooks are designed and completed in a top-down process that focuses only on cultural contents, national development directions, and systematic processes without considering the needs and experiences of the students. It is necessary to learn students' perceptions and practical use of English textbooks in the context of the new English textbooks. This study seeks to identify the mismatch between China's English textbooks and the real learning situation of students. It suggests that the need for adjustment lies not only with the students but also with the curriculum standards, emphasising the importance of reforming the curriculum standards to serve the students better. Table 1 shows the skeleton of this research.

Table 1 Skeleton of the research

Title **The Challenges Brought by China's New English Textbooks for Senior High Students**	
Problem Statement	
1. The changes in China's new curriculum reform are discontinuous, presenting students with opportunities as well as challenges (Wang, 2019). 2. Chinese students are not sufficiently motivated to learn English because English textbooks are not designed to meet the actual needs of students (Qi, 2016).	
Research Gap	
1. Most studies analyse the policy and design of the curriculum change in China (Li , 2021; Wang, 2019). 2. Many researchers explore cultural awareness, cultural varieties and cultural representations in China's English textbooks (Xu, 2013; Huang, 2019; Li and Lee, 2021; Zhang and Su, 2021; Liu et al., 2022). 3. Little research has been done to integrate students' learning experience with the content design of the textbooks.	
One sentence summary	
This study aims to explore challenges brought by China's new English textbooks for senior high students by investigating students' evaluations of their English learning experience.	
Research Objectives	
1. Illustrate challenges brought by the new English textbooks in high school English learning.	2. Draw more attention to the usage of new English textbooks in high school students' English learning.
Research Questions	
1. What are the challenges the new English textbooks bring to Chinese senior high students?	2. Have the new English textbooks been fully utilised in the English learning of high school students?
Methodology	
Theoretical Perspectives -- Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) Vygotsky (1978) emphasises language has tightly connections with social interaction and cultural transmission (Erbil, 2020).	

Table 1 *(cont.)*

Research Design A mixed research method (Quantitative + Qualitative)
Data / Respondents Data: Students' perceptions of their English learning experiences Respondents: 51 senior high students from a private school in Yunnan province, China
Data Collection Process 1. Questionnaire design: Design a questionnaire based on RQ and RO 2. Online questionnaire conduction (during Qingming Holidays in China)
Method of Data Analysis 1. Library study (to choose theoretical framework) 2. Categorise and organise (Excel) 3. Analyse the data (analytical framework: sociocultural framework; qualitative analysis method: content analysis)
Ethical Consideration UM ethical approval, consent from participants (before the conduction of the online questionnaire)

Research Purpose

Education in China is largely led by the government, and the new curriculum standard set by the Chinese Ministry of Education is studied and applied by all schools in China as an authoritative guide. Textbooks are the concrete expression of curriculum reform and the main source of the application of Chinese curriculum standards. Students are the users of textbooks and the ultimate practitioners of the National Curriculum standards. According to Pan and Zhu (2022), 63% of investigations of China's English teaching materials focused on university students, China's curriculum standard and China's educational department, while few researchers paid attention to textbooks for secondary, primary school students or kindergarten children. The most prominent stage in China's education is senior high school, which attracts the greatest concerns from both students and parents. As a reference for the propositional contents of Gaokao, textbooks are the core materials in high school.

Focused on the learning experiences of senior high school students in Yunnan province, China, this study will explore students' evaluations of their English

textbooks with the help of an online questionnaire to find out whether the English textbooks currently used in Chinese high schools make students learn English effectively.

Research Objectives

Chinese educators have been exploring the new curriculum for several years. However, most researchers have focused their research on the curriculum standards provided by the Chinese Ministry of Education, the design of examinations and teaching, and the improvement of teachers' competencies. They ignored the fact that students are the key to implementing textbooks and China's curriculum reform. Making a new curriculum or designing textbooks without considering students' learning experience is not a good choice. Therefore, this study aims to:

1. To identify the challenges of new English textbooks in high school English learning.
2. To examine the usage of new English textbooks in high school students' English learning.

Research Questions

This study explores the challenges the new English textbooks brought to students' English learning experiences. The data for this study involve high school students' experiences using the new English textbooks and evaluations of instructional design and learning environments. Two questions need to be answered in this study:

1. What challenges do the new English textbooks bring to Chinese senior high students?
2. Have the new English textbooks been fully utilised in the English learning of high school students?

Research Significance

Wang (2019) points out that the Chinese curriculum standards are developed to meet the needs of national development at present and in the future. Nevertheless, the teaching model in China is still designed to serve the needs of the examinations. It is still necessary to understand the needs of students rather than putting the standards into practice rigidly.

Unlike most previous research, which mostly focused on textbook content and instructional design, this study can dissect the importance of students in English textbooks' design. It does so by exposing the challenges and dilemmas that students encounter in English learning and providing a reference for the design and improvement of English language teaching materials in China. It can also inspire students to overcome the modules they are unfamiliar with and adapt to the new curriculum as soon as possible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study analyses the influence of new English textbooks on senior high schools based on the development and reform of the China's English curriculum in recent years. There are four parts in the literature review, including English education development in China, reform of English education in China, characteristics of China's English textbooks and problems of China's English textbooks.

English Education Development in China

Due to the influence of the former Soviet Union and the Chinese national political system, the Russian language was the dominant foreign language of China from the 1950s to 1970s (Zhao, 2016). After that to achieve rapid growth of the market economy, the attention on English has gradually increased since the 1970s, replacing Russia's position in China. Considering the development of both economics and politics, the opening up of China in 1978 paved the way for English in China's education curricula (Bolton et al., 2020). Though the government attached great importance to English, it still took a long time for English to enter the education field because China's education is closely linked to national development needs. Guo et al. (2013) point out that profound changes in society and economy in China influence the spread of education, allocation of educational resources, education equity and curriculum reform. As English-speaking countries had never colonised mainland China, Chinese people seldom speak English in daily life, and it is impractical for them to learn English spontaneously. Learning English is target-oriented, and people choose to learn English to pursue universities, better jobs, and study abroad instead of the convenience of life (Liu et al., 2021).

Reform of English Education in China

In the beginning, the popularity of English in Chinese schools was very limited, and English teaching

resources in many rural areas were scarce. English education was introduced as a compulsory subject in China's primary and secondary schools in 2005 due to the prior lack of experience in English Education (Guo et al., 2013). Besides, to further standardise English language education, the Chinese Ministry of Education also developed special curriculum standards and curriculum resources in the latter years, which makes it possible for many students to study English. Subsequent reforms then shifted the focus from basic subject content to the individual development of the students, emphasising learning interest, learning efficiency, independent learning, as well as the practical and culturally transmitted role of curriculum content. English is the focus throughout all educational levels in China, which directs students to make efforts for higher scores in all kinds of English examinations (Lu & Liu, 2016).

These measures have raised the importance of English among the population successfully while exacerbating the conflict between English and Chinese. As a foreign language in China, English requires more time, money and energy to master than learning Chinese; as a result, to put Chinese in a dominant place in China's education, the Chinese government planned to abolish the English examination from the Gaokao in 2013 (Li & Yuan, 2015). Although English is still retained in primary and secondary education, there are significant changes in the examination pattern in the new curriculum standards implemented nationwide in 2019.

Characteristics of China's English Textbooks

Textbooks are the primary resource for China's National Curriculum standards and fully reflect the spirit, core competencies and problem-solving skills in the redesign of the curriculum (Wang, 2019). In China, English textbooks are not designed as a pure exploration of subjects but as a combination of national development needs, basic knowledge, and English culture. To improve students' global cultural awareness, more world-cultural content has been added to the new English curriculum for high students (Su & Zhang, 2021). The highlight of China's 2019 textbook release is the integration of Chinese and world cultures to help students develop a global perspective, which has been studied by many researchers. Many scholars have also studied and analysed the latest China's English textbooks from a cultural perspective. Zhang and Su (2021) affirm the design of the new curriculum standards for the cultural content of China's English textbooks, which give students a global cultural perspective, encouraging them to think and see the world in a more open-minded way. There are two sides to everything, and it is worth reflecting on the impact of the new English textbooks. In his interpretation of China's new curriculum reform, Wang (2019) points out that the core and direction of the reform is to improve students' practical and problem-solving skills, but these changes are discontinuous, presenting students with opportunities as well as challenges. Although English textbooks attempt to guide students with a broader cultural perspective, the new textbooks are still more oriented towards Anglo-American culture, not effectively providing students with a variety of cultural content in the textbooks (Liu et al., 2022).

Problems of China's English Textbooks

In the process of modernisation, China has adopted measures to support the development of some regions, firstly to drive the lagging regions. In the study of China's education reform process, the coverage of education reforms is not comprehensive, for many education reform systems were only piloted in some regions instead of nationwide. For example, Wang and Zhao (2011) found that rural areas lack access to information, and rural schools struggle to attract competitive teachers due to limited resources.

After ten years, Li (2021) analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the new English e-textbook materials for senior secondary schools and pointed out the important role of e-resources in English reading and writing. More importantly, the design of English textbooks in China is a top-down process that neglects to investigate the perceptions of the users. By polling primary school students' perceptions and comments on the importance of English, Qi (2016) demonstrates that students are not sufficiently motivated to learn English in the long term because English textbooks are not designed to meet the actual needs of students but are only designed to promote English through examinations. Pan and Zhu (2022) conducted a comprehensive study of the English textbooks in use in China, analysing the quantity and content in terms of the number of publications, users and topics and concluded that the design of these English textbooks

used in China ignored the needs of students and catered to the curriculum standards without practicality.

Some scholars have also pointed out problems in the design of China's textbooks by comparing the English textbooks used in mainland China with those used in other regions in terms of their contents. Lee and Li (2019) compare the English textbooks used in mainland China and Hong Kong and find that the mainland textbooks cover English and Chinese culture, but most of the foreign culture is still confined to the UK and the US without full context to help students understand the dialogues in listening practices. In addition to the lack of context, China's textbooks lack practicality. Haidar and Fang (2019) compare the content of English textbooks in China and Pakistan in terms of local usage, language norms, students' self-awareness and the practical use of English, pointing out that China's textbooks are not practical enough so that many students need to learn additional English textbooks in order to pass exams or live abroad. However, English is only a foreign language in China, and it is impractical to rely on the study of English textbooks to master it in the absence of a real English context.

In summary, some problems exist in current China's English textbooks and English education. Firstly, Chinese educational policy and resources are shaped by a top-down decision-making process that is divorced from the realities of students, but little research has been done on this process. Besides, the existing researches on China's English textbooks focus on textbook design, textbook content and the impact of the textbook on the teacher but ignores students' experience of using the English textbooks. Therefore, these studies do not reflect a focus on students and fail to provide an effective reference for improving the English learning situations of students, nor do they effectively address the problems in English learning for Chinese students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a mixed research method is adopted to analyse the data collected and illustrate the connotations embodied in the data of the questionnaire. With the help of quantitative analysis, data on students' evaluations would be compared in terms of votes and average scores. After that, the qualitative analysis illustrates the connotations of questionnaire design and students' choices with the guidance of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to figure out the challenges brought by the new English textbooks. The following are the specific content of the research methodology.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky regards learning as a social and cultural process that interacts with humans and environments (Marginson & Dang, 2017) and his sociocultural theory analyses language learning development from the perspectives of empirical learning and solving problems. Besides, Vygotsky emphasises that language learning tightly connects with social interaction and cultural transmission (Erbil, 2020). Vygotsky's sociocultural framework is widely used in the studies of second languages to highlight the influence of social and cultural contexts in language teaching and learning. This study focuses on students' learning experiences influenced by China's English textbooks, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a viable framework for understanding the challenges brought by the new English textbooks for high school students. To effectively analyse high school students' English learning experiences in this study, the following components of Vygotsky's theory should be considered:

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs when students are challenged to perform tasks that are beyond their current ability (Shooshtari & Mir, 2014; Pathan et al., 2018). In China's new English textbooks, some content designs exceed the students' knowledge base and overestimate their English levels. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development emphasises the gap between individual knowledge and practical problem-solving. It is adult guidance and collaboration with more capable peers that can help students step over this gap. To improve students' individual problem-solving abilities and potential developments, it is necessary to identify students' ZPD and provide support as well as guidance to help them in English learning.

Cultural Context

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasises the importance of cultural context in language learning (Erbil, 2020). The English language environment is difficult to be established in China as it is not used very often in Chinese daily life or news media. The main language environments for students are English textbooks and English classrooms. The biggest changes

in China's new English textbooks is the culture section, which provides a broader view of world cultures. Therefore, combining Vygotsky's sociocultural theory with students' learning experiences, this study can investigate whether the cultural context of new English textbooks can provide an effective cultural environment for students' language learning.

Language Development

Vygotsky believed that language plays a critical role in cognitive development and that language and thought are interconnected. The sociocultural theory focuses on the knowledge learners gain and the solutions they use for problems of learning languages (Pathan et al., 2018). Coincidentally, during the design of the new English textbooks, the Chinese curriculum standards also emphasised enhancing the practicality of the textbooks and improving students' problem-solving skills. It is workable to explore the influence of language development on students by analysing their perceptions towards China's new English textbooks.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory explores the conditions under which effective learning occurs, the cognitive processes of language competence development and the impact of cultural factors on language learning. His theory has been used by many scholars to explore second language learning. It is also a helpful guide to finding the connections between English learning effectiveness, English learning materials design and the challenges of English learning. In conclusion, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a valuable framework for exploring the challenges brought by China's new English textbooks for high school students' English learning.

Participants

This study involves 51 participants who are not younger than 18 years old and attend a private high school in Yunnan, China. More importantly, they have used the old version of English textbooks for about six years in both primary and secondary school, and it is the first time that they have been exposed to the new English textbooks in high school.

Data Collection

This study collects data from an online questionnaire on a famous Chinese platform, Wen Juan Xing (WJX). WJX is a well-known online survey platform in China and is widely used in academic research, social surveys, enterprise market surveys and other fields in China. WJX can specify a variety of sample attributes such as gender, age, region, occupation, and industry to pinpoint the target population; it can also set a variety of filtering rules to automatically filter out invalid responses while supporting manual checking to ensure the validity of the final data (Wang et al., 2020). There are 13 bilingual questions in the questionnaire (shown in Table 2), including one single-choice question, one multiple-choice question and 11 scoring questions.

All participants are clear about the purpose and scope of the questionnaire. Their personal information would not be used as data for this study or any other research, and they all signed the participant consent form from the Universiti Malaya before they finished the questionnaire.

Table 2 Design of research questionnaire

China's New English Textbooks' Influence among Senior High Students 新版中国英语课本对高中生的影响		
Single-choice question（单选题）		
1	How many marks do you usually get in a high school English exam? 你在高中英语考试中一般能得多少分？	• more than120 • 100 -120 • less than 100
Multiple Choice Questions（多选题）		
2	What was the most difficult part of learning English in high school for you? 对你来说，高中英语最困难的部分是什么？	• Listening • Reading • Writing • Speaking
(1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree) （1=强烈反对；2=反对；3=中立；4=同意；5=非常同意）		
1	The use of British English in textbooks of high school does not affect you much (British words like organise, realise, colour, and centre). 高中英语课本中使用的英国英语并没有影响你很多。	1 2 3 4 5
2	The Chinese cultural vocabulary in your English textbook of high school is something you've seen before in junior high school. 你在初中就见过高中英语课本中的中国文化相关词汇。	1 2 3 4 5

Table 2 *(cont.)*

3	The texts selected from the high school English textbooks are very close to your life. 高中英语课本中选择的文本内容贴近你的生活。	1	2	3	4	5
4	The English textbook content of high school is practical and can easily be applied to daily conversations. 高中英语课本内容很实用并且容易运用到日常对话中。	1	2	3	4	5
5	The content of high school English textbooks and examinations is highly relevant. 高中英语课本内容和考试相关性很大。	1	2	3	4	5
6	High school English textbooks have a broader cultural perspective to show cultural diversity. 高中英语课本有更广阔的文化视角来展示文化多样性。	1	2	3	4	5
7	The teachers of high school prepare most of the course content based on the English textbooks. 你的高中老师准备的上课内容大都是以英语课本为准。	1	2	3	4	5
8	The school you are attending has a reasonable arrangement of English courses and gives you the space to teach yourself. 你们学校的英语课程安排合理并给你很多的自学时间。	1	2	3	4	5
9	It is easy for you to adapt to English learning contents in textbooks of high school. 你很容易就能适应高中英语课本的内容。	1	2	3	4	5
10	You are studying English to take the Chinese college entrance exam. 你学习英语是为了参加高考。	1	2	3	4	5
11	The content of your high school English textbook is very appealing to you and stimulates your interest in learning English. 高中英语课本的内容非常吸引你，激发了你的英语学习兴趣	1	2	3	4	5

Research Procedure

There are three stages in the research procedure. Firstly, after finishing the questionnaire, the data collected are classified and organised using Excel. In this part, the first single-choice question directly illustrates the participants' English level. All participants had been studying English in high school for a year and a half. Chinese high schools have formal exams every month, so they are clear about their academic performance. The multiple-choice question highlights the shortcomings of the participants in English learning. The remaining 11 scoring questions are collated in an Excel sheet, and the results are presented visually with corresponding statistical charts.

In the second stage, a quantitative analysis for the answers to 11 scoring questions is used to answer RQ1. The data is the main basis for this process, and the votes and average scores are used to analyse participants' choices. At this stage, the mean score for each question indicates participants' attitudes and evaluations. Besides, comparing these data can identify the important factors that influence the participants' English learning.

The third stage uses qualitative analysis to explore and answer RQ2 in detail. Researchers combine the data collected with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to reveal challenges in the process of using new English textbooks. They also point out some issues about China's English teaching and textbook design.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

China's English language test scores mostly reflect English learning status and achievements. In Chinese high school English exams, the full mark is 150, with 120 and above being excellent, between 100-110 being good, and 90 being a pass. In the current study, participants' performance is divided into three levels (*see* Figure 1). It is clear that more than half of the participants didn't do very well in English examinations, and one-third of the participants did well in English. Only around 7% of the participants can achieve a distinction grade in English exams.

In order to better inform the study effectively, the questionnaire investigates the participants' difficulties

in learning English in detail — the four modules of the English test (listening, reading, writing and speaking).

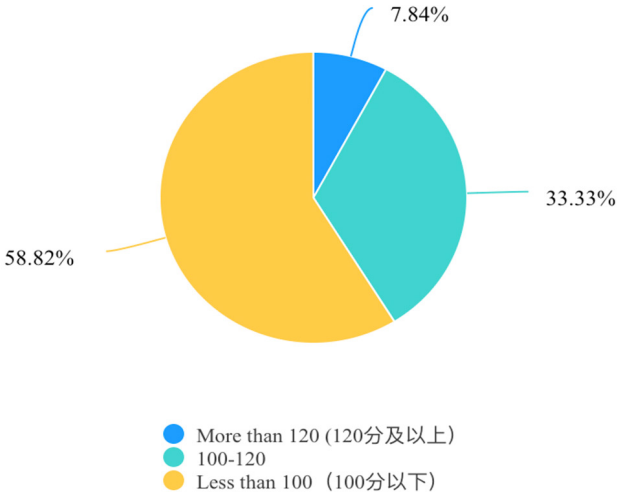


Figure 1 Participants' general english grades in learning

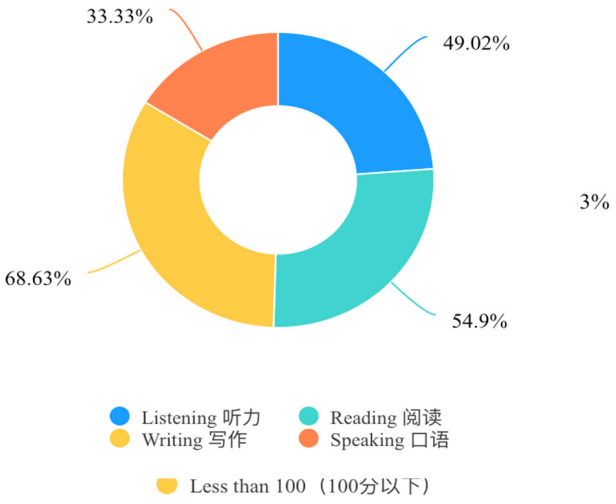


Figure 2 Participants' difficult points in English

According to Figure 2, most participants have difficulties in writing, with over half of the participants finding reading challenging. Additionally, 49% of participants struggle with listening. In summary, learning English is not an easy task for these students in Yunnan.

The rest of the 11 scoring questions explore students' perceptions and attitudes toward new English textbooks based on their learning experience. The data collected in Table 3 shows that the average score for each question is no less than 2.5, indicating that the influence of these factors is tangible.

Table 3 Data of 11 scoring questions

Questionnaire of Students' Perceptions of English Learning Materials in High School of YunNan Province, China

(1 = strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree)
（1= 强烈反对； 2 = 反对； 3 = 中立； 4 = 同意， 5= 非常同意）

	The amount of participants : 51	strongly disagree	disagree	netural	agree	strongly agree	average
1	The use of British English in textbooks of high school does not affect you much. (British words like：organise, realise, colour, centre)高中英语课本中使用的英国英语并没有影响你很多。	5	12	16	10	8	3.08
2	The Chinese cultural vocabulary in your English textbook of high school is something you've seen before in junior high school. 你在初中就见过高中英语课本中的中国文化相关词汇。	6	8	14	13	10	3.25
3	The texts selected from the high school English textbooks are very close to your life. 高中英语课本中选择的文本内容和你的生活。	7	13	19	4	8	2.86
4	The English textbook content of high school is practical and can easily be applied to daily conversations. 高中英语课本内容很实用并且容易运用到日常对话中。	11	9	22	3	6	2.69
5	The content of high school English textbooks and examinations are highly relevant. 高中英语课本内容和考试相关性很大。	7	10	18	6	10	3.04
6	High school English textbooks have a broader cultural perspective to show cultural diversity.高中英语课本有更广阔的文化视角来展示文化多样性。	2	7	16	14	12	3.53
7	The teachers of high school prepares most of the course content based on the English textbooks. 你的高中老师准备的上课内容大都是以英语课本为准。	3	8	17	16	7	3.31
8	The school you are attending has a reasonable arrangement of English courses and gives you the space to teach yourself. 你们学校的英语课程安排合理并给你很多的自学时间。	9	16	16	6	4	2.61
9	It is easy for you to adopt to English learning contents in textbooks of high school. 你很容易就能适应高中英语课本的内容。	12	14	13	5	7	2.63
10	The content of your high school English textbook is very appealing to you and stimulates your interest in learning English. 高中英语课本的内容非常吸引你，激发了你的英语学习兴趣。	12	9	16	7	7	2.76
11	You are studying English to take the Chinese college entrance exam. 你学习英语是为了参加高考。	5	6	15	5	20	3.57

Figure 3 is an analysis based on the specific votes received for each question, and Figure 4 is based on the average score. There is coherence between them. According to Figure 4, 6 questions scored more than 3, with the highest score being 3.57 (Question 11) and the lowest score being 2.61 (Question 8). Question 6, which affirms the multi-cultural perspectives provided in the new English textbooks and Question 11 point out that students' learning motivation gains the most support. While Questions 3, 4, 8 and 9 get less support than other questions. Questions 3 and 4 evaluate the practical nature of English textbooks in daily life. Question 8 gained the lowest score as a portrait of the participants' educational model. Question 9 reflects the participants' adaptation to the high school English textbooks and directly answers RQ1.

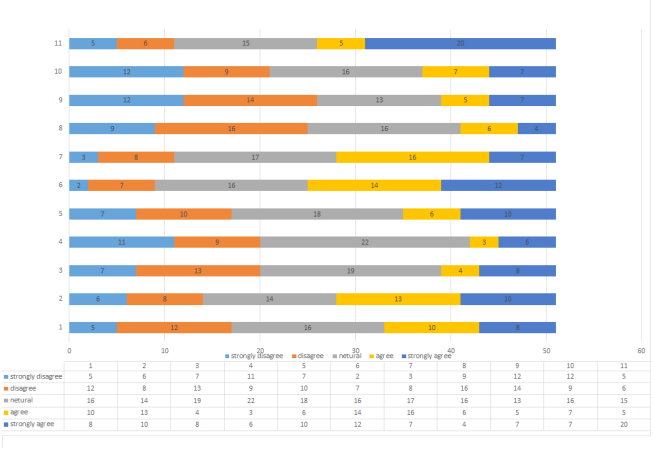


Figure 3 Overall comparison of the porpotion 13 questions

To further demonstrate the specific scores for each question, the scoring parameters for the corresponding options are listed in detail in Figure 3. Excluding neutral comments, it could be seen that Question 9 is strongly against participants' perceptions towards the difficulty of English textbooks, with 12 strongly disagreeing and 14 disagreeing. Besides, there are 20 participants against the statements of Questions 3 and 4, 25 against Question 8 and 21 against Question 10. It is noteworthy that Question 4 holds the most neutral ratings but receives the least supportive ratings. Question 6 received the most votes in favour, with 14 votes agreeing, 12 strongly agreeing, and Question 11 had the most votes strongly agreeing, 20. What is more, both Questions 2 and 7 got 23 supportive votes.

Figure 3 is an analysis based on the specific votes received for each question, and Figure 4 is based on the average score. There is coherence between them. According to Figure 4, six questions scored more than 3, with the highest score being 3.57 (Question 11) and support. While Questions 3, 4, 8 and 9 get less support the lowest score being 2.61 (Question 8). Question 6, which affirms the multi-cultural perspectives provided in the new English textbooks and Question 11 point out that students' learning motivation gains the most than other questions. Questions 3 and 4 evaluate the practical nature of English textbooks in daily life. Question 8 gained the lowest score as a portrait of the participants' educational model. Question 9 reflects the participants' adaptation to the high school English textbooks and directly answers RQ1.

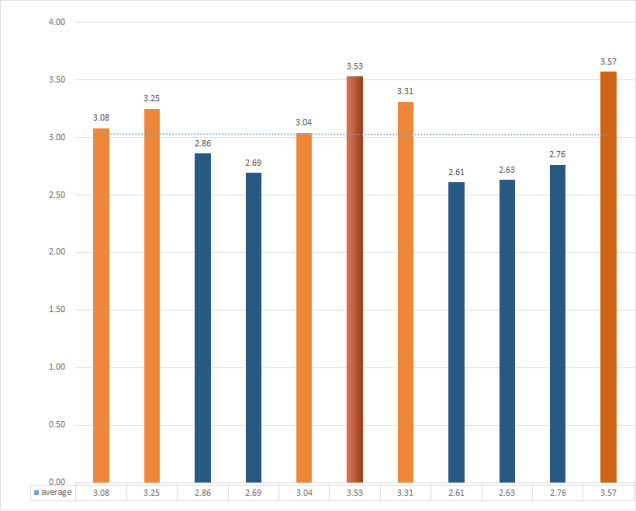


Figure 4 Average scores of scoring questions

According to Figures 3 and 4, it could be concluded that most participants agree with the statements of Questions 6, 7, and 11. Questions 4 and 8 are strongly against their English learning experience. Out of these eleven scoring questions, the eighth surveys the students' learning environment, the eleventh addresses the learning motivations of high school students, and the remaining nine express a positive opinion of the content of high school English textbooks. However, none received a rating of more than 4.

The 11 scoring questions mentioned before are all positive comments about China's new English textbooks, but the participants didn't strongly support any of them. In particular, participants give relatively low marks for the usefulness of the textbook content and the extent to which they have adapted to the new textbooks. Therefore, the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire indicates that students have not well adapted to the new English textbooks and that the new textbooks pose a challenge to students.

Qualitative Analysis

Vygotsky introduces language in relation to social interaction, cultural context and historical artefacts, which play important roles in second language education (Pathan et al., 2018). In the quantitative analysis, it is clear that students' perceptions of English textbooks tend to be more negative. In this part, content analysis is the qualitative method used to explore the connotations behind 11 scoring questions. With the help of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the researchers would determine whether the current English textbooks are fully used in English learning at this selected senior high school.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

As for ZPD, Vygotsky (1978) believes the actual situation of development relies on individual problem-solving while the potential development of a better situation is determined by problem-solving with guidance or cooperating with capable peers (Erbil, 2020). According to the content of the 11 scoring questionnaires, it could be seen that participants couldn't deal with the new English textbooks individually.

In scoring questions, the first four questions are designed to explore students' familiarity with the

textbook content and its relevance to their lives. Students feel familiar with some cultural elements for they have learned relevant topics in junior schools, such as teenage life, travelling, sports, history and tradition. Students believe the content of textbooks is irrelevant to their lives, and they seldom use English in reality.

It is difficult to achieve good results in language learning without application, which explains why less than 8% of the participants perform excellently in examinations. The seventh question again reveals the fact that these participants are not taught English according to the content of the textbooks. Their teachers don't correlate well with the textbooks in classrooms, which also illustrates the low usage of English textbooks. Erbil (2020) points out that cooperation with more competent and knowledgeable peers for individuals is the key to the success of upper-level cognitive studies, activities, and homework within the context of ZPD. The new English textbook is not easy for students, and students who do not perform well in English cannot solve the problems individually. Even worse, teachers fail to provide adequate guidance in English teaching. All of these are highly detrimental to student learning and against the discipline of ZPD.

Cultural Context

In China, the new curriculum standards have given the new English textbooks a broader cultural perspective to enhance students' core competencies and problem-solving skills (Huang, 2019; Wang, 2019; Lee & Li, 2020). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the cultural context is essential for language learning. The importance of cultural context is attached to the design of new English textbooks. The sixth scoring question illustrates the diverse cultural perspectives in English textbooks and gains the second-highest score. The new English textbooks incorporate a wide range of knowledge from sports, culture, history, technology, and art to show students broader perspectives. Participants are also aware of this and approve the broadening of cultural perspectives. It is obvious in the last scoring question that declares the appeals of the textbooks to the students and inspirations of learning interest with the highest score. The addition of a broad cultural context to the new English textbooks has a positive impact on students' English learning.

Language Development

Vygotsky believes language learning is also a complex cognitive process linked to social interaction (Pathan et al., 2018). In other words, language skills should be acquired from practice, and knowledge should be gained from problem-solving. However, participants in this study lack effective practices and opportunities for reflection in English classrooms. Focused on the seventh scoring question, some English teachers do not fully prepare lessons based on English textbooks. It is no wonder that students indicated on the ninth scoring question that they could not adapt well to the content of the high school English textbooks. It is well known that the realistic goal of English teaching in China is Gaokao (Li & Yuan, 2015), so many teachers disregard the textbooks and focus on having students take frequent mock exams to improve their exam tips. This phenomenon is also verified in the penultimate question of the questionnaire. More than half of the participants don't deny that their English learning motivation is Gaokao. The fourth scoring question also illustrates that students learn English but cannot use it regularly in their daily lives.

It is worth mentioning that there is a popular model of school operation in China, known as the examination factory, in which the timetable is packed from morning to night, with little free time for students apart from sleeping and eating. The participants in this research are studying in such a model. The eighth scoring question explores students' independent learning time, and this question received the lowest score, indicating that they lacked opportunities for independent learning. Even worse, the teaching load is so heavy in high school that much of the content of the English textbooks is abandoned. The teachers are so preoccupied with conducting examinations that students do not have time to express their own opinions on the textbooks or have in-depth discussions with their peers. As a result, students do not form a complete cognitive system in English learning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on China's new English textbooks that have been carried out in high schools of Yunnan Province to explore the challenges brought by the new English textbooks on senior high students' English learning. The data of this study is directly collected from 51 students in a Chinese private high school. The results

obtained from the questionnaire show that Chinese high school English textbooks have two sides to students' English learning process. On the positive side, the new English textbooks have enhanced the cultural elements in the content. It not only presents a world-cultural perspective to broaden students' horizons and enrich their historical and cultural knowledge but also inspires their learning interest. On the negative side, the findings prove that students have not adapted well to the new textbooks and are experiencing difficulties and challenges in their English learning.

Firstly, students can hardly find connections between the content of English textbooks and their everyday lives. As the combination of knowledge, culture and learning instruction, the textbook is a significant media and tool for education, but language context is a vital element for learning effectiveness (Huang, 2019). English is a foreign language for Chinese, so many areas lack an English language environment, and the English context relies on the English classroom.

Secondly, the new English textbooks are not fully utilised in English teaching in high school, widening the gap between students and English textbooks. Gaokao is not only the main motivation for Chinese students in high school, but it is also the guide to teaching for many of China's English teachers. It could be found that students felt that their exams were not very relevant to the English textbook content. Their teachers are reducing the weight of the English textbook content in their teaching designs. Students feel it is more difficult to adapt to the content of new textbooks and improve their English language performance without sufficient guidance. The disconnections between English teaching and textbooks also reduce students' attention to the content of the textbooks. Hence, it could be concluded that these findings have illustrated the challenges of the new English textbooks brought to high school students. Besides, the results of this research reveal some potential problems in English education in China.

English education reform in China has been dominated by economic development and modernisation (Guo et al., 2013; Qi, 2016; Fang, 2018; Luo et al., 2020) rather than by individual developments of students or teaching design. Following international trends, China makes efforts to redesign subjects to connect theories and policy with the practice of core competencies in globalisation (Wang, 2019). Proficiency is a key point of English as fluency gives students a better understanding and appreciation of world cultures and allows them to be truly immersed in a culturally diverse environment (Jin, 2017). However, China's English learning is still oriented by the results of examinations. Students can only acquire exam skills rather than language skills, not to mention English fluency. Scoring high marks in exams is not equal to high proficiency in English for Chinese examinations seldom evaluate language fluency in communicative situations. For example, the listening tests that involve English situations are comprehension tests with single-choice questions and always on a fixed topic so that students can easily find the answer even if they do not fully understand the conversation. In practice, many teachers focus on exam preparation merely because the examination format is irrelevant to the new English textbook.

The Chinese government are trying to evoke global awareness nationwide by connecting education with social context so that China could be more competitive. The key to educational reform and learning practice is the actual needs of students (Haidar & Fang, 2019). In order to improve the effectiveness of English language learning, teachers, students, and the Chinese education reform need to work together. Based on the new textbooks, the teacher should use various cultural content to stimulate students' interest in learning English and design more practical English teaching sessions to improve students' practical language skills. Students should realise that learning English is not just about being admitted into university but is an important contributor to their further development. China's education reform should be based on the developmental needs of students to design textbooks that can improve their actual learning situations and provide more practical skills.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the challenges faced by senior high students in the usage of China's new English textbooks and reveals that students lack a good grasp of the content of the new English textbooks without sufficient guidance. What's more, this study is based on students' actual learning experiences, so it can provide a practical reference for studies of China's English textbook reform.

However, this study is set in a high school in Yunnan, where the educational condition is relatively backward. The number of students involved in the study is limited, and all participants are in the same grade. Some objective factors, such as psychological reasons, family environment, the competence of teachers and regional educational conditions, are not being taken into account. The data collection tool used in this study is only widespread and credible in China, and it is difficult to confirm its reliability internationally. In addition, the data processing method in this study is too simple. If more convincing data and more representative findings are needed, researchers should try to include as many high school students from different regions of China as possible and choose a more credible data collection platform and data processing tools.

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