



# A Study on the Cohesion of English Teaching Materials Between Primary and Junior High School

BI Fengshan<sup>[a]</sup>; CHENG Nuo<sup>[b],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Yancheng Teachers University, Yancheng, China.

<sup>[b]</sup>Undergraduate, School of Foreign Languages, Yancheng Teachers University, Yancheng, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 16 January 2022; accepted 8 April 2022

Published online 26 June 2022

## Abstract

English teaching materials, as the main teaching media, play an important role in teaching. Many scholars have attached great importance to teaching materials, but they took little heed to the cohesion of teaching materials between different stages of basic education. This study intended to investigate the cohesion of primary-secondary teaching materials by exploring the problems in terms of language knowledge and language skills in the selected English teaching materials for primary and secondary schools, which was finally succeeded by some practical suggestions for the English teachers and the students alike to effectively facilitate the cohesion problems in the primary-secondary stages.

**Key words:** English teaching materials; Cohesion; Primary-secondary stages

Bi, F. S., & Cheng, N. (2022). A Study on the Cohesion of English Teaching Materials Between Primary and Junior High School. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 24(3), 51-55. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/12622>  
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12622>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the development of globalization, English as a lingua franca is becoming more and more welcomed by people from different countries. In China, students usually begin to learn English in grade three of the primary school. After four years of learning, these children will

acknowledge some basic English rules, which will lay a solid foundation for their further studies.

Teaching materials as the major teaching tools have played important roles in students' studies. It can't be replaced. At present, teaching materials need to be renewed from time to time. However, as different kinds of teaching materials are being used in practical life, more and more problems also occur in our daily teaching and one of the existing problems is the cohesion between primary and junior middle school. An overall look at the various English teaching materials shows that not all of them have been carefully designed to meet the transitional learning needs from primary to middle school. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the present English teaching materials for primary and junior high school, to effect smooth transition from primary stage to secondary stage, whereby the English teaching quality and efficiency can be realized.

## 2. COHESION AND ITS RELATED THEORIES

### 2.1 Concept of Cohesion

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary, cohesion is the connection of things.

Cohesion has been studied in depth in the field of curriculum. Curriculum cohesion indicates logical connectivity within courses and between course elements; In many cases, cohesion within a level occurs in a horizontal syllabus (Woods, 2010), in which students are put at the same level in all language skills, and this cohesion is featured by teaching materials and lessons in different classes of the same level. Cohesion with classes is most effectively achieved through well-planned syllabi. For example, the teaching activities and lessons in the previous classes should connect those of the following classes.

Cohesion within teaching materials suggests that lessons, chapters, and activities include internal links. What is taught in one chapter must logically prepare learners for the next (Stoller and Grabe, 1997). For example, what is taught to students at level three should be based on what is taught at levels one and two. It also needs to be prepared for the need for later languages, university research, employment, etc. Links between skills or skill integration should be linked to students' learning in the reading, writing, listening, and speaking classes.

## 2.2 Related Theories Concerning Cohesion

### 2.2.1 Gagne's Theory of Learning Information Processing

Gagne (1986) believes that the learning process is a step-by-step process. Teaching is a series of external conditional activities that are purposeful, planned in stimulating, maintaining and promoting learners' learning. He emphasized the role of existing cognitive structures in learning. According to Gagne, the new learning must be suitable for the learner's cognitive development level at that time, that is, the cognitive structure that the learner has formed. He believed that learners must establish a new structure of mutual connection and cooperation between their inner world and the newly input information. The ideal learning state is to make appropriate adjustments to the conflicts and gaps between the new input information and the learner's cognitive structure. In this way, new information can be put into existing cognitive structures. Learners can build new cognitive structures, which will become the basis for further learning. Cognitive structure can be gradually developed and perfected.

### 2.2.2 Constructivism Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory is one of the theoretical foundations of China's educational reform. According to constructivist learning theory, it is believed that the most important fact is to find out the connection between new knowledge and learning. Scholars who support constructivist learning theory argue that knowledge should be used and understood in practice. According to the American psychologist Spiro (1991), there are two forms of learning, namely, primary learning and advanced learning. The former is the primary stage of learning. In this stage, the learner's task is to understand some important concepts and facts and to retell this knowledge in a text. The latter is that students apply what they have learned to gain new experiences in their lives. The theme of constructivist learning theory is that the learner must be an active and constructive participant in the learning process. The process is active and constructive. Constructivist learning theory has a different view about knowledge, learning, teachers, and students as distinct from the traditional view. Constructivist learning theory holds that knowledge is not the final answer. In other words, knowledge is dynamic. And the process of learning is not a process of what the teacher teaches and what the

student learns. It is a process of constructing knowledge based on existing experiences.

## 2.3. Previous Studies at Home and Abroad

### 2.3.1 Studies Abroad

Comenius (1679), a famous Czech educator elaborated on "teaching connection" in his *The Great Theory of Teaching*. He stressed that the most important factor of teaching connection is to implement the connection from students' thoughts, that is, all specialized learning should be carried out based on students' mental preparation, whereby students can accept what they learn. Comenius was the first scholar in the world to put forward an interconnected single-track school system. His early childhood education system still has practical significance for today's education.

In the 1940s, after research and improvement, the Department of Pre-school Education Research of the Russian Academy of Textbooks created the kindergarten system, adding a transitional class to the kindergarten and elementary school sections, forming a partial system of "kindergarten-pre-school-primary school".

From the mid and late 1960s to the early 1970s, the United States implemented secondary education reform, establishing "intermediate schools" in this primary school and middle school to strengthen their connection. The intermediate school enrolls students between the ages of ten and fourteen, and forms a complete secondary education system with the first level of school (primary school) before the intermediate school and the comprehensive school (high school) after the intermediate school.

To sum up, western studies on the cohesion between primary and secondary school teaching are mainly reflected in the following aspects: firstly, many scholars explored the reasons leading to the problems of cohesion between primary and secondary school. In the 1930s, Dewey proposed that we should pay more attention to the behavior of students which are changing from the former stage to the latter stage. In 2002, the UK conducted a study on the factors affecting cohesion through a teaching experiment with a relatively wide range of influence, which proved that the key factors affecting students' academic performance in the process of transition from primary school to middle school were as follows: When students felt that they were in repetitive mechanical learning, their interest in learning would decline; When primary and secondary school English teachers lack the understanding of school operation and evaluation methods, students will be unfamiliar with the evaluation methods used by teachers, so that students can not timely receive the information reflected by teachers. Secondly, improper teaching cohesion will mainly affect the development of students in all aspects. Nisbet and Entwistle (1969) believed that students' failure to self-regulate and integrate themselves into a new environment would lead to a

decline in academic performance. Galton and Willcock (1983) followed more than 120 students from 1974 to 1979 and found that “the transition period affected many students’ academic performance, which fluctuated to varying degrees”. Wigfield and Eccles (1994) found in their survey that students in transition experienced a decline in confidence, identity, and usefulness. Eamest (1995) found that the decline of students’ interest in learning was closely related to their mastery of learning ability. Morgan, Diamond, Hetzog, and Walker (1996) put forward that both academic performance and efficiency of students at this stage were declining. Morgan believed that students at this stage will avoid learning and lose interest in learning without finding reasonable solutions when they encounter difficulties in learning. According to the questions mentioned, cohesion truly deserves to be researched deeper. Most foreign language teachers in the west can adjust teaching materials according to their needs, and can choose teaching materials and develop teaching resources independently. For example, Britain provides a variety of graded reading bibliographies, multimedia courseware, audio-visual, online teaching resources to coordinate with the use of traditional teaching materials. Teachers’ careful training of students can arouse students’ pride and self-confidence, promote students to consciously abide by various rules and regulations, and constantly strive for progress in their usual study, which is conducive to students’ rapid adaptation to the new environment.

### 2.3.2 Studies at Home

Dong Cuicui (1983) made a systematic study of vocabulary teaching in primary and junior high schools in *The Cohesion of English Teaching from the Comparison of Textbooks*. She concluded that improper cohesion in teaching materials was the key factor causing the cohesion problems in primary and junior high schools.

Gan Yuguo (2008) pointed out the creative use of teaching in his article “Investigation on the Current Situation of Textbook Cohesion in Primary and Secondary Schools”. School-based research on building materials and teachers’ participation in the construction of building materials is the first step to solve the current improper cohesion of English teaching. The goal is to require teachers to understand the teaching materials and use flexible and diverse teaching methods to make up for the shortcomings of the teaching materials.

Wang Huihui (2012) also held the same view. In a survey on *The Cohesion of English Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools*, she said that if the teaching materials used in primary schools are not well connected with those used in junior high schools, the starting point of students entering junior high schools will be inconsistent, which will also bring a challenge to teachers’ teaching, whose idea was shared by other scholars, such as Li Luo, Yin Xinyuan, Li Zefeng, Sun Junhong, and so on.

Zhang Quanli (2006) also believed that: teachers should establish a comprehensive curriculum view, and make the smooth connection of primary and secondary school teaching contents, the communication between teachers and students’ emotions, English teaching methods, examination contents and forms, students’ learning habits, etc. After entering junior high school, students should analyze more and more of the learning contents with the help of rational thinking. If teachers’ teaching methods are completely different in primary and secondary schools, it will lead to students’ misunderstanding and add to their difficulties in learning English.

To sum up, the improvement of English teaching quality in the cohesion stage has always been the focus at home and abroad. However, there are still some shortcomings: firstly, the literature is mostly empirical and involves fewer theoretical studies; secondly, the shift in students’ thinking should also be brought to the teacher’s attention. After entering junior high school, students’ thinking becomes more rational, so teachers’ teaching methods should also be changed. Finally, the authoritative research results are very scarce. In fact, the researchers of cohesion are basically front-line teachers, and the number of professional scholars is very small, which leads to the lack of authoritative results. Therefore, the research value of this paper lies in conforming to the trend of curriculum reform, guiding practical research with theoretical research according to the new English curriculum standards, and exploring the significance of English teaching cohesion between primary and junior middle schools.

---

## 3. COHESION ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING MATERIALS BETWEEN PRIMARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

---

In the field of curriculum, cohesion in language teaching materials means that different levels of teaching materials should have internal connections. For example, the knowledge in junior middle school should be based on that in primary school. Only when teaching materials for different stages of learning do a good job in bridging, can they give full play to their roles in learning.

### 3.1 Cohesion on the Contents of Teaching Materials

The contents of primary school focuses on communicative knowledge, which aims to stimulate students’ interests and curiosity in learning English, enabling them to do simple listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It can also develop students’ communicative ability to meet the requirements of the corresponding target level under the new curriculum standard. The contents of the second and third grades of junior middle school focus more on

grammar knowledge. Through more complex training, students can further develop their abilities in various aspects, which not only meets the requirements of the new curriculum standards but also conforms to the law of students' physical and mental development.

There are also shortcomings, in order for students to master more sentence patterns, the teaching materials require them to learn as many sentences as possible around a topic at the beginning of each lesson, resulting in students not easily mastering multiple expressions. Primary school teaching materials have obvious focus with one key sentence pattern per unit but their shortcoming lies in the high repetition that appeared in the English teaching materials for junior high school.

As for phonetics, a big difference exists in terms of the presentation modes. In pronunciation teaching, teachers in primary schools seldom teach students pronunciation rules, but only lead students to mechanically repeat the words and sentences according to the videos or recordings; English teachers in junior middle school are faced with heavy teaching burdens in training students how to achieve desired scores in the college entrance examination, so they would spend less time in teaching students phonetic symbols and spelling rules. Therefore, there is a lack of connection of phonetic teaching between these two stages, and in the long run, negligence of phonetic knowledge will be departmental to students' English learning, without which they would face many challenges or difficulties in listening, speaking or even writing.

Another cohesion problem about teaching materials between primary and junior middle school is that they were compiled by different compilation teams and the key points are different. Unavoidably, many repetitive contents in vocabulary and grammar teaching can be found on the ground that there is a lack of communication between those two compilation team as to what contents should be included and what should be omitted in the primary and secondary stages.

Although some shortcomings exist, the cohesion of English teaching materials between primary and junior middle schools overall reveals its superiority, showcased by its cohesion of function and topic designs.

### 3.2 Cohesion on Language Skills

Compared with other teaching materials, the selected version of Junior Middle School English teaching materials contains more contents in terms of both vocabulary and grammar. Admittedly, it can provide students with more learning opportunities and is a great advantage for students with good foundation, but an invisible burden for students with a poor foundation because there is a sudden increase in both the quantity and quality of the new words involved in the teaching materials. Therefore, systematic and coherent design of vocabulary and grammar knowledge should be one of the problems that teachers should attend to.

Besides, students may not make smooth shift in learning from primary school to junior middle school because primary school teaching materials focuses more on reading and recognition, while junior high school requires comprehensive skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Confronted with that situation, students may easily be inclined to developing a disparity or disconnection in the acquisition of language skills, so it is necessary for teachers give them more guidance by utilizing scientific teaching methods, for example, in order to train students' listening and speaking, teachers can also use audio-visual teaching method to arouse students' interests in learning and at the same time input authentic language knowledge visually and audibly.

---

## 4. CONCLUSION

---

### 4.1 Research Findings

Firstly, students are not passive recipients of the teaching materials, but they should have their own opinions about the teaching materials; In a sense, students are satisfied with the teaching materials they used in the school. However, for them, they think that the teaching materials in primary and junior high schools do not connect well. A large number of repetitive words and grammar make them lose interest in learning English.

Secondly, teachers' view of the available materials is objective compared to that of the students. They believe that the materials are the most important factor affecting teaching and learning. The existing materials for the most part are useful and enlightening to students' English learning, but should make timely modifications according to the constant changes of time and varied needs of the students.

Thirdly, it is found that despite the fact that the elementary level provides a good foundation for English learning, but students should also be taught systematically in the middle school levels. However, some middle school teachers are not so familiar with what students have learned in primary school, resulting in an embarrassment by either repeating or overemphasizing contents that students have learned in the primary schools. This leads to increased loss of learning motivation and reduced sense of challenge in English study.

### 4.2 Suggestions

For teachers:

As the guide of students' English learning, they should strive to become the dominant player in the process of students' learning, use teaching materials creatively and effectively, and finally meet the needs of the learners. First of all, they should keep updating their knowledge and familiarize themselves with the contents of teaching materials for different grades; only in this way can they become familiar with the deficiencies of the existing



cohesion and make up for them in the teaching process. Secondly, they should also make appropriate trade-offs in the existing contents of the teaching materials and add additional course knowledge to enhance students' interest in learning. Finally, Teachers at different stages should become familiar with organizations and focuses of the teaching materials and accordingly redesign their teaching activities and revise their syllabi. Teachers should also reconstruct the teaching materials according to the students' cognitive levels and the actual needs of language teaching, and attach importance to the guidance of learning strategies.

For students:

Students must be clear about the focus of different learning stages, have a clear understanding of learning objectives, and do their best to acquire English language knowledge with the help of teaching materials and the guidance of their teachers; they should also be more independent, active and purposeful in using teaching materials. In the application of teaching materials, it is necessary for each student to review and preview the teaching materials in a timely manner. In addition, they have a holistic view of what they are learning and are conscious of doing more practice on key parts.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Comenius, J. A. (1679). *Great didactic of Comenius*. People's Education Press.
- Dong, C. C. (1983). The cohesion of English teaching between primary and middle school from the perspective of textbook comparison *Tianjin Education*, (7).
- Feltovich, P. J., Spiro, R. J., & Coulson, R. L. (1991). Learning, teaching and testing for complex conceptual understanding. In N Frederiksen R Mislevy & I Bejar (Eds.) *Test theory for a new generation of tests* Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gagne, R. M. (1985). *Learning conditions*. People's Education Press.
- Gan, Y. G. (2008). *An investigation into the textbook cohesion between primary and middle schools*. Northeast Normal University.
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (1996). *Reading and vocabulary development in a second language: A case study*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stoller, F., & W. Grabe. (1997). *The six-T's approach to content-based instruction*. In M. Snow & M. Brinton (Eds.), *The content-based classroom: Perspectives on integrating language and content* (pp.78-94). New York: Longman.
- Wang, H.H. (2012). A survey of English teaching cohesion in primary and secondary schools. *China Circulation Economy*, (9), 80-80.
- Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (1994). Middle grades schooling and early adolescent development. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, (2), 5-8.
- Woods, A. Luke, A. & Weir, K. (2010). Curriculum and syllabus design. In E. Baker, B. McGraw, & P. Peterson (Eds.) *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed., Vol. 1, pp.362-367) Elsevier, United Kingdom.
- Zhang, Q. L. (2006). On the cohesion of English teaching in the primary schools. *Petroleum Education*, (3).