

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**INCORPORATING CEFR ALIGNED
VOCABULARY INTO FRESHMAN
TEXTBOOKS IN CHINA**

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary plays a significant role in the learning of listening. However, words in textbooks are often not properly designed, making them difficult for students. Thus, this study aimed to align the difficulty level of the vocabulary presented in textbooks with students' proficiency level by incorporating the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Using textual analysis as the approach, this study employed a quantitative method to analyse the vocabulary in the audio and listening task sections of *iEnglish: Viewing, Listening and Speaking* Textbooks 1 and 2 designed for freshmen. The total number of words analysed was 30904. The instruments used included Text Inspector, the Cambridge Online Dictionary, the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, VScore and Microsoft Excel. The findings reflected several key issues. First, there were difficult words at Level C1 and C2, and the density of unknown words was overwhelmingly high. Second, the majority of words in audio and listening task sections were repeated less than seven times. Third, some words appeared only in the audio or only in the listening task sections, but not in both. Fourth, suggested vocabulary sets were provided based on the results of first four research objectives. Overall, the results suggested that the vocabulary in both textbooks was too difficult for freshmen. To address these problems, the following suggestions were proposed. For the first issue, three suggestions were made: providing synonyms for difficult words from lower CEFR levels, replacing words at Level B2 with synonyms, and providing a glossary. To address the second issue of insufficient repetition, textbook compilers should manage word selection, space out repetitions, and build connections between words. At the same time, teachers need to raise their awareness, teach affixes, use flashcards, introduce deliberate vocabulary learning strategies, encourage repeated listening of materials, provide supplementary activities, and apply spaced repetition techniques. Third, for words that appeared in the listening task sections but not in the audio, it was essential to: (1) provide sufficient input, (2) identify synonyms for C1 and C2 level words, and (3) revise the listening tasks using these synonyms. Conversely, for words present in the audio but not in the tasks, additional vocabulary support was necessary. Finally, the suggested vocabulary sets should be applied by textbooks compilers, teachers and learners to facilitate the learning of listening in China. While applying them, it is necessary to ensure they align with freshmen's proficiency. With the suggested vocabulary sets and suggestions, this study could benefit textbook compilers, freshmen, teachers and ongoing refinement of the CSE. It holds a profound theoretical and practical significance for language learning in China.

Keywords: CEFR, vocabulary, difficulty, textbook, textual analysis

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an introduction to the study by covering several key aspects. It begins with an overview of English language education in China, emphasising the role of vocabulary in language learning. It also discusses the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its relevance to textbook design and teaching strategies. The current state of freshmen English listening textbooks in China is described, along with the rationale for incorporating CEFR-aligned vocabulary into the textbooks. Additionally, the chapter outlines the issues related to textbook design, followed by the introduction of the research objectives and questions of the study. Finally, it highlights the significance of the study, limitations and definitions of key terms used throughout the research.

1.2 Background of the Study

With globalization, English language teaching (ELT) has become highly significant in China. It is essential to improve communication, foster cultural exchange, promote Chinese culture globally, and develop international management talent. As a result, English is a mandatory subject from primary school through university. Lei (2019) highlights that English is a required course at all academic levels in China, leading to a growing number of people learning the language.

English plays an important role globally. However, it is still taught as a foreign language in China. One key reason is that it is learned for future use rather than immediate application (Cook, 2016). The focus is primarily on passing examinations such as the College English Test Bands 4 and 6 (CET-4, CET-6), the Test for English Majors (TEM-4, TEM-8), and international tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Chao (2019) states that Chinese students often study English specifically to succeed in these examinations. In addition, students typically engage with English only in the classroom, with little opportunity to practice it outside academic settings (Darus, 2009).