An Analysis of Senior High School English Textbooks’ Core Competencies Using China’s English Curriculum Standard Framework

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Abstract
The study aimed to identify the features of linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking capacity and learning ability found in the English textbooks used in senior high school in China. This study used a qualitative approach and content analysis of the three PEP senior high school English textbooks. China’s English Curriculum Standards (CECS), established by the Ministry of Education in 2017, were used to identify the features of English Core Competencies (ECCs). The three English Compulsory textbooks were the subjects for this study. They were used as learning materials in a high school where the study was held. One research question was asked as part of the underpinning: What features of linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability components were found in the English textbooks used in senior high school in China? The findings showed that linguistic competence had the highest frequency of 29%, and vocabulary ranked second at 22%. Whereas cultural awareness, Chinese culture had the highest frequency of 41%, foreign culture ranked second with 34%. Thinking capacity had the highest frequency of 48%, and critical thinking ranked second at 27%. The learning ability inquiry learning had the highest frequency of 45%, and cooperative learning ranked second at 27%. Each component has its features, but they are interrelated and integrated into each other to make up a system.

Keywords: China English Curriculum Standard, English core competencies, English textbook evaluation, Textbook analysis

Introduction

English education has become a significant part of civic education in which globalization has brought not only the fast-changing needs for Chinese education but the whole world. In China, though English is taught as a foreign language, it has become one of the crucial subjects in various educational institutions. Therefore, there is necessary to focus on students’ ability to use English in different settings. Hence, cultivating English Core Competencies (ECCs) based on the new English curriculum standards in English education is necessary. Consequently, the evaluation of textbooks used as learning materials has great significance because students' learning outcomes need to correspond with the China educational policy. The objective of this study was to identify the features of linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability found in the English textbooks used in senior high schools in China using the English Curriculum Standard (ECS).

Literature review

In 2017, the Chinese government's Ministry of Education (MOE) proposed the English Curriculum Standards for senior high schools. The aim was to meet the quality of education requirements and provide teachers with guidelines for developing students' English Core Competencies (ECCs) framework. This framework has different objectives. The first is to fully implement China's educational policy, cultivate and practice the socialist core values, and carry out the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education (www.wsc.hqu.edu.cn). The second focuses on further promoting the development of students' English core competencies and cultivating socialist builders and successors of Chinese feelings of international vision and cross-cultural communication ability based on compulsory education (MOE, 2017). The policy also involves cultivating and developing students' linguistic competence, learning ability, thinking capacity, and cultural awareness (Baker, 2011; Moran, 2001) after receiving an English education in senior high schools. This framework was the basis for evaluating the three textbooks as teaching materials to determine their teaching contents and quality standards.

Books are perceived as the ladder of human progress (Deng, 1981; Liu, 2007) and are no exception from textbooks. Tomlinson (1999) argued that textbook evaluation should base not only on lessons' teaching objectives but also on the context of situations. This notion is supported by the Chinese scholar Cheng’s (2002) work on the Analysis and design of English teaching materials. The development and evaluation were expounded systematically from a holistic perspective and introduced relevant theories to clarify his argument. Textbooks dominate Chinese education. English textbooks are considered primary resources for teaching English. They become students' essential learning necessities and serve as teachers' guides to effectively and successfully deliver lessons to students based on teaching objectives. Most importantly, they cater to different learners' needs for 'the future of the country or nation' (Zhang & Shi, 2019, p.1).

Textbook evaluation is not a new phenomenon in the Chinese context. Cheng Xiaotang (2011) proposed a systematic textbook evaluation based on three principles, scientific, reasonable, and practical. The evaluation should follow the teaching guiding ideology and methods’ adopted selection, and arrangement of the content. This also includes the authenticity and localization of the language and components and designs of the teaching materials (Cheng Xiaotang, 2011).
Researchers used different frameworks to evaluate learning materials based on a few studies reviewed in Southeast Asia related to textbook evaluation. Though the focus was quite different, there were similarities regarding the domains evaluated. For example, Karimah's (2022) study about intercultural contents and national identities in the textbooks adapted the framework of Cortazzi and Jin (1999 cited in Karima, 2022). While Efendi et al. (2022) study on the main factors supporting the main contents of the English textbooks in the Indonesian context adapted Nazim's (2021 cited in Efendi et al., 2022) framework. Hanh's (2022) and Arif in and Yusuf's (2022) studies, however, used the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to determine the effectiveness of the textbooks in developing students' communicative competence.

The studies highlighted were just a few examples of the necessity of evaluating textbooks based on a different context. However, very few are found in the context of China that focus on a more coherent framework that supports ECS except Wang's (2015) proposed English core competencies (ECCs) framework, a new base for textbook evaluation based on four dimensions: linguistic competence, cultural awareness (Baker, 2011; Moran, 2001), thinking capacity, and learning ability (Byram, 1997, 2009, 2014). When ECCs finally listed the requirements for the English Curriculum Standard (ECS) (MOE, 2017), this became a new standard for evaluating English textbooks to be more apposite in the current Chinese situation. The reasons are that ECS is supported the English Core Competencies (ECCs) framework. Second, the design is based on the curriculum content of ECCs, content-oriented, and based on English learning activities. Fourth, its academic quality requirements are accorded with the development of ECCs. Lastly, it provides guidelines for teaching and suggestions for evaluating teaching materials based on ECCs. Thus, ECS provides a clearer picture as a criterion for teaching and learning relevant studies. According to MOE (2017), the strengths of ECS answer the questions of what English subjects should teach, why, and how to teach them.

Consequently, cultivating students' virtue reflected in the curriculum should be part of pedagogy and one of the objectives of English language teaching. This way, the value and function of English subjects in education are to be understood and implemented. The unique and specific implication of the English Core Competencies should be the target learning cultivation in China.

**Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research design. It employed content analysis to identify the features of ECCs in the English textbooks and its four dimensions: linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking capacity and learning ability.

**Objects of the study**

The three English textbooks for the senior high school teachers and students used as teaching and learning materials were the foundation of this study. These were the *Compulsory I*, *Compulsory II*, and *Compulsory III*. The English textbooks were published by People's Education Press (PEP) (Liu, 2019). These were designed based on the English Curriculum Standard (ECS) issued by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2018. This series is the first edition published by the PEP textbooks in 2019 and compiled by the *Curriculum Textbook Research Institute and the English Curriculum Textbook Research and Development Center*. They are part of the eleven *General Senior English Textbook series* (2019). The senior English textbooks series (2019) has three levels.
based on different grades, such as grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3, and each level represents different requirements for senior high school students. Accordingly, the three English textbooks are compulsory learning materials for senior high school. Each compulsory textbook has five to six units, and each unit consists of eight sections. The contents are categorized into: 1) titles of the sections; 2 and 3) listening and speaking; 4 and 5) reading and thinking; 6) discovering functional structures; 7) listening and talking; 8 and 9) reading for writing; 10 and 11) assessing the progress with the project, and 12) video time.

Figure 1. Compulsory I to III (Liu, 2019)

Compulsory I is one of eleven English textbooks in the General Senior English Textbook series (2019). Senior high school students used them from the first semester in Grade one. This textbook covers a picture of an ancient city named Machu Picchu. This place is surrounded by tropical jungle in the Andes Mountains of Peru in South America and is one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. The aim is to bring senior high school students into the English world with world culture.

Compulsory II is the second English textbook of the series (2019). The cover is the picture of the Elizabeth Tower, regarded as the building landmark of London. This name comes from the Clock Tower Big Ben on the Thames River in Britain. Compulsory II presents students with a target language culture or foreign culture.

Compulsory III is the English textbook of the series (2019). The cover is the Golden Gate Bridge that connects San Francisco metropolitan area with Marin County. This bridge is located in California and is the symbol of Los Angeles. This textbook shows students the foreign culture of the target language country, America.

Using ECS (MOE, 2017) as the framework for evaluation, these three English textbooks were analyzed using content analysis.

Research Procedures
To identify the features of ECCs components and its four domains: linguistic competence, cultural awareness, thinking capacity and learning ability, these procedures were followed.
First was about the development of the evaluation criteria based on the framework. The second was assigning the codes of the four ECCs’ components. Third was about identifying the features of ECCs in the textbooks based on the four domains. Fourth focused on categorizing the different features found based on the codes applied, and lastly, the frequency of different features found was manually counted and presented on the table.

**Findings**
The findings have indicated that different features of ECCs were found in the three Compulsory English textbooks, (Compulsory I, II, and Compulsory III).

- **Linguistic Competence Components found in the English Textbooks Used in the Senior High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Language knowledge</th>
<th>Language skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Phonology</td>
<td>Vocabary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Language Knowledge**
Language knowledge is about phonology, vocabulary, grammar, text, and pragmatics (MOE, 2017). The sixteen English textbook units illustrate that sub-components are under language knowledge.

**Phonology**
Phonology indicates the sound pattern of a particular language, whether Chinese and English. Allophone represents the sound produced in various environments (Burridge & Stebbins, 2016). Sounds can be pronounced differently depending on where a speaker comes from and their social background.

**Example One**

*Figure 1. Pronunciation activity (Compulsory I, p.3)*

The activity helps the student review the pronunciation rules of the vowel letters A, E, I, O, and U by listening, repeating, and noticing. It helps them use these rules to accurately distinguish the
sounds by adding words they know to each group, and finally helps them effectively remember the words.

**Vocabulary**

Vocabulary, also known as lexis, is the sum of all words and phrases in a language. Vocabulary is about teaching and learning lexical items, including new words, phrases, and idioms (Shu & Xiang, 2010). Learning vocabulary is not only about memorizing the sound, shape, and meaning of words but, more importantly, understanding and expressing information or opinions related to various topics through language activities such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing (MOE, 2017).

**Example Two**

![Figure 2. Conversation Activity (Compulsory I, p.12)](image)

The example is a while-listening activity located in the section of ‘Listening and Speaking’ in Unit 1 taken from *Compulsory I*. In tasks 1 and 3, the new words such as movements and greenhouse are presented in bold. They help students notice the features in textual context because they are all presented in phrases and sentences under specific contexts rather than in isolation.

**Grammar**

English grammar knowledge includes lexical knowledge of the morphological change of words and syntactic knowledge of sentence structure (MOE, 2017). Grammar point or item refers to teaching and learning the structural items in the patterns, like a sentence as a model exemplifying the structures (Shu & Xiang, 2010). Some evidence about grammar is in each unit, such as basic sentence structures, noun phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases, and tag questions.

‘Discovering functional structures’ helps students master grammar knowledge in the process of discovery, understanding, and application to make students realize that grammar knowledge is a unity of function, meaning, and use. Grammar knowledge is a compulsory course that requires students to realize that grammar knowledge is a unity of function, meaning, and use (MOE, 2017).
Example One

![Figure 3. Phrases activity (Compulsory II, p.52)](image)

Students should understand and use verb-ed forms for attributions, adverbials, and supplements sentences (MOE, 2017). The example shows that lexical grammar focuses on the morphological change of words, such as the number of nouns, cases, and the tense of verbs. This activity helps students to pay attention to verb-ed forms, such as tired, well-organized and dressed. These are the past participles functioning as the attribute used in different situations and locations, respectively, first in noun phrases and then in the sentences, and help them understand and use the past participles as the attributes by completing the column, comparing the meaning, and then making sentences.

**Textual Knowledge**

Text or discourse is the language unit to express meaning, including oral and written text, which can be a sentence, a word, a book, or even several books. Textual knowledge is about discourse constructed in the process of communication and expressing meaning (MOE, 2019). The knowledge of coherence and cohesive device, locating the relationship of a topic sentence and transitional sentence, language features of formal and informal discourse, and writing purposes and structural features of different types of discourse (Mei & Wang, 2018).

Example Four

![Figure 4. News report activity (Compulsory II, p.9)](image)

Students should know news reports' typical discourse structure, title, and language characteristics (MOE, 2017). The example helps students know the text structure of a news report, such as its headline and body and ends with students referring to the table and then drafting their news report to master its title and language features.
Pragmatic Knowledge

Pragmatic knowledge is the accurate understanding of others and the appropriate expression of the speakers' knowledge in a specific context (MOE, 2017). Pragmatic knowledge is helpful for students to choose formal or informal, direct or euphemistic, oral or written, and other language forms. Accordingly, the communication purpose, formal degree of communication occasions, status, and role of the participants are helpful for students' communication to achieve its purpose (Mei & Wang, 2018).

Pragmatic knowledge appears in each unit in pair or group discussions, conversations, and doing the project. For example, the project in unit 1 is to let students set up a student club, and the project in unit 2 is to let students design a travel brochure.

Example 5

![Figure 5. Cultural site (Compulsory II, p.7)](image)

Students understand others' attitudes, emotions, and views according to the specific communicative situation. They use appropriate language forms, such as politeness, direct or euphemistic, to express their attitudes, emotions, and opinions (MOE, 2017). Activity three helps students to understand that people use language accordingly. Language is used contextually depending on the different statuses, places, or situations. The examples and expressions show how to start a conversation and role-playing as tourists and a tour guide.

Language Skills

Language skill comprises listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. Listening, reading, and viewing are receptive skills, while speaking and writing are expressive skills (MOE, 2017). Sixteen units of the English textbooks illustrated the different language skills found in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing.

Listening Skill

Listening is a receptive skill, which is the basis for speaking. Rost (2005) summarized and defined listening from the integration between traditional and modern teaching as receptive, constructive, collaborative, and trans-formative (Fu, 2014). On the content of listening skills in the
three English textbooks, there is a listening strategy in each unit to promote students' listening skills, which aligns with the content requirements of ECS (MOE, 2017). Some examples found in the English textbooks for listening strategies are predicting the content, focusing on the keywords, listening for main ideas and details, and referencing.

**Example Six**

![Listening activity](Compulsory%20I,%20p.12)

As shown, the listening strategy is the tip for students to predict the content before the listening activity, which helps students find the correct answers more efficiently and promotes their listening skills.

**Speaking Skill**

*Speaking* is an expressive skill belonging to the language output. By nature, speaking is interactive based on contextualized social activities. Speaking skill appears 298 times in the English textbooks or about 7% of its content. Speaking skill is also mainly found in the section of 'Listening and Speaking' and 'Listening and Taking' followed by 'Reading and Thinking' in the form of activities of pairs or group discussions, conversations, role-play, and presentation.

**Example Seven**

![Travelling sites](Compulsory%20I,%20p.24)

In Activity 1, before students listened to the recording, they were first made to discuss the following questions in groups to get familiar with the topic and stimulate their schemata connecting the background knowledge they already knew. There are also some new words and useful phrases for them to use while speaking and in the following listening activities.
**Reading Skill**

Reading is an input skill from the perspective of input to output while also being a receptive skill from the perspective of information exchange. Reading is a social and cultural skill necessary for people's survival and development in modern society (Anderson, 2004). The purpose of reading is to find and integrate information. Alternatively, for writing, students must skim, while for general comprehension, they have to learn from or critique texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2005).

The topic of reading skills appears 139 times in the English textbooks occupying 3%. Reading is a form of reading activity in the section of 'Reading and Thinking' and the section of 'Reading for writing' in every unit of the textbooks, each occupying two pages. Each section usually has about 5-7 activities. Students read sentences or paragraphs as activities. They integrate them with the section by 'assessing their progress and discovering functional structures' to attain reading comprehension skills. Learning language knowledge like vocabulary and grammar by reading the passage is helpful to them. 'Reading and thinking' pay more attention to reading skills. While students are reading, their thinking is also developing. This section emphasizes reading skills.

**Example Eight**

![Reading activities](image)

Figure 8. Reading activities (Compulsory III, p.20)

The example above is a warm-up or pre-writing activity, which lets students read the passage for the first time to find out the answers to the questions, which helps students understand the fable's content and prepare for writing a review of it in the subsequent activities.

**Writing Skill**

Writing is an expressive skill (MOE, 2017) and belongs to productive skills like speaking (Fu, 2014). Writing is a personal expression, a cognitive process, or social interaction from different perspectives (Elbow, 1998; Murray, 1985). Writing is a communicative activity with a particular purpose and response to others or others' text (Hyland, 2009).

Writing activities are found in the section of 'Reading for Writing' in every unit. Some writing activities include writing a student profile, a letter of advice, a travel plan, a wellness book page, a news report summary, and a blog about English study. The aim is to facilitate and prepare students' writing.
Example Nine

Figure 9. English idioms (Compulsory II, p.34)

The example helps students to write the meaning and Chinese idioms that are equivalent to English, helps students understand some similarities and differences between the English and Chinese idioms, and at the same time promotes their cultural awareness.

Viewing Skill

Given the increasing importance of the new media era and the development of science and technology, viewing is the new skill added to the language skills listed first in the ECS (MOE, 2017), which is a receptive skill along with listening and reading. Viewing in language skills usually refers to skills that understand meaning by using graphics, tables, animation, symbols, and video in a multi-modal discourse (MOE, 2017).

The topic of viewing skills is found in the section of 'Video Time' and are activities in the forms of graphs, pictures, and tables. Understanding multi-modal discourse requires students' ability to observe the information in the charts. Understanding the symbols and interpreting the meaning of the animation is essential.

Example Ten

Figure 10. Video time (Compulsory I, p.46)

The viewing skills also require students to understand the meaning of non-text resources such as pictures, images, sounds, symbols, and colors in multi-modal discourse such as movies, TV, posters, songs, and comics (MOE, 2017). 'Video Time' could be found in each English textbook from unit 1 to unit 5. The example embodies the curriculum philosophy, extends the theme content of the unit, and broadens students' horizons.

• Features of Cultural Awareness Components found in the English Textbooks Used in the Senior High School

Culture is classified into "big C" and "small C" by Allen & Valette (1977). "Big C" refers to human beings' achievements and contributions to civilization, like art, music, literature, architecture, science discovery, technology development, and philosophy. "Small C" refers to human beings' lifestyles, such as how to earn their living, manage their organization, interact with their families.
and friends, show their agreement or disagreement, and display their different behaviors in various settings. Cultural awareness refers to understanding Chinese and foreign cultures and identifying excellent culture, the cross-cultural cognition, attitude, and behavior orientation students show in globalization (MOE, 2017).

Cultural knowledge involves two aspects of material and non-material culture. Material cultures include food, clothes, buildings, transportation, and inventions and creations. While non-material or spiritual cultural knowledge mainly includes philosophy, science, education, history, literature, art, values, moral cultivation, aesthetic taste, social regulations, and customs.

The findings of the evaluation found different features of cultural awareness components in the three Compulsory English textbooks, *Compulsory I to Compulsory III*. These are *Chinese culture*, *foreign culture*, and *world culture* (Karimah, 2022).

The table 2 illustrates the frequencies and the percentage of the cultural awareness components that appeared in the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Chinese culture</th>
<th>Foreign culture</th>
<th>World Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compulsory 1</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compulsory 2</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compulsory 3</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td>799</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of the ECCs (MOE, 2017). Based on the framework, the researcher found the features of the cultural awareness components in the English textbooks from the three levels of Chinese, foreign, and world culture. The cultures categorize into the source, target, and international cultures (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, quoted in Wang, 2021).

**Chinese Culture**

Chinese culture, foreign culture, and world culture are found in the English textbooks and used in this thesis based on the understanding of cultural awareness in ECS (MOE, 2017) and three categorizations of cultures source culture, target culture, and international culture proposed by Cortazzi and Jin (1999). Sixteen units of three English textbooks illustrated the different components of cultural knowledge.

Source culture means the culture of language learners' mother country, referred to as Chinese native culture in this research, such as traditional festivals, significant customs, sports spirit, idioms, behavior, and hospitality. Senior high school students are required to use compulsory English textbooks. The textbook introduces traditional Chinese festivals and traditional Chinese cultures, such as Peking Opera, literature, painting, gardens, martial arts, and food culture. These consistently spread excellent traditional Chinese culture (MOE, 2017).
Example 11

Figure 11. An example of Chinese culture (Compulsory I, p.30)

_Terracotta Army_ is a travel destination located in Xi'an city in China. Therefore, students would know more Chinese cultural knowledge about the 'Terracotta Army' from the introduction.

**Foreign Culture**

Foreign or target culture refers to the target cultures, such as Great Britain and America. They usually focus on countries where English is their native language. Countries like New Zealand, and Australia, to name a few, correspond to the cultures of the inner circle. Braj Kachru first proposed them in the early 1980s (Peng, 2019). Typically, students understand foreign countries' traditional festivals and their historical significance. The customs, sports, achievements, and contributions to human civilization are some of those. English idioms in the discourse are some of the beauty of the English language in learning activities (MOE, 2017).

Example 12

Figure 12. Title (Compulsory III, p.26)

Cultural knowledge covers both material and non-material cultural knowledge, and material cultural knowledge mainly includes food, clothing, architecture, and transportation (MOE, 2017). The example above shows American food and its origins, and American food belongs as a part of foreign culture. The examples mentioned help students to familiarize different types of American food by looking at pictures of the food.
World Culture

International culture or world culture are other foreign countries' cultures besides British and American. They include the culture of countries where English is frequently used in international situations by speakers whose first language is not English. Therefore, it means the cultures of the outer circle or expanding circle countries besides China.

Example 13

![Figure 13. Different countries’ greetings (Compulsory I, p.60)](image)

Activity one prepares the students for listening and speaking. There are eight different countries around the world in this activity, and each has its way of saying hello, such as Bonjour in France, Hello in Canada, Hola in Spain, and Hallo in Germany. It provides students with the world cultural knowledge of different languages around the world.

- **Thinking capacity components found in the English textbooks used in the senior high school**

  The findings of the evaluation found that different features of thinking capacity components were found in the three Compulsory English textbooks from *Compulsory I* to *Compulsory III*. These are logical thinking, critical thinking, and innovative thinking.

  Table 3 below illustrates the frequencies and the percentage of the thinking capacity components that appeared in the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Logical thinking</th>
<th>Critical thinking</th>
<th>Innovative thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 1</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 3</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>48.37%</td>
<td>27.10%</td>
<td>24.53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thinking capacity refers to the ability and level of thinking in logic, critical, innovation, and other aspects (MOE, 2017). Sixteen units of the English textbooks illustrated that the different thinking abilities could be found in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar.
Logical Thinking

Logical thinking includes the cognitive objectives of observing, comparing, analyzing, inferring, summarizing, and constructing concepts (Wang, 2020). Students compare the information obtained to identify the similarities and differences, for example, the primary and secondary relations and critical problems between information through observation. Summarizing common characteristics, elements, formation rules, and analyzing the surface are among these activities. Internal associations, differences, contradictions, and causes between information infer the logical relationship (MOE, 2017).

Example 14

Figure 14. Make predictions’ activity (Compulsory I, p.38)

In learning activities, students should be guided to determine the goals and tasks in listening and reading and includes other remaining skills with enough time and space for practice (Mei & Wang, 2020). Observation is an intuitive activity for students to obtain information with a purposeful, planned, and more lasting behavior. The example guides students to predict the content of the reading passage according to titles and pictures, which can promote students' logical thinking of observation.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a kind of reflective thinking that evaluates thinking according to specific standards, improves thinking, and explores objective facts (Mei & Wang, 2020). Students obtain authentic information and put forward their views to distinguish the value of critical questions. They reflect on the assumptions of various views and ideas to distinguish their values and simultaneously make reasonable doubts and correct evaluations (MOE, 2017).

Example 15

Figure 15. Reflections (Compulsory I, p.20)
The reflective questions are specific standards to evaluate what students have learned in this unit, such as some language knowledge, language skills, and learning strategies. They have to evaluate the problems they encounter and how they solve them. If they are interested in the materials, they can make more connections and relate more to students' personal preferences under the unit theme of teenage life.

**Innovative Thinking**

Innovative thinking refers to the existing thinking mode, using the existing knowledge and materials in a specific environment, put forward differently from conventional or ordinary thinking (Mei & Wang, 2020).

**Example 16**

In groups, collect some festival food recipes. If possible, learn to cook the food at home and then make a poster with pictures for the class. Use the example below to help you.

*Project 2: Make a poster about festival food recipes*

The Laba Festival usually occurs about a month before the Chinese Spring Festival. The Laba Festival's traditional food is Laba porridge.

**Possible ingredients and steps:**
- 15 Chinese dates
- 5 peeled longan fruit
- 5 dried red dates
- 1/2 cup of sticky rice
- 1/4 cup of peanuts
- 1/4 cup of red beans
- 1/4 cup of raisins

1. Wash the rice, dates, longan fruit, red beans, and put them in 2 cups of water overnight.
2. Put the ingredients and water into a pot and bring the pot to a boil. Bring the pot to a boil again and then put it onto a low heat.
3. Turn off the heat and let it sit for another 30 minutes.

**Figure 16.** An example of festival poster (Compulsory II, p. 20)

The example helps students develop their thinking innovatory by letting them try something unique and do different things. They can even try to cook to make their poster.

- **Learning Ability Components Found in the English Textbooks Used in the Senior High School**

The evaluation findings found different features of learning ability components in the three Compulsory English textbooks from Compulsory I to Compulsory III. These are autonomous learning, cooperative learning, and inquiry learning.

Table four below illustrates the frequencies and the percentage of the learning ability components that appeared in the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Autonomous learning</th>
<th>Cooperative learning</th>
<th>Inquiry learning</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.85%</td>
<td>27.84%</td>
<td>45.30%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning ability constitutes the development condition of the ECCs (MOE, 2017). Based on the framework of learning ability (MOE, 2017; Liu & He, 2021; Xiao, 2021), the researcher found
the features of the learning ability components in the English textbooks from the three levels of autonomous learning, cooperative learning, and inquiry learning.

**Autonomous Learning**
Learning ability refers to students' awareness and ability to positively and autonomously use and adjust English learning strategies. They must develop good learning habits and improve students' efficiency (MOE, 2017). Students should keep an enthusiastic and positive attitude towards English learning and constantly increase their confidence in learning. Students should be interested in learning English and take the initiative to participate in various learning and using the language of practice activities (MOE, 2017). Autonomous learning focuses on learners' active and positive learning motivation and conscious and continuous behavior ability (MOE, 2017).

**Example 17**

![Figure 17. An example of identifying main ideas (Compulsory III, p.5)](image)

The picture above provides students with a reading strategy for identifying a paragraph's main idea, which is usually located in the first sentence and works as the topic sentence. It promotes students' learning ability by reading and underlining the topic sentence to identify a paragraph's main idea. This way, students would find the topic sentence quickly and understand the paragraph's main idea better.

**Cooperative Learning**
Students should be conscious of cooperative learning and willing to share various learning resources with others (MOE, 2017). Students' cooperative learning ability can be cultivated through pair work and focus on learners' communicative and cooperative ability (Xiao, 2021).

**Example 18**

![Figure 18. An example of a role plays (Compulsory II, p.7)](image)
The example above lets students work in groups and make a conversation under their chosen situation. Making conversations in cooperative learning is vital for students because they could experience and role plays the real-life conversations that they may use shortly outside their class.

**Inquiry Learning**

Inquiry learning ability refers to the learning in that language learners can analyze and solve problems in their learning process and concepts (Xiao, 2021). Students should actively analyze the reasons and try to solve the difficulties when they encounter problems in learning (MOE, 2017).

Problem-solving is when students complete the learning activities more directly without too many instructions. The English textbooks allow students to answer questions after listening, reading, and viewing. They must complete blanks, brackets, notes, passages, and match pictures, words, and sentences.

**Example 19**

4. **In pairs, discuss the following questions.**

   1. What do most festivals seem to have in common? Why do you think people around the world find these things important?
   2. How do you feel about festival customs that have already faded away?
   3. What is the writer’s attitude towards the commercialisation of festivals?

*Figure 19. Pair’s discussion (Compulsory III, p.5)*

The example above helps develop students' problem-solving as a part of their learning ability. A while-reading activity asks students to answer the questions by discussing with their classmates to check their reading comprehension after reading the passage. The aim is to get detailed information to find the reasons, the contents, and the methods. Therefore, solving the problem means that students should answer the questions after they finish the reading activities to catch the required information.

The findings show the different features of English Core Competencies (ECCs) components in the three English Compulsory textbooks for senior high school students in China. The four domains are linguistic competencies, cultural awareness, thinking, and learning.

**Discussion**

The findings show the different features in the three English textbooks senior high school students used. The result indicates an alignment between the China English Curriculum Standard (CECS) and the compilation of textbooks, as ECCs are embedded in every unit of the textbook. The first feature is about linguistic competencies of language knowledge and language skills in the textbooks. For example, the importance of learning and using English as a target language are emphasized. The indication also suggested that learning a language is not only about knowledge of phonology, vocabulary, grammar, text, and pragmatics but about using it in real situations. Previous studies in different contexts such as Malaysia (Arifin & Yusuf, 2022), Vietnam (Hanh, 2022), and Indonesia (Efendi et al., 2022; Karimah, 2022) imply that good textbooks should possess different features that support students’ language knowledge and language skills through its various contents.
Consequently, the features of cultural awareness, such as Chinese, foreign, and world cultures, are embodied in the textbooks. As indicated in the findings, language is part of the culture. The textbooks' evaluation findings support the argument of Karimah (2022). She argued that cultural knowledge embedded through pictures, passages, and activities could help students' cultural awareness. Furthermore, as another feature found in the textbooks, thinking capacity illustrates that learning English encompasses thinking logically, critically, and creatively. Therefore, students can resolve problems through observation and correct evaluative judgment through the textbook contents.

For this reason, English can be seen as a subject beyond learning as it promotes creative thinking ability (Efendi et al., 2022). Lastly, the learning ability features found in the three English textbooks activities that promote autonomous, cooperative, and inquiry learning are embodied in the textbooks. These features help students to be active and engage in learning. Active learning is one of the solid foundations for lifelong learning, promoting autonomous learning. As students explore language, they can work with peers through pair or group discussions, thus promoting cooperative learning.

Conclusion
This study aimed to identify the features of the English Core Competencies components in the three English textbooks Compulsory I, Compulsory II, and Compulsory III (Liu, 2019), used by senior high school students using China's English Curriculum Standard as the framework. The findings suggest significant implications for teaching and learning, especially in English language teaching. As shown, the three English textbooks are equipped with core competencies needed by students learning English as a foreign language. The indication is that the English Curriculum Standard developed by the Ministry of Education in 2017 can be viewed as a good framework to evaluate textbooks used by the schools to establish their alignment with the standard of the Chinese educational system.

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