

國立澎湖科技大學應用外語系

英文實務專題

A Comparative Study on the English Textbooks for  
Elementary School First Graders Taiwan vs. Malaysia

小學一年級英語教材比較研究：臺灣與馬來西亞

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中文摘要  
小學一年級英語教材比較研究：臺灣與馬來西亞

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摘要

由於全球化的推進，對於我們的日常生活而言，英語變得越來越重要。對於全球來說，重視英語初學者成為了必要的議題。教科書在教育系統中被廣泛的運用，不同的國家有不一樣的教育系統，我們將要探討台灣跟馬來西亞一年級英語教科書的不同，現有的教科書是否適合台灣的學生以及我們將來可以如何做得更好。透過兩個國家版本教科書的比較，我們可以清楚地發現，本國與將英語作為官方語言的馬來西亞之差距。在這個研究當中，從編輯框架的層面，我們提出了如何幫助改善現在的台灣英語國小教科書。

關鍵詞：國小英語教科書、康軒版英語教科書、馬來西亞 KSSR 版教科書、英語教科書比較

## 英文摘要

# **A Comparative Study on the English Textbooks for Elementary School First Graders Taiwan vs. Malaysia**

### **Abstract**

Because of globalization, English is considered important in our daily life. Attaching importance to English beginners becomes an essential issue all over the world. Textbooks are extensively used in education industry. Every country has its own education system and style. We discuss the differences in English textbooks for elementary school first-graders in Taiwan and Malaysia, contemplating whether the existing textbooks suit Taiwanese students or what we can do better in the future. From comparing the textbooks with Malaysia, we observe the disparity between the country that takes English as the official language and the one that does not. In this research, from the aspects of editing frameworks, we offer suggestions and comments on how to help improve the current English textbooks in Taiwan.

Keywords: Elementary School English Textbooks, English Textbooks of Kang Hsuan Version, English Textbooks of Malaysian KSSR Version, Comparison of two English Textbooks.

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# **Chapter One-Introduction**

## 1.1 Background and Motivation

The English language is increasingly recognized as an international communication medium in the recent years mainly due to vast amounts of international trading and information exchange. Nevertheless, learning English has not been easy for EFL or ESL students. It goes without saying that: great oaks from little acorns grow. If one wishes to learn English well, building the foundation is quite important. As so, textbooks for first graders that are coming into contacts are vital. Designation and editorial of English textbooks play very crucial roles in assisting students to master the English language. In this research, we will compare Taiwanese and Malaysian first graders' (elementary school) English textbooks to find out the differences and similarities.

## 1.2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the significance of textbook for first-grade students. Textbooks are powerful teaching aids for both teachers and students. A thoughtfully designed textbook can boost students' learning motivation and acquisition. Therefore, choosing proper textbooks is a crucial issue for teachers and students.

In Taiwan, the selection of textbooks is usually limited and regulated by local Ministry of Education of counties governments or city halls. However, in Malaysia, textbooks are decided and unified by country's Ministry of Education. In this case, not only the usage of textbooks is varied in these two countries, difficulties of respective textbook, contents, composition, and design of textbook also have significant differences. Therefore, in this study, we are opted to find out whether the textbook is suitable for respective countries' first-grade students.

## **Chapter Two-Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definition of Textbook**

Based on Cambridge English Dictionary, a textbook is known as a book that contains detailed information about a subject for people who are studying that subject. Today, textbooks are widely used worldwide for most of the teachings. Therefore, textbooks are seen as a crucial material to help construct knowledge for students.

Hence, the content of textbook must be written and designed with great consideration. Textbooks should continue to grow into guides for both students and teachers, coordinating different resources from animations and simulations to interactive exercises. These include electronic interfacing and focus on developing critical thinking skills rather than the transmission of knowledge (Cunningham, Duffy, and Knuth, 2000).

## 2.2 Major differences of Taiwanese and Malaysian Students

Students' English level before entering elementary school is the key for designing and compiling textbook as textbook difficulty may affect the learning of first-grade students. There are differences between the students' English level in Taiwan and Malaysia. In Taiwan, Taiwanese students never had English classes before they enter elementary school. On the contrary, for Malaysian students, 60% of their parents engage private teachers for English class before they enter elementary school to lay a foundation for learning English. In addition, some kindergartens which do not require speaking English during school time are also required to have English class more than two hours a week. According to the information, we discover that most Malaysian students have a general idea of English. Malaysian also speak English in their daily life, which is important because speaking plays an important role in learning English.

### The difference of teaching hours

**Taiwan:** Each county and city have a different standard of teaching hours. Almost all senior classes are required to spend at least two lectures (one lecture=40 minutes) a week on teaching English. But there is an obvious difference in junior grades about English teaching hours. Numerous counties require students who are under 5<sup>th</sup> grade spend one lecture a week on learning English. Taipei, Yilan, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Hualien all spend two lectures a week. But almost 70% of the schools in Tainan spend three lectures a week on learning English.

**Malaysia:** Almost all schools belong to the government, divided into Sekolah Kebangsaan (National School) and Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (National-Type School). Ministry of Education requires students of Sekolah Kebangsaan (National School) to learn English for 300 minutes a week and Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (National-Type School) for 150 minutes a week.

### The difference of project textbook

**Taiwan:** We can clearly get from the textbook <Go! Go! Starter! > that the Taiwanese textbook's characters' design according to cartoon figure.

**Malaysia:** In Malaysian textbook, the figures named "Nabil, Jay Sen, Kiran, Encik Nasrul, Melinda, Vinod" are different races and have different cultural background which is consistent with Malaysian diversified characters.

### 2.3 Differences in Textbook and Curricula

In Taiwan, elementary schools use Phonics to guide students distinguish between alphabet and pronunciation. Students can pronounce the word when they see it. Starting from junior high school, Kenyon and Knott (KK) plays an aider role. It is more convenient for students when they look up into the dictionary to check if their pronunciation is correct.

The ministry of education did not encourage elementary school's teachers to teach their students Kenyon and Knott diction, but there are 27.2% of teachers use Phonics and Kenyon and Knott at the same time; 71.7% use Phonics and 1.1% of Kenyon and Knott. In elementary school, usage of Phonics is much higher than Kenyon and Knott.

Kenyon and Knott is more suitable for junior high school students compare to children. It is like abstract symbol, which is divided into two parts: entity and tone. Some symbols look totally the same to alphabets, but the pronunciation is different. To junior high students, it is not too difficult to learn vocabulary and Kenyon and Knott at the same time.

In terms of learning Phonics, the earlier of learning the better. Due to children have strong imitation skills, they will establish favorable pronounce base if they meet a qualified teacher. It will be easier to learn English when students approach Phonics more often. Taiwanese students did not have the environment of using English so that they cannot learn the pronunciation naturally. It is insufficient to learn Phonics with just a few hours of English lesson a week.

Malaysia is a multilingual country. Malay is listed as first official language and English is listed second. As a result, Malaysia has a better English environment than Taiwan. Malaysia's elementary English textbooks implement Kenyon and Knott and Phonics simultaneously. Phonetics has stress, but not Phonics. So, by adding Kenyon and Knott can help make up the deficiency of learning Phonics.



## 2.4 Vocabulary size of Taiwanese first graders and Malaysian first graders

Vocabulary size and level are one of the factors to determine the English level of learners. There is also a strong and positive correlation between proficiency and vocabulary size. The importance of vocabulary can be seen from studies showing the close relationship between vocabulary size and success in reading and writing (Biemiller & Slomin, 2001; Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamazaki, 1995; Fraser, 1999; Laufer, 1997; Laufer & Nation, 1995; Paribakht & Wesche, 1999), as well as in learners' general language proficiency (Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990; Richards, 1976), and academic success (Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996). Laufer (1997) pointed out that lexical problems of insufficient vocabulary, misinterpretation of deceptively transparent words and inability to guess unknown words correctly are found to be impeding factors for reading comprehension. Vocabulary is the base of learning when you know more vocabularies, you can understand a sentence more easily, answer a question and even can write an essay without having much trouble. In many countries, ministries of education or related departments have set a standard for vocabulary size. In Taiwan, English courses for elementary schools are divided into 2 stages. The first stage is from elementary Year 3 to Year 6, and the second stage is from junior high school Year 1 to Year 3.

For the first stage and before, the vocabulary size standard that is set by the ministry of education are: able to speak and identify 300 words below, or to write at least 180 words and handle a simple and easy conversation. This clearly shows that insufficient vocabulary made Taiwanese students lose interest or even afraid of having conversation with foreign speakers.

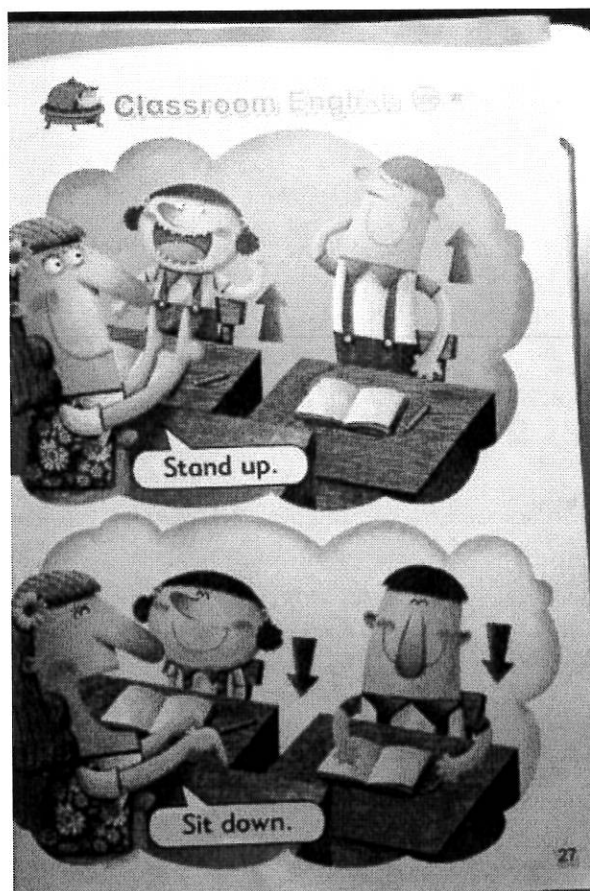
Whereas in Malaysia, English is a compulsory subject in primary, secondary and tertiary education although English is officially second language in Malaysia. Malaysian students start their formal English class at the age of 7 (first grade in elementary school). In Malaysia, the ministry of education did not set a specific standard for vocabulary size. But the new Elementary school Standards-Based Curriculum Initiative (KSSR) that were implemented in 2013 introduced the Standards-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) gives equal emphasis to English literacy skills as to English communication skills, as core elements in the language curriculum. The SBELC focused on basic reading literacy, phonics, penmanship, language arts and higher order thinking skills (HOTS) such as critical and creative thinking skills as well as reasoning skills.

## 2.5 The Structure and Traits of Kang Hsuan Version

The textbook of Kang Hsuan version is divided into two books which are suitable for first-grade students, mainly using CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). The textbook focus on listening and speaking and assisted by reading and writing. Two main characters are Andy and Bean, which are superman and candy. These textbooks include classroom English, alphabet, daily talk, chant and sing and interesting story times.

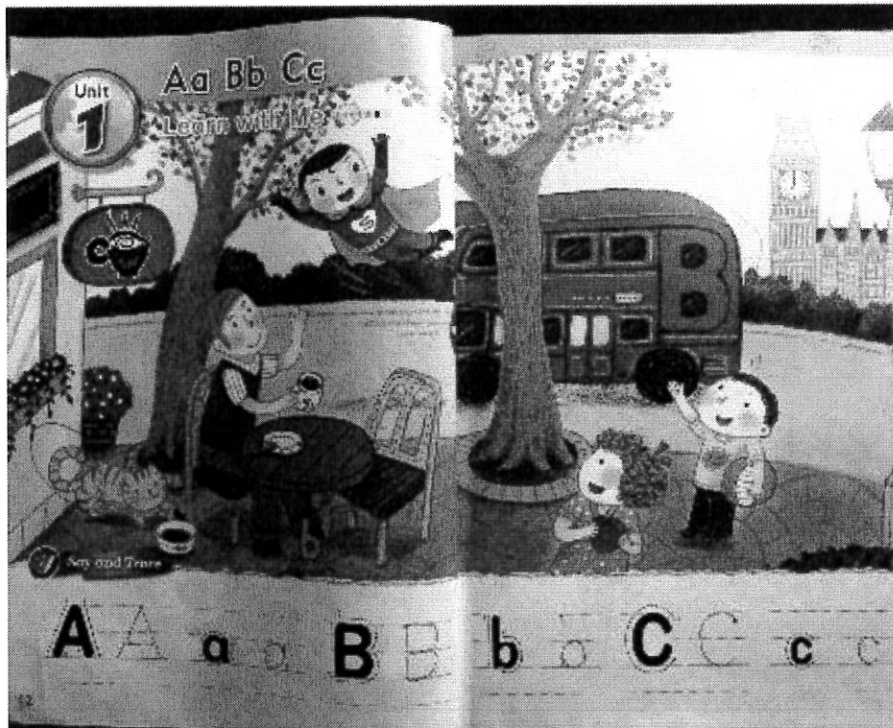
### Part 1 Classroom English

This part mainly teaches students with simple English sentences that can be used mostly in the classroom. For example, saying “Stand up” when the teacher comes into the class and teacher saying “Sit down” to the students.



## Part 2 Alphabet

Alphabets are the important part in English, usually hidden in colorful pictures for students to identify and practice to write. For example, when students see the red bus, they can identify alphabet B immediately.



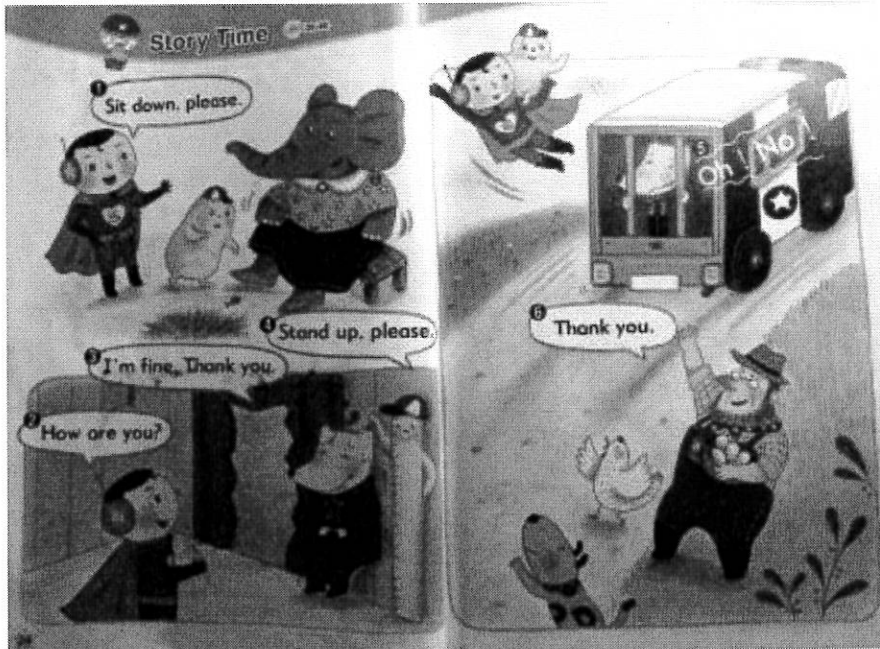
### Part 3 Daily Talk

Daily English is employed in the form of stories utilizing two major characters, Superman and Candy, to attract the attention of students and apply such language to their everyday usage.



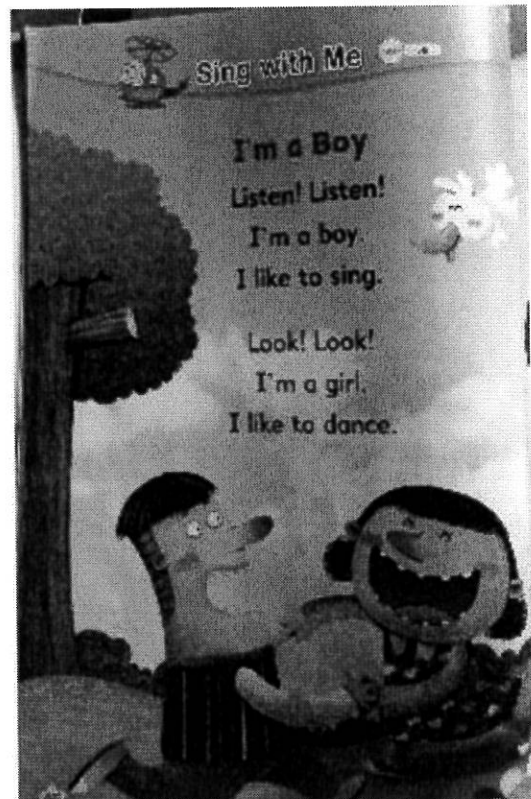
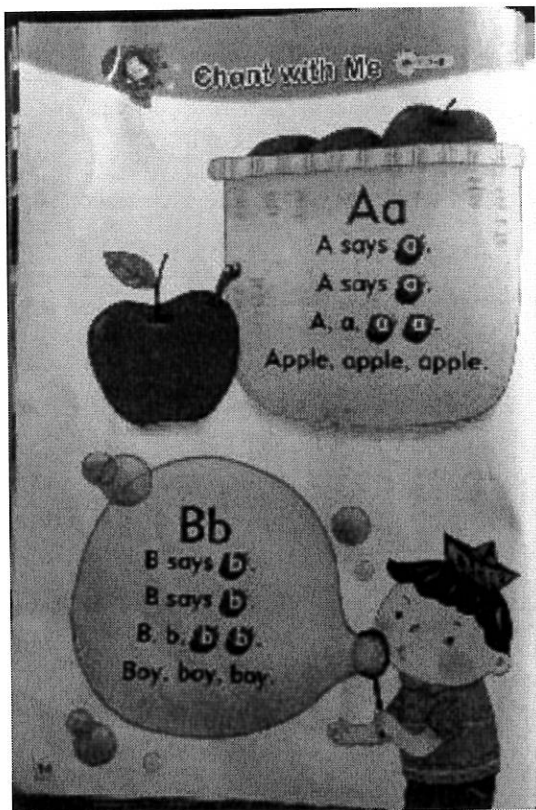
## Part 4 Story Time

Stories for Taiwanese first-grade students are more understandable and interesting in order to attract students' attention. Colorful pictures and thought-provoking storyline help students practice and keep a good habit.



## Part 5 Chant & Sing

Chant and Sing are two important parts in the textbook. With simple rhyme and rhythm, chant and sing help improve students' recognition towards a specific subject. For example, on page 14, this chant let students remember the phonics of specific alphabet and help students know the related subject of the particular alphabet. Chant and sing can also attract students' attention, thus promote the efficiency of teaching.



## 2.6 Malaysian KSSR Textbook Year 1 - Contents and Layout

Malaysian English curriculum are divided into two major groups, SK (Sekolah Kebangsaan) – Malay-medium National School and SJK (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan) – Non Malay-medium National Type School. The difference between these two groups is in the usage of the medium of instruction. However, the English language is a compulsory subject for no matter what school students are admitted into. Hence, textbooks adopted in the schools are regulated by Ministry of Education of Malaysia.

Based on the textbook layout, we notice that this textbook covers all four important modules like Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. As for contents, the textbook is based on three themes – the World of Self, Family and Friends, World of Stories, and the World of Knowledge. Phonics awareness is also an important part of the textbook.

Correspondingly to Kang Hsuan Version, Malaysian textbooks also include classroom English, alphabet, daily talk, and chant and sing. However, the specialty of Malaysian textbook is the implementation of multicultural contexts, such as having different characters with different culture background. Moreover, Malaysian textbooks also help students to prepare for the real world by having simulated scenario, for example, crossing the road, buying groceries, developing a good habit at home, and much more.

## Part 1 Classroom English

This part helps students learn how to greet and interact with other students or teacher. For instance, greeting “Good morning, teacher” or using WH- question.

Let's listen.

Listening and Speaking

Good morning, pupils.  
My name is Encik Nasrul.

Good morning,  
Encik Nasrul.

Hello, I am Nabil.

Hi, I am Vinod.

Pairwork

Role-play the scenes and practise the dialogues.

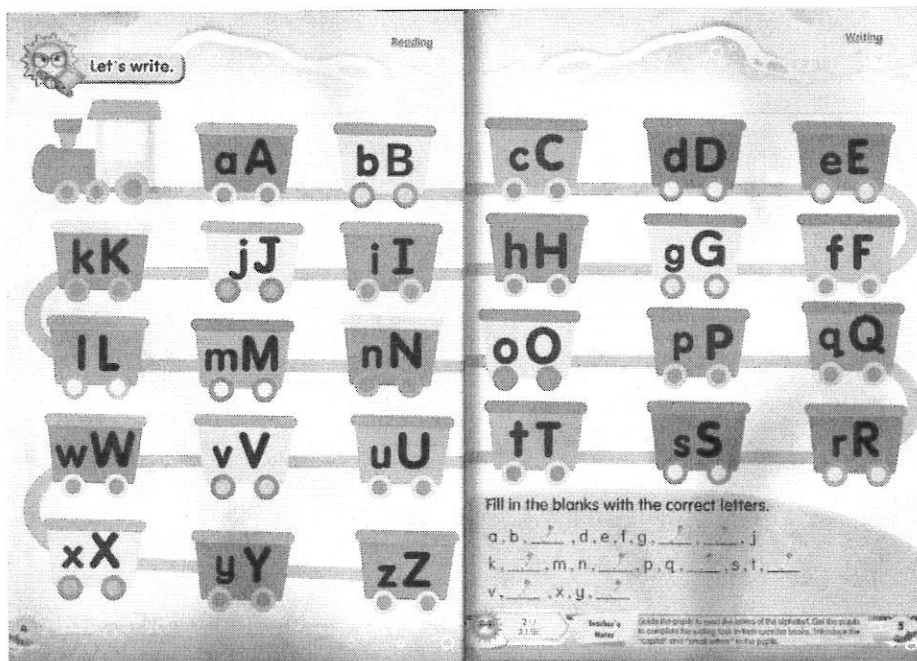
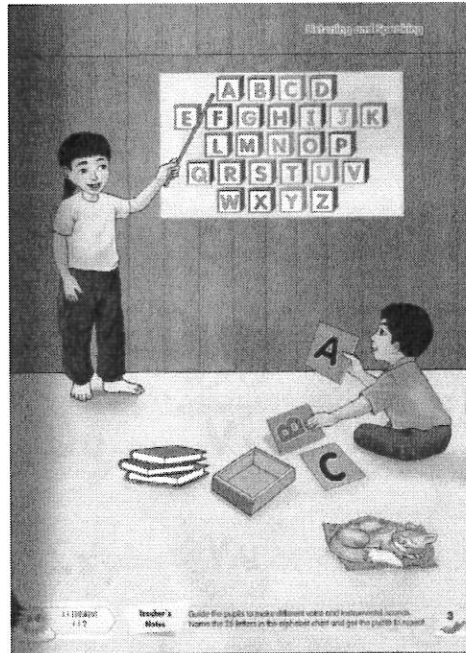
Teacher's Notes

123456789



## Part 2 Alphabet

In this section, all 26 alphabets are shown in both capital and small letters. Students are requested to practice and recognize them during the class.



### Part 3 Daily Talk

Daily conversations among friends, family, a teacher, and others are shown in this part.


Let's write. writing

**STAY SAFE!**

**stop** Stop at the roadside.

**look** Look right, left, and right again.

**listen** Listen carefully for the sounds of the incoming cars.



How to cross a road?

1. Stop at the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Look \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and right again.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ carefully for the sounds of the incoming cars.

28 29

Let's read. reading

1 Stop! Don't run.

2 You must stop at the roadside before you cross the road.

I am sorry.

Listen carefully for the sounds of cars.

4 Look right, left, and then right again.

3

When there are no cars, cross the road.

6 Thank you for helping me.

5

List three road safety rules.

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

28 29


## Part 4 Story Time

The amount of story is less, compared to the Taiwanese textbook. However, the story content covers more aspects of learning.

Let's read. Reading


### The Crow and the Gold Coins

The King of the Jungle died.  
The King had no son of his own.  
The King left behind some gold coins.



The animals had no King. They competed in a running competition. The winner would be the King. The crow decided to join the race. However, other animals laughed at him because of his appearance.

Ten animals joined the race including the crow. The competition started. They ran as fast as they could. The crow flew straight to the finishing line.

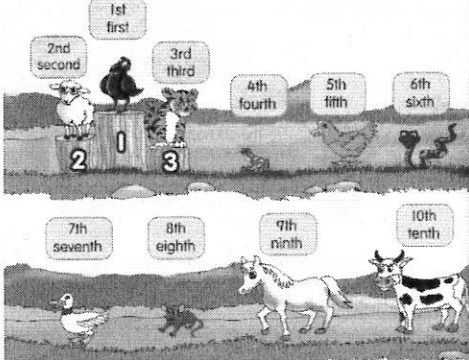


**Teacher's Notes** Narrate the story to the pupils. Guide the pupils to read the story using the correct pronunciation, word stress, and intonation.

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Let's read. Reading

The crow won the race and became the new King of the Jungle. Other animals learned their lesson on not to judge and underestimate others.



- 1st first
- 2nd second
- 3rd third
- 4th fourth
- 5th fifth
- 6th sixth
- 7th seventh
- 8th eighth
- 9th ninth
- 10th tenth

1. How did the animals choose their king?
2. Who became the new King of the Jungle?
3. Who do you think should win the first prize? Why?

**Teacher's Notes** Guide the pupils to read the ordinal numbers in numeral and word forms fluently.

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## Part 5 Chant & Sing

This part adopts many nursery rhymes and modified contents in order to attract students, which is also easy for teachers and students immediately sing with the modified contents.

Let's sing.

ABC Song

A B C D E F G  
H I J K L M N O P  
Q R S T U V  
W X Y and Z

Now, I know my ABCs  
Next time come and sing with me.  
(To the tune of the ABC Song)

Teacher's Note

4 / 200

Let's chant.

The Sun, Snails, and Ants

See the sun,  
It shines brightly.  
See the ants,  
See the snails,  
On the apple tree.

See the sun,  
It shines brightly,  
See the ants,  
See the snails,  
On the apple tree.

Teacher's Note

3 / 100

## **Chapter Three-Research methods**

### **3.1 Content Analysis**

Our project adopts Content Analysis to compare the difference between Taiwan and Malaysia. Content Analysis is described as the scientific study of the content of communication. According to Krippendorff, “Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. As a technique, content analysis involves specialized procedures. It is learnable and divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher. As a research technique, the content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher’s understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. Content analysis is a scientific tool” (18). It is the study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts, and intentions contained in messages. Broadly, content analysis can be seen as a method where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions about the content. Further, content analysis falls in the interface of observation and document analysis. According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (112).

## 3.2 Tools

Research methods divide into several parts: vocabulary size and level, students' English level before entering elementary school, teaching hours, pronunciation method and Textbook Structures.

### 3.2.1 Editing Framework

- 3.2.1.1 Situational Presentation: Contrary to Malaysian KSSR Version adopting authentic materials, Kang Hsuan Version is more story-friendly but distant to the real world.
- 3.2.1.2 Students' English level before entering elementary school: Malaysian students familiarize themselves with English earlier than Taiwanese students.
- 3.2.1.3 Pronunciation method: The difference of pronunciation method between Taiwan and Malaysia. The students in Taiwan are orientated towards the use of Phonics, but Malaysia's students use Phonics and Kenyon and Knott at the same time.
- 3.2.1.4 Vocabulary size and level: The quantity of vocabulary of a lesson in two textbooks. (Taiwan & Malaysia). In Taiwan, students are required to speak and identify up to 300 words, or to write at least 180 words. In Malaysia, ministry of education did not set a specific standard for vocabulary size, but it emphasizes the other conversation skills.
- 3.2.1.5 Pronunciation method: The difference of pronunciation method between Taiwan and Malaysia. The students in Taiwan are orientated towards using Phonics, but Malaysia's students use Phonics and Kenyon and Knott at the same time.
- 3.2.1.6 Textbook Visual Aids: The design of Taiwanese textbook characters is based on cartoon figures. The Malaysian textbook has manifold characters based on Malaysian various cultures.
- 3.2.1.7 Teaching hours: School's English courses set up the amount of time on teaching students per week. In Taiwan, teaching English spends approximately 80 minutes a week, and, in Malaysia, it spends probably 150-300 minutes a week.

### 3.3 Object of Research

- 3.2.1.8 Taiwan's numerous counties have their own English teaching policy. In the last decade, some counties announced that the first grade had increased English teaching hours in each semester. It reveals that the Taiwanese government has attached importance to English teaching gradually.
- 3.2.1.9 Malaysia is a multilingual country. Malaysian students have a general idea of English, and they speak English in their daily life.
- 3.2.1.10 Our research object aims at the first-grade students of elementary school. In Taiwan, the first graders consist of 6-7 year-old students, and in Malaysia, the first graders are all 7 year-old.

### 3.4 Conclusion

	Taiwan	Malaysia
Situational presentations	Less authentic (More story-friendly)	More authentic
English level	Not holding English class before elementary school	Holding English class before elementary school
Vocabulary size	180	Focus on conversation skills
Teaching hours	80 min/a week	150-300 min/a week
Pronunciation method	Phonics	Phonics and Kenyon and Knott at the same time
Textbook Aids Visual	Cartoon figures	Figures from Malaysian various cultures

## **Conclusion and Suggestion**

### Conclusion

According to our research, we recognize the similarities and differences of English teaching at elementary school between Taiwan and Malaysia. Malaysian students acquire English earlier, and they speak English in their daily life. However, most of the students in Taiwan never use English before they go to elementary school. Based on that premise, there are several differences implicated in the textbooks, learning hours, and teaching methods between Taiwan and Malaysian. These discrepancies are considered for various situations. Teaching methods should be adjusted for different levels. From the two textbooks, several differences are perceived: Taiwan adopts cartoon characters as the roles of the textbook. Malaysian adopt some real people from different countries as the characters. Base on the multi-culture society, Malaysia makes up textbook figures from various races. The forms above we can see the differences in English level, vocabulary size, teaching hour, pronunciation method and textbook structure.

After the journey of studying the English textbooks from the two different countries, several discoveries are made, such comparison and analysis revealing the components we can improve or enrich our textbooks. Nonetheless, due to the circumstantial differences, it is inadequate to simply conclude that one textbook is superior to another. Still, one can adjust oneself via observing others' advantages and disadvantages. Taiwanese textbooks are equipped more alphabets exercises, suitable for Taiwanese students' background, in which alphabetical forms appear less or later in Taiwan than Malaysia. Malaysians adopt the phonics (requiring learners exposed to English frequently) and K.K. (Kenyon and Knott, less demanding learners exposed to English often) in their textbooks, such methods the ways that can help Taiwanese students because of lacking a sufficient English-speaking environment compared to Malaysia. Furthermore, Malaysian textbooks, contrary to Taiwanese ones, are implemented multicultural contexts, which could reduce the one-dimensional dullness and arouse students' curiosity to further know the contents. We may consider adding aboriginal culture and characters into our textbooks. Moreover, Taiwanese textbooks are more constructed or even "fictional," suitable for coherent learning and examinations, but remote from the reality, which could decrease students' motivation for not recognizing the possibility of applying English within



foreseeable range. Compared to Taiwanese ones, Malaysian textbooks adopt more practical phrases and conversations situated in authentic contexts, simulating the real world, which could motivate students to learn because the psychological distance between acquiring and employing English is rather short, encouraging a virtuous circle of learning and applying a second language.

Taiwan: Advantages: There are some hands-on games attaching to the textbooks. The games can attract students' attention and assist them to learn. The sequence of the textbooks is followed by the 26 letters which can help students to comprehend the sequence of 26 letters. This kind of sequence is clear and easy to understand. Taiwan attaches importance to speaking. Speaking is an important part in English study and can help students to remember. The degree of difficulty can make students accept easily.

Disadvantages: From the class arrangement, compared to the Chinese class, English class is not paid enough attention. Taiwanese students in Grade one have five sessions a week on Chinese (One session is equal to 40 minutes). Nonetheless, they only have two sessions a week on English. The textbooks are overly simple, easily accepted but unable to improve themselves vastly. As a result, before attending the elementary school, Taiwanese students' English ability is lower than Malaysian students'.

Malaysia: Advantages: Culture combined with education, the main roles in the Malaysian English textbook are some children from different countries have different skin colors, which can help students to understand the environment they reside. Moderate degree of difficulty: From the teaching hours, we can find Malaysian people value the importance of English teaching. Malaysian teaching method (Phonics combined with Kenyon and Knott) can comprehensively help students apprehend English.

Disadvantages: The arrangement of textbooks are a bit dull which cannot attract students.

### Suggestion:

Taiwan is a country with traditional culture. Combining traditional culture with teaching and designing characters related to Taiwan's custom. is a sound method to attract students to inherit and preserve traditional culture. Moreover, we think that textbooks' version should be unified and regulated by the Ministry of Education in order to have similar levels of understanding throughout the country. Appropriately increasing the teaching hours can make students fuse the English environment. What is more, increasing teaching hours can help students advance their overall English level.

What can we learn from Malaysia?

First, strengthening the level of difficulty is necessary. In order to achieve international standard as soon as possible. This adjustment should be put on the agenda. Nevertheless, it should not go too far, avoiding the situation like "go for wool and come home shorn."

Secondly, vocabulary size should be increased since vocabularies are the basis of learning English. Building wider vocabulary can help students master English, especially in reading and writing.

Moreover, comprehensively improving students' ability, Taiwan's textbooks focus on listening and speaking. However, writing and reading are important for an English beginner as well. For laying the foundation, a proper language education should comprehensively develop students' ability.

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