This study aimed to create a corpus of forty General English (GE) reading textbooks used in universities in Taiwan. The criteria for including books in the corpus were based on the popularity of GE textbooks from five major import bookstores. The operational measures for comparison involved vocabulary size, vocabulary levels (distribution among the British National Corpus, BNC 1st to 14th 1000 high-frequency word families) and text coverage. Coxhead’s (2000) Academic Word List was chosen for comparison. In addition, the Grade 1-9 Curriculum 2000 basic English words announced by the Ministry of Education as well as the elementary and intermediate vocabulary covered in the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) were lemmatized into word families as the comparison basis and as the base words replacing the BNC high frequency word lists established in the RANGE software (Nation, 2005). The GEPT tests are the accredited English proficiency tests that Taiwanese college students are likely to take to meet graduation and job requirements.

This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What percentage of the words in a General English reading textbook does the AWL cover?
2. If a senior high school graduate has a vocabulary size of 2000 basic English words or GEPT elementary words, how many new words can s/he learn in a GE textbook?
3. To what extent does a GE textbook cover the GEPT intermediate vocabulary?

It is hoped that the indices examined in this study would help English teachers to take account of the continuity in curriculum design and in preparing students for the GEPT through the choice of GE teaching materials.