

英语 教学分析

主编 陈文存 副主编 严萍 余美根 彭康洲


An Analysis of English
Teaching and Learning

English



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前言

我国的外语教学主要是指英语教学，对语言教学的研究主要也是针对英语教学的。因此，本书定名为“英语教学分析”。

英语教师必须思考几个基本问题：教什么？怎么教？为什么要这样教？要回答这几个问题，就应该对英语教学进行分析。分析对象最重要的是学习的客体——英语和学习的主体——学习者；其次，英语教学的发展趋势、对英语教学的评价和英语教师的进一步发展对回答上述问题都会有帮助。本书试图在这几个方面进行分析。

全书分为五章。第一章分析学习的客体——英语。分析内容主要有：语言的定义和本质，同汉语相比较，英语的一些显著特点，并介绍了几种主要的语言观。第二章主要分析语言学习者和语言学习过程，介绍了几种主要的语言学习观点、学习者个体差异的几个主要方面和学习策略。第三章分析了英语教学的发展趋势。对以学习者为中心、以人为本的语言教学、任务型语言学习与教学、合作学习、互动学习、后方法时代、模块化、超文本化语言教学进行了论述。第四章分析了英语教学的评价问题。涉及评价的基本概念、要素、测试分类、形成性评价的技能、命题步骤和英语试题的编写指南等。第五章分析了英语教师的教育与发展。主要内容有：从教师培训到教师发展、教师教育概述、英语教师的基本素质、新教师与老教师的发展、理念的确立与修正、在职教师的发展、英语教师的角色。

由于国外学者，尤其是北美学者在研究和讨论外语教学时没有区分二语和外语，且常常使用 Second Language 这一术语。本书在论述时没有对二语和外语作严格区分。

作者心目中的读者是英语教师，包括在职教师和即将成为英语教师的大学生。希望能对他们有所帮助。

本书在编写过程中参考和引用了大量国内外资料和研究成果，

由于篇幅有限，未能一一详细注明，谨在此向作者表示感谢。

本书由陈文存主编，其工作包括全书构架、组稿、审读，编写第三、五章，修改和增补第一、二、四章部分内容。第一章主要内容从严萍编写，第二章主要内容由余美根编写，第四章主要内容由彭康洲编写，美籍教师 Debbie Brande 对部分语言进行了加工润色。

由于作者水平有限，书中的错误和不当之处恳请读者和同行批评指正。

编 者

2007 年 10 月于西华师范大学

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Introduction

As a Chinese teacher of English, it's quite necessary for him or her to ask and ponder over some elementary questions:

What? What is language and what is the nature of language? What does a language consist of? What is English? What are the main differences between English and Chinese? What does it mean when one says he or her knows a language? What does it mean to say one can use a language? What are the shared features of English learners? What individual differences can exist in English learning? What sort of personalities do the learners have? What kinds of strategies does a learner use? What are the elementary principles of English teaching? What is the current tendency of English teaching? What are the necessities of a qualified teacher of English?

How? How does English learning take place? How people learn a foreign language? How can a person ensure success in language learning? How can a teacher teach English more effectively? How to evaluate and assess English teaching and learning? How can a teacher of English make further development in work?

Why? Why can some English learners succeed in English learning while many more fail? Why can some teachers' teaching of English be more effective?

This book aims to analyze the above questions.

Actually, language learning refers mainly to three aspects: the object—the target language, the subject—the learner, and the environment—the learning aids (teaching materials, teaching methods, the teacher, language policies, etc.). The above questions are of the three aspects. Analysis from the three aspects is the focus of the book.

We can never separate teaching from learning, since they depend

on each other and neither of them can exist without the other. There is an old saying: teaching and learning enhance each other. That is why the book is named "An Analysis of English Teaching and Learning". This book is expected to be helpful to teachers of English.

Chapter One An Analysis of the Object— Language and the Target Language

1.1 An Analysis of Language

We use language everyday and live in a world of words; hardly any waking moments pass without thinking, talking, writing, or reading. Indeed, language is most essential to mankind, yet we as language users do not know exactly what language is. Philosophers, linguists and philologists have been trying for centuries to define the language, but there is still no simple and single answer to it. Actually, to presume to define language adequately would be folly. The study of language has a history of over 2 500 years. During the long history of linguistic study, theories and schools of thoughts emerged, and views on language from different perspectives have entailed varied definitions and descriptions.

1.1.1 Different Definitions of Language

What is language? This may sound like a naive question. Yet, to this extremely familiar phenomenon, it is very difficult for people to give a satisfactory definition. Although there has been an enormous amount of research in language in the past half century, no authoritative answer has been given to “What is language?” Rather, people talk about views of language, seemingly allowing for or accepting different theories for the moment. We may say “language is a tool for human communication”, but that doesn’t say anything about

its defining properties, only about its function, and there are many other systems (secret codes, traffic signals, for example) performing the same function. We may say "language is a set of rules", but again that says nothing about its function, and there are other systems containing sets of rules (Hu et al, 1996). Still other common definitions of language found in dictionaries and introductory textbooks include the following ones:

Language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact (Finocchiaro, 1964: 8).

Language is a system of communication by sound, operating through the organs of speech and hearing, among members of a given community, and using vocal symbols possessing arbitrary conventional meanings (Pei, 1966: 141).

Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication (Wardhaugh, 1972:3).

"Any means, vocal or other, of expressing or communicating feeling or thought...a system of conventionalized signs, especially words, or gestures having fixed meanings" (*Webster's New International Dictionary of the English language*, 1934:1 390).

"A systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings" (*Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English language*, 1961: 1 270).

A system of communication consisting of a set of small parts and a set of rules which decide the ways in which these parts can be combined to produce messages that have meaning (*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, 1995: 795).

"Many of the significant characteristics of language are capitalized in these definitions. Some of the definitions, Finocchiaro, Pei and Wardhaugh, for example, restrict themselves to the notion of vocal symbols, while both of the Webster's definitions include more

than merely vocal symbols as the proper domain of language. Finocchiaro and Wardhaugh limit their definitions to human language, thereby implying that animal communication and language are essentially different" (Brown, 1994:5).

All in all, to define language adequately would not be an easy thing. "Linguists and philologists have been trying for centuries to define the term. A definition is really a condensed version of a theory, and a theory is simply—or not so simply—an extended definition" (Brown, 1994:4) .

In later years it was thought, optimistically, that defining was simply a problem of the blind men, each examining a different part of an elephant. It was thought that more work was needed on devising better test criteria and on how to interpret the results of the tests, and that these results would eventually converge on a consistent overall description of an elephant. However, as one of my students gasped when realizing the implication of the domain confusion, "there is no elephant!" (Yngve, 1996:46)

Breaking down the components of the definition of language, we can extract a consolidation of the definitions of language which yields the following composite definition.

- (1) Language is systematic and generative.
 - (2) Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.
 - (3) Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may also be visual.
 - (4) The symbols have conventionalized meanings to which they refer.
 - (5) Language is used for communication.
 - (6) Language operates in a speech community or culture.
 - (7) Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.
 - (8) Language is acquired by all people in much the same way—language and languages learning both have universal characteristics.
- (Brown, 1994:4)

To sum up, any definition of language is far from adequate, but a knowledge of language components helps to know its essential properties and aspects which will define the limits of language learning and teaching.

1.1.2 Nature of Language

What is language on earth? As language teachers, we need to have a clear and general knowledge of what sort of entity we are teaching to our students. Generally speaking, linguists are in broad agreement about some of the important characteristics of human language, and most of them would accept a tentative definition like the following: Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication. This does not appear to be very original at first sight, but each word in it has been chosen with care to cover one important aspect of language.

By "system", we mean all elements of language in this system are arranged according to certain rules; they can not be combined at will. In English, "bytk" will not be a possible word. "They table a green" will not be an acceptable sentence. If language were not systematic, it could not be learned or used consistently. In other words, it is because every language has its system that it conveys the same meaning to different speakers.

By "arbitrary", it means that there is no intrinsic connection between the word cup and the thing we use to drink with. The fact that different languages have different words for it (cha bei/茶杯 in Chinese for instance) speaks strongly for the arbitrary nature of language. Although the choice of certain sound symbols to represent certain objects, events or ideas is arbitrary, once the relationship is established, it becomes a fixed convention. It is because the sounds and words of a language are used in fixed ways that the speakers of the language recognize the similar meaning, thus making possible