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OF CHINESE
EFL TEACHERS'
COGNITION

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外语教师认知研究

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on me that encouraged me to take the teacher's perspective at a time when much of the field considered it a peripheral area. I have always been grateful for that confidence and trustworthiness. He also found time, out of his heavy academic and administrative schedule, to read and reread the entire manuscript through carefully and critically. To him, I owe much more than words.

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To conclude, it needs pointing out that although I have incorporated many an invaluable and suggestive view, any errors of misjudgment or oversight in this study, however, are solely my own responsibilities.

Abstract

Within both general education and second language teaching field since the 1960s, there has been a movement away from teacher-dominated modes of learning to more learner-centered approaches. In fact, under the influence of this movement, of unquestionable importance for language learning has been the development in recent years of learner-centered models of education. In a provocative article, Basanta (1996) states: "In recent years two parallel processes have been at work, with the role of the learner being steadily upgraded, and that of the teacher moving in the opposite direction." This can be seen from the fact that while books and articles concerned with learner are in abundance, there is still little research on what the teacher brings to the process of second language education. However, this learner-centeredness movement does not deny the importance of the teacher, nor imply that there is no role for the teacher in a learner-centered classroom, quite the contrary, it led to a reexamination of traditional teacher

roles, for even the so-called innovative methods still require teachers to carry out particular roles in the classroom in order to facilitate the language learning processes the method is designed to activate. Similarly, learner autonomy is a welcome goal for education, but it does not mean the absence of the teacher in the learning process. For language teachers, "there is a new, more evolved role which can be, if in some ways more challenging, also more exciting and fulfilling." (Jane Arnold 2000) There are also clear signs today that the importance of the teachers' role in the language learning processes has not diminished. This can be seen in some of the publications on teacher development (Richards and Freeman 1996; Woods 1996) and the emphasis in current second language acquisition studies on qualitative research in which teachers are active participants or initiators.

Unfortunately, even among the "few who go against the trend by looking at the other side of the desk", the process-product research paradigm has been dominant in their studies. In this research paradigm, teaching is approached from the outside, that is, from the perspective of a researcher or observer looking at observable classroom teaching processes or teaching behaviours, such as strategies used in opening lessons, questioning behaviours,

ways of giving praise and feedback, error correction, and other quantifiable aspects of classroom interaction. This approach has attempted to understand the nature of teaching through identifying and describing sets of discrete teaching behaviours. The assumption is that specific teaching behaviours could be identified with particular learning outcomes and the teaching behaviours characteristic of effective teachers could be used as a basis for the training of other teachers.

A different research paradigm is illustrated in the present study, an approach which is based on a qualitative or interpretative approach to teaching research and which seeks to understand teaching from the inside rather than from the outside, that is, from the point of view of the EFL teachers themselves. Rather than depending on quantification of teaching behaviours, we focus on how teachers' knowledge systems, beliefs, values and principles shape their understanding of teaching and how they arrive at instructional decisions in teaching.

Through classroom observation, on-going interviews with teachers, analysis of their stories they tell about their teaching, and retrospective interviews based on videotaped recordings of their lessons, the present research tries to present an account of the pedagogical reasoning and

classroom teaching practices employed by Chinese EFL teachers in their work.

The whole dissertation is composed of six chapters, including the introduction at the outset and conclusion at the end.

Chapter 1 is the introduction. It provides a general introduction of sources of the current research and why the present topic is chosen. Only when we have a clear picture of what others have done in this field can we develop our own topic, thus Chapter 2 delineates the background of the present study. Language teacher cognition literature in three major domains is reviewed: basic notions in the study of language teacher cognition studies, teacher cognition and classroom practices and the relationship between teacher cognition and teacher education. This chapter relates language teacher cognition to teachers' classroom practices and its impact on teacher education, pointing out the limitation of existing studies, especially inappropriateness concerning the Chinese EFL context.

Language teachers' instructional decisions are strongly influenced by their educational belief systems. Drawing on research findings on teacher cognition, Chapter 3 examines the nature of EFL teachers' belief systems and its role in shaping teachers' instructional decisions and practices. It

also examines the nature of decision making in more detail and the effects of these decisions on teaching and learning. Thus, this chapter paves the way for the case study of Chapter 4.

Based on the preceding discussions, Chapter 4 focuses upon the ways in which a particular group of experienced Chinese college English teachers conceptualized their classroom practice. The purpose is to discover the meanings the teachers gave to their classroom work in terms of the particular relationships they identified between their classroom practices and principles which they identified as guiding these practices. The major findings are presented and discussed. Whether there is a clear relationship across the group between principles and practices that may reflect collective language pedagogy is also reported.

Drawing on the research findings of last section, Chapter 5 provides a coherent framework of ideas for the field of EFL teacher education and development in China. This framework involves teachers in developing theories of teaching, understanding the nature of decision-making, the development of a reflective teaching practice and strategies for teacher change. It also reminds that teacher educators need to reassess their current positions and practices and examine afresh the assumptions underlying their own

programs and practices. The central idea here is that teacher education should be less involved with transmitting models of effective practice and more concerned with providing experiences that facilitate the development of cognitive and interpretive skills, which are used uniquely by every teacher.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion. It includes the retrospect and prospect of the whole thesis, in which the author summarizes the central themes of dissertation, addresses its limitations and points the way for future directions. In particular, it suggests that there is a pressing need for an empirical as well as a theoretical base for teacher development.

To sum up, although the study has nowhere exhausted the topic at issue, it does add an important dimension to our understanding of second language teaching, one which enables us to recognize the limitations in conceptualizing teaching only in terms of teaching methodology or teaching behaviours, and one which emphasizes the importance of understanding the cognitive dimensions of teaching, the ways in which beliefs, values, principles and experience shape teachers' classroom actions and perceptions and implications for Chinese EFL teacher education and development.

中文摘要

自从 20 世纪 60 年代以来,西方基础教育与语言教学领域开始了一个脱离以教师为中心的教育模式向以学生为中心的模式发展的运动。在外语教学领域,人们开始认识到外语学习的主体是学习者,因此越来越强调所谓“以学习者为中心(learner-centredness)”的教学方法。受此影响,相当一段时间以来,从学习者的角度来探讨外语学习本质的文章和专著大量涌现,大有“一统外语教学天下”的趋势,而有关外语教师角色的研究很少见到。面对这种不正常的现象,西方语言教育家 Basanta (1996) 在英语教学著名杂志 ELT 撰文指出:“在外语教学领域,近年来有两种趋势同时起作用,一方面,学习者地位不断得到提升,而同时教师的地位则在不断下降。”其实强调“学习者为中心”的教学模式并不排斥教师的作用,教师的角色应当说更有“挑战性”了(Arnold 2000)。但在这股“学习者为中心”强大的浪潮中,很多人误以为教师的作用已不重要了,再谈论教师的角色就显得有点过时与落伍,从而也就忽视了对外语教师在教学中认知作用的探讨,这对我们外语教学产生了一定的负面影响。因此,国内外关注教师作用的专题性研究成果比较少,这方面研究不仅少,而且也多处在初级阶段。对教师认知的研究国外有 Woods (1996), Richards

and Freeman (1996), Richards, J. C. (2001), Richards, J. C. and Lockhart, C (2000) 等, 而在国内似乎还未见到有关专题研究。相对于蓬勃发展的外语教育, 这不能不说是一大遗憾。

在为数不多的对外语教师的认知研究中, 其研究模式往往是“外在的”, 即从研究者或观察者的角度来探究教师的教学行为, 说到底就是试图通过找出和描述一些分散的教学行为来探求教学的本质, 关注焦点是外语课的起始策略、提问方式、纠错方式等一些能够观察到的可以进行量化的“外在”方面, 这样做的理念就是找出好的外语教师和学生学习结果的关联, 从而为教师培训提供理论基础。

本研究选择了教师认知系统作为重点, 在吸收有关研究成果的基础上, 我们采用一种“内在的”, 即让“教师自己站出来说话” (voices from teachers themselves) 的定性 (qualitative) 或解释性 (interpretive) 的方法来探讨外语教师的认知系统。我们选择了一些教学经验丰富的优秀大学英语教师并对其中几位进行个案研究, 结合课堂观察、课后访谈、看课堂录像、教师自己讲述等方法, 力求全面深入客观地描述他们的教学过程, 关注他们的知识体系、观念系统、态度和经验如何影响他们在教学过程中作出各种决策 (decision-making) 以及对他们教学过程的理解, 并探讨了教师如何通过对自己的教学实践的批判性反思来不断充实、更新和提高自己的教学理论和实践能力。本研究为中国英语教学提供了一个具有较高解释力的框架, 从而为我国外语教师教育与发展提供新的思路和理论依据。本研究在一定程度上可以说填补了国内外语教学界在外语教师认知领域研究的空白。

论文共分为六章。第一章是导论部分，本章首先对本项研究的目标、范围进行简单介绍，对教师认知这个关键术语的定义及范围加以限定；然后对以往有关对教学本质和对教师角色研究进行综合性回顾与阐释，并对论文的研究方法、整体架构进行大致说明。

第二章是对外语教师认知研究有关文献的综合回顾，指出已取得的成就及存在的问题。为此我们首先澄清了外语教师研究中的有关概念，进而评述了教师认知和课堂教学、教师认知和教师发展两方面研究现状，特别指出教师认知和课堂教学之间的互动关系会对教师发展的影响是国内外该领域研究的薄弱环节，是本研究着重要探讨的问题。

教师的课堂行为深受其观念系统的影响，在第三章，我们主要探讨了两个问题：观念系统的本质及教师决策。通过研究教师认知方式指出教学本质是一种思维活动，了解教师的观念系统就容易理解他们的教学行为，教师的观念系统建立在他们对教学内容和过程的认识基础上，主要包括教师语言学习、英语教学以及外语教学作为一个职业等的认识。正是这些认识使他们在教学中作出这样或那样的决策。这里所谓决策就是教师在教学活动中的各项决定。一位优秀教师之所以优秀就在于他能够决定什么时候采取什么样的策略，因此教师的决策能力是教师职业技能的关键所在。我们所讨论的教师决策主要包括三方面，即计划性决策、互动性决策和评估性决策。

第四章是具体对一组大学英语教师的研究，探讨了教师观念系统如何影响课堂决策。研究结果表明，教师观念比所具备的知识更能影响其教学行为，一些看似自发或无意识的行为实际反映了隐含在教师内心深处的教学观。只是这些理论有可能

不被教师所意识到，它们可能隐含在教师作出判断、作出决定、采取行动时，甚至隐含在他的工作模式里。发现和理解这些隐含理论相当重要，教师应不断监控和检查自己的教学行为是否反映了自己的教学观点，反思自己的教学实践，建立适合自己的教学理论。

第五章涉及认知研究的结果对外语教师教育和发展的有关启示。教师是影响教学的关键因素之一。在传统的语言教师培训模式中，重点往往是教学技能的训练、教学理论的构建，以学科能力替代专业能力的倾向尤甚。这样做的结果并不能转化为外语教师对外语教学这一复杂过程的理解和把握，更谈不上自动地内化为他们的职业实践能力，这一传统模式最大缺陷就是忽略了外语教学是一种强烈的“认知行为”。研究结果启示我们，教师学习是社会性的、持续不断的、开放式的过程，师资教育的重点不仅仅是传授教学技巧、语言学及应用语言学理论，更应关注“教师思维”，关注教师认知能力的培养。我们认为教师发展就是教师自我反思、自我更新的过程，即从他们自己的教学实践中探询、归纳和研究中形成有特色的个性化教学理论，不断提高自己的专业能力，成为善于独立思考、具有反思精神的人。

第六章结论部分是对本文主要观点和结论的总结，同时也指出了本课题有待进一步研究的领域和方向。

传统外语教学研究从教学方法和行为入手对外语教学进行概念性解说和阐释。本研究试图跳出这一研究思路的禁锢，强调造成教学效果差异的是教师，而不是方法。贯穿全书的中心思想就是外语教学是一种强烈的认知行为，教师的观念系统比他们的知识结构更能影响其教学行为；在外语师资培训中，应

调整把语言学和应用语言学当作唯一渊源学科的弊端，关注教师认知能力的培养，使他们成为善于独立思考，具有反思精神的人。

综上所述，本研究围绕教师观念系统和课堂教学之间的关系以及对教师发展的启示等进行了初步的研究和讨论。论证远非全面，但它传递的信息引人深思，我们相信，从认知角度来探究外语教学的本质给中国外语教师教育与发展提供了一个新的视角，希望更多的人能加入到这个行列中来，同时也期待有关专家、同行的批评指正。