

An Introduction to English Subject Educology

英语教育学引论

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to English
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从传统教学法的教师中心说到现在的学生中心说,从最初的语法翻译到现在的发展交际能力,外语教学经过多年的发展,已有了自己的理论与实践体系。然而在任何时期,教师的作用都是毋庸置疑的。外语教师的教育经历了从师资培训(teacher training)到师资教育(teacher education)再到师资发展(teacher development)的过程,外语教学研究也经历了从外语教学法到外语教学论再到外语教育学的过程。

外语教育学是研究外语教育客观规律的科学,是研究外语教学过程及影响外语教学的诸多因素,揭示外语教学的性质及规律的科学。外语教育学是外语教学法的改造、发展和提高。它是以教育学等科学与外语学科相结合的理论为基础的应用性科学。所谓“应用性”是一个相对的概念。它仅仅是和宏观的教育科学中的“理论”相对而言的。就外语教育本身而言,它又有自己的理论和实践的内容。外语教育的实践活动是其理论的源泉。外语教育学从外语教育实践中研究外语教育现象和探讨提高外语教育质量的规律,反过来它又应用从实践中升华出来的规律指导外语教育再实践,进一步提高外语教育质量。应用性的主要标志就在于外语教育的主要任务是帮助未来的外语教师树立正确的外语教育观。

本书作为外语教育学引论既涉及宏观的外语教育学相关学科的理论,也涉及外语教育学理论与应用体系,继而集中在外语教学的课程论、学习论、教学论、评价理论、科研方法。本书用英语编写,既可以作为外语专业英语教学法教材,也可以提高阅读者的英语水平。本书的阅读对象为英语教育专业的本科生、研究生,英语教师及对英语教学感兴趣的各界人士。

本书参考了许多有关外语教学的著作及文章,其主要内容曾在山西师范大学的本科生及研究生中使用,并得到学生及部分教师的宝贵意见,在此一并表示感谢,书中可能出现的问题皆因作者水平有限所致,希望读者提出宝贵意见。

作者

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Chapter I Concepts of English Language Educology

As the beginning and pavement of the whole book, Chapter I focuses on the following major issues: 1. Introduction to English language educology; 2. The study of education and its relation to language educology; 3. Language Acquisition/Learning Theories; 4. A brief survey of English teaching models. In so doing, we put forward the dominating factors in educology-teaching, learning, and their interactive theories guiding practices in English language education.

1 Introduction to English Language Educology

1.1 Why Educology?

With the modernization and globalization of the world, studies on English language teaching have become increasingly vigorous in recent years. So far various terms have been applied to the field: English teaching, English education, English pedagogy and English educology. While they roughly refer to similar practice guided by similar theories, English educology, as we observed, is more theory-oriented, which is in line with our purpose of writing this book-providing a theoretical survey of studies in ELT (English Language Teaching) and ushering English learners and teachers into further theoretical and practical studies. It is therefore, necessary for us to understand the term educology and the subject educology as a first step.

The term "educology" refers to the entire fund of recorded knowledge about the entire educational process. It has been in use since the seminal work in educology by L. W. Harding in the 1950s. This fund of knowledge can be extended through three types of disciplined inquiry: empirical, focusing on scientific and praxiological knowledge; normative, focusing on the intrinsic value of aspects of education; and analytical, focusing on the analytic philosophy of education, the history of education, and the jurisprudence of education. Like anthropology, sociology, and psychology,

educology refers to the effects of variables on its central subject (ERIC)^①.

Subject educology is a discipline with the school subject education as its focus of study. Its final purpose is to completely realize the educational aims. The theoretical basis is taken from research achievements of relevant disciplines, studying the whole process of aim-making, course-setting, syllabus-designing, teaching, learning and evaluation of teaching programs. The development of subject educology has roughly experienced three stages-teaching methods and teaching materials, teaching theories, and branched educology (Tao, 2001)^②. As for English language educology, the research objects and significance are illustrated as follows.

1.2 Research Objects of English Subject Educology

In the process of education and training, general education that is realized through curricula and teaching programs is generally oriented towards three directions: the development of cognitive competence, the development of the personal and social, as well as professional competence. While it is fundamental to strive to achieve the goals of the general education in English language education, educology of English has its specific objects of study.

1) English subject curriculum

Since the birth of modern science, a close science system has been established. The way of resolution and specialization lays the foundation of modern scientific research, which helps the exploration of human race go from integration and roughness to differentiation and fineness. However, in the process, the inner link between different areas of knowledge has been broken, thus creating separations and limitations. In the case of English teaching, especially as foreign or second language, there has been the long practice of dividing the process into various language skills like listening, speaking, reading, writing etc. This arrangement has contributed a lot to the field of language teaching. However, with time going on, a complementary voice has already been heard: in the age of knowledge economy, the knowledge system of schools needs reconstruction while the main basis is the basic personal qualifications. The knowledge system should be characterized by

① ERIC, <http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal>

② 陶本一. 学科教育学. 北京:人民教育出版社, 2001

integration, comprehension and openness. It should be noted that there is a phenomenon of discipline in the knowledge system. The construction of the knowledge system requires the resolution of dialectical relations between consistency and difference, stability and deviancy, resolution and integration, as well as limitation and selection. The basic principles for the construction of the knowledge system include: to place emphasis on the fosterage of integrated personality, to establish a curriculum system balancing consistency and difference, to realize the integration of the knowledge system and to carry out multi-cultural education (Tao, 2001). The past few years have seen the trial of integrated course books in the EFL (English as foreign language) field in China.

2) English subject learning

The research on learning in subject educology is first of all, directed towards the study of learning effect and learner factors. However, it is not only engaged in the traditional research on learning behavior of people, but also involves research on learning as an important means of fitting into the society, seeking self-actualization and striving for self-perfection. Nowadays the conception of "live and learn" has penetrated into people's lives in the modern learning society. "An integrated person" can be realized only through lifelong learning (Tao, 2001). This is not only an opportunity but also a big challenge facing the modern "individual being" during the process of seeking self-realization. Therefore, as an important element of subject learning, new and ample contents have been added to the connotations of modern English learning, especially some breakthroughs in English language learning theory. This book will expound learners' variables as well as some learning problems within the domain of subject education and review some researchers' achievements of study in such aspects of students' learning subjects as meta-cognition in English learning, strategies of English learning and case study of English learning.

3) English subject teaching

The ultimate goal of subject teaching is to promote and facilitate the production and growth of knowledge in learners to realize their overall development. The development of contemporary society makes the function of subject teaching in educational institutions continuously expand. Under the idea of lifelong, autonomous and integrated learning, the role of subject teachers in the communication of knowledge is also continuously changing. In

today's English teaching field, while laying more and more emphasis on individualized learning, English teaching researchers and frontline teachers in the process of redevelopment and renovation of teaching materials spare no efforts in trying to achieve the accumulation of knowledge and meanwhile sufficiently activate students' positive thoughts on teaching practice. The aim is that general students can be guided and helped to positively, actively and independently gain knowledge and to form a knowledge structure with their own individualized characters (Tao, 2001).

In the process of English teaching, the advantages of various teaching methods and approaches should be taken into consideration. Decisions should be made according to the practical conditions of teaching environment and students we have. And as English educators, we should advocate and improve the spirit of democracy in the process of English instruction and establish good relationships between teachers and students through joint participation and collaboration as well. We should also jointly create a teaching environment that is harmonious and beneficial to the production and growth of knowledge so that the classroom subject teaching activities may become invigorating (Tao, 2001). In such an environment, the skillful instruction of English teachers will deeply influence students' learning activities while the level of teachers' teaching arts will be continuously enhanced in the process of the teachers' subjective and initiative efforts; then the style of teaching arts with individualized characteristics will gradually be formed.

4) Contemporary educational technology in English subject educology

Teaching aids have long been a study and focus of attention for teaching researchers and curricula developers. The impact of modern educational technologies on English language teaching is too big and strong to be neglected. Contemporary educational technology makes use of contemporary information technology in language teaching in order to promote the teaching reforms and students' learning achievement. Generally speaking, the function of the application of contemporary educational technology in English language teaching has experienced a gradual process of cognition:

Media→Tools→Resources→Environment

In the present digital and information age, contemporary educational technology has been becoming one of the basic means, resources and environment for acquisition and growth of knowledge. It is apparent that with the rapid development of multimedia

technology and the internet, great changes have taken place in school teaching activities such as curriculum and teaching materials, teaching models, different roles of teachers and students, etc. For instance, multimedia equipment like Computer, VCD, DVD, EVD, MP4, VCR has enriched and freshened the meaning of audio-lingual and communicative approaches. The use of digital information in English teaching will become an important challenge in our nation's next major education paradigm and will trigger a revolution in all educational and learning approaches. In order to adapt to the advent of the information age in education, the key point for the application of contemporary educational technology in subject teaching activities is the training of all teachers. The training should be closely linked with teachers' routine work and the mastery of information technology. The change of educational ideas and the reforms of teaching should also be closely linked.

5) Teacher training in English subject educology

Compelling evidence and various studies show us that the quality of a teacher is one of the most critical components of how well students achieve. In most cases we can even say teachers are the single biggest influence on how well students learn. So it's no surprise the discussion and debate about English subject educology also zeroing in on the quality of teaching in the classrooms. There are now many loud voices with differing opinions talking about teacher quality. And in many countries in the world, teacher training has already become an established routine work in the field of education.

The need to improve teacher quality and enhance the teaching profession is more urgent for China with regard to its vast larger number of population. The challenge of improving teacher quality in English education in China involves the following aspects.

Teacher preparation: many new English teachers do not feel ready for the challenges of today's classrooms.

Teacher retention: English teachers are often left to "sink or swim", not receiving the nurturing and support they need.

Mastery of content: English teachers in many areas lack opportunities to receive in-service training, resulting in an out-of-date, stereotyped knowledge system in them.

Teacher recruitment: English education faces the challenge of attracting a

greater quantity of people to the teaching profession while also increasing teacher quality.

Of course, as Parrot (1993) points out, whether someone can become a good foreign language teacher does not solely depend on his/her command of the language. There are a variety of elements that contribute to the qualities of a good teacher. These elements can be categorized into such groups as ethic devotion, professional qualities and personal styles.

With all these factors taken into consideration, the task of teacher training in China becomes more demanding.

6) Assessment in English subject educology

Assessment has a direct influence on the entire process of the development of education. When we are trying to inspect and study ongoing subject education, it is necessary for us to study and explore the assessment system of subject education from a new angle. This is the only way that the new theory and practice about subject education may be realized. For many people, assessment is often associated with testing. Many EFL teachers immediately think of tests when speaking of assessment methods.

However, testing is only one of the various means of assessment. In another word, assessment is a broader term. It is usually based on information collected about the learners' current situation, while testing is a way to collect information through formal and standardized form. In this book, both the formal and informal ways to gather information will be discussed. And the influence of social reforms and industrial social ideology over the assessment in subject educology will be touched upon. This influence, along with globalization, is having great effects on English subject assessment. Only after we know the social ideology behind educational assessment and the social function that appears after its effects are left on the assessment system, can we have deeper considerations for the problems and contradictions that exist in the current assessment system of English education in China. At the beginning of the new century, social and cultural reforms not only bring about changes in the assessment functions of English educology, but also surface the disadvantages in the traditional English testing system. It is urgent to construct a new, open and balanced English assessment system.

Besides the listed elements, educology is focusing on more trans-disciplinary studies, like using Internet to test, cultural awareness in language

acquisition/learning. We will also dwell on such topics in this book.

1.3 The Importance of English Subject Educology

Most people would agree that we are moving into the "computer future", a future where everything will be different because of the presence of computers and other new technologies. In many walks of life, the dominance of computer is already visible and even necessary.

Under the new socio-economical situation, it is important to develop new thinking in the field of ELT. The traditional methodology for studying innovation in education may have been adequate at a time when only small changes were possible. But we need a different methodology altogether when we envisage radical changes in education.

Generally speaking, there are two sides of English educology: one side facing towards society, the other facing the individual. The fundamental importance for learning English subject educology includes at least the following aspects:

To enable us to systematically master the general laws of English education;

To enable us to solve the problems which are difficulties for English education at special levels;

To explore and promote the theory of English curriculum and teaching, and

To enable us to identify the difficult nature of English subject education.

As a result, we deal with the various aspects of English educology one by one: its history, main schools of theories, related practices in real language teaching domain and innovations. And in the following parts of Chapter one, we will provide a general survey of teaching theories and a detailed illustration on the study of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which is a hot topic for English language teachers and learners of today.

2 The Study of Education and Its Relation to Language Educology

Among various disciplines, the study of education (educational science, educational theory) is one of the closest to language educology. Yet, it is probably the least recognized and the most neglected (Stern 1987: 420). Language teaching in its most widespread forms occurs in educational settings:

schools, universities, colleges, adult classes, and so on. Usually it forms part of a curriculum of studies and is meant to make an educational contribution to this curriculum. Concepts of education are applied as a matter of course in language teaching just as much as in other subjects of the curriculum. The language teacher almost inevitably operates with some notion of what teaching involves and how language teaching fits into the educational enterprises of which it customarily forms a part. It is therefore all the more surprising to note how little thought has been given to the relationship between language teaching and the study of education.

As a professional field of study, education draws on a number of other studies, such as philosophy, psychology, or sociology, as source disciplines. To be specific, education as a discipline is commonly divided into such sub-disciplines: ① philosophy of education; ② history of education; ③ educational psychology; ④ educational sociology; ⑤ economics of education; ⑥ educational administration and organization; ⑦ educational planning; ⑧ comparative education; ⑨ curriculum; and ⑩ educational technology (ibid: 425). In the following discussion, several sub-disciplines will be illustrated to show the importance of education to language teaching, and language educology as a whole.

2.1 Educational Philosophy

Educational philosophy has bearing on every aspect of the study and practice of education, and language educology is no exception.

Language educology has operated, more or less consciously, with the notion of a defined curriculum (syllabus, program, or method) and has, in recent years, attempted to distinguish between purposes of language teaching (goals, aims, or objectives) and means of language teaching to achieve these purposes. Thus language educology has become committed to an ends/means approach, and this view of the curriculum is often treated as a self-evident truth, and not as a model which has its uses but which may also have certain limitations. It is therefore valuable to recognize that the ends/means model has been put into discussion by educational philosophers. In recent years the relationship between language teachers and language learners, implicit in this model, has also been seriously called into question. Educational philosophy can thus help in clarifying unstated assumptions. In similar ways, it can throw light on such key concepts as are often used far too lightly as discovery learning, individualization, interest, motivation, teaching, skill, and evaluation.

Moreover, the act of foreign language learning, moving from first language to second language, is an expression of ethnic value judgments. Even the desired degree of bilingual competence to be achieved by the student is ultimately a value question. For example, fluency in a second language is worth having if the second language is viewed as a means to communicate; and communication with another ethno-linguistic group is a value to be assessed against other values cultivated by the curriculum.

The teacher's treatment of the language learners and of the learning process also indicates philosophical values. Are learners participants in the teaching-learning process, or are they treated as passive recipients of pre-arranged mechanical activities? Educators looking at language teaching and learning rightly ask themselves, just as they ask of any other curriculum activity: What is the underlying educational philosophy of second language learning, and how does this philosophy relate to the philosophy underlying other educational activities (H. H. Stern: 437—41)?

These indications are sufficient to suggest the merit of a philosophical perspective for language pedagogy.

2.2 History of Education

The importance of a historical approach to language teaching theory has already made itself clear. What is necessary to add in the present context is a reminder that the history of language education forms part of the history of education which provides the wider context, and while language teaching has been subjected to influences which in some ways set it apart from the general historical development of education, in most respects the history of language teaching can be better understood in the framework of educational history. Language educology as part of, and apart from, educational history can be illustrated by a few examples.

In the second half of the nineteenth century modern languages took their place besides other "modern" subjects such as history and natural sciences. Similarly, throughout the first half of the twentieth century languages were thought of as belonging to the curriculum of secondary education because the curriculum conventions dictated that primary education was vernacular schooling in which foreign languages had no place. It was only during the last decades of years that the primary curriculum has become sufficiently flexible to tolerate or welcome second language learning. Language teaching also has in many respects been subject to the same influences of

educational thought that have affected other curriculum subjects and indeed the entire curriculum: psychology, testing, educational research, and educational reform movements. By recognizing these broad trends influencing education the language educational theorists can appreciate better common educational assumptions.

Of course, languages went their own way in some other respects. First, language teaching was exposed to the influence of phonetics and other branches of linguistics. Second, the intellectual demands of "content" subjects, such as history, politics, biology, geography, or the sciences, were viewed differently from the achievement of mastery in a modern language. Third, language teachers as persons were often a group apart from teachers of other subjects, because they included native speakers of the foreign language who brought with them other pedagogical traditions and other cultural presuppositions; they did not always fit into the cultural context in which they taught their native language, nor did they necessarily conform to the ethos of the schools in which they taught.

In the 1960s, at a time when educational thought emphasized creativeness, training in critical thinking, and individual differences among learners, and vehemently rejected mechanical and authoritarian modes of teaching, language pedagogy-following its own linguistic and psychological theories-stressed the need for drill, habituation, conditioning, and automatic responses. The language class of the sixties demanded a much more rigid and authoritarian environment than was regarded as educationally valid in most other curriculum areas (Stern, 1987: 442-44).

In this sense, the history of language education is best viewed as the result of an interplay between general educational history and influences specific to language teaching alone. And it is all the more important not to view the development of language teaching theory without reference to the general history of education.

2.3 Educational Psychology

Since educational psychology covers every aspect of education from a psychological angle, it is central to educational theory. Take behaviorist theory for example. The behaviorist theory of language learning was initiated by behavioral psychologist Skinner, who applied Watson and Raynor's theory of conditioning to the way humans acquire language. Based on their experiments, Watson and Raynor formulated an S-R (stimulus-response)

theory of psychology. They claimed that emotional reactions are learned in much the same way as other skills. Skinner further suggested language is also a form of behavior. It can be learned the same way as animals are trained to respond to stimuli. This theory of learning is referred to as behaviorism, marked by Skinner's Verbal Behavior. Since the advent of Skinner's theory, it has been adopted for some time by the language teaching profession, particularly in the United States of America. One influential result is the oral-aural (audio-lingual) method, which involves endless drilling patterns of listening and repeating. The core idea of this method is that language is learned by constant repetition and reinforcement of the teacher to form habits in language learners. Mistakes were not tolerated and were immediately corrected, and correct utterances were immediately praised. Today, this method is still widely used and practiced in the world at large.

This example shows how important a place of psychology has in the field of language educology.

2.4 Educational Sociology

As a branch of sociology, educational sociology places education as an activity and institution into a social context. It recognizes schools and other educational institutions as agencies within a society. Schools may be viewed as part of a society, reflecting the existing social structure. Writings in educational sociology have demonstrated how in many societies the composition of school populations inevitably reflects the divisions in society, and to what extent school systems are openly divided according to the major social strata in that society. Languages have played their part in this class division of education. Until recently, learning foreign languages was regarded as a mark of an "elitist" education; and in some school settings languages are taught not so much for their intrinsic merit but mainly because they give social prestige to the learner (Stern, 1987: 445-47).

Educational sociology also recognizes that schools have been created as agencies of social change through which the society may deliberately strive to modify its internal social structure. Education has been used in some societies as a means of breaking down class barriers, and thus creating equality of opportunity and increasing social mobility. Languages have sometimes been introduced into schools and colleges as a move towards more democratic education.