

牛津应用语言学丛书



Focus on the Language Learner

论以语言学习者为中心

Elaine Tarone

George Yule



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Focus on the Language Learner

Approaches to identifying and meeting the needs of
second language learners

Elaine Tarone and
George Yule

Oxford University Press

出版前言

去年5月本社出版了从牛津大学出版社引进的19种“牛津应用语言学丛书”,受到了外语教学界师生的一致好评和欢迎,在短短的一年中,重印了4次。为了向我国的外语教学和研究人員提供更多的学术参考专著,帮助读者了解近年来国外应用语言学和外语教学研究的理论,促进我国外语教学的研究和改革,本社又挑选了10本该系列中的精品,奉献给广大读者。希望本套丛书能够对于借鉴国外研究成果和总结我国自己的外语教学经验,形成具有中国特色的外语教学理论有所帮助。

《论以语言学习者为中心》是一部以外语教学理论指导外语教学实践的专著,其主旨并不是提出一整套的外语教学理论,而是在正确的教学原则指导下,介绍如何确定不同的语言学习者的具体需要,并在此基础上,通过实例介绍一系列的教学方法、技巧和步骤,以帮助教师在不同的教学环境中实施以学生为中心的教学理论。

本书由E·塔龙(Elaine Tarone)和G·尤尔(George Yule)合作完成,前者为美国明尼苏达大学语言学系教授,后者为路易斯安那州立大学语言学教授。两位教授均为应用语言学和外语教学方面的专家,并发表过多部专著。本书初版于1989年,至1996年止已经修订再版过4次,从而成为外语教学理论方面的一本常被引用的专著。

本书内容共分为四部分。第一部分为导论,作者分析了外语学习的过程,外语学习者的目的和期望,语言的基本规律以及语言教学应该达到的目的。第二部分探讨了学习者的需要,提出应从“全局需要分析”(global needs analysis)和“语法修辞需要分析”(grammatical-rhetoric needs analysis)两个层面来做此项工作,并分别加以详述。在第三部分里,作者进一步从语法能力、社会语言学能力和交际能力三个方面入手,详细论述了如何鉴定学习者确实已知什么和不知什么。第四部分则讨论了如何了解学习者对学习过程的想法,即语言

学习中学习者的情感因素问题。

本书最大的特点在于作者不是抽象地谈论学习者的需要,而是注重实践,详细论述了如何鉴定在特定的教学环境中学习者的具体需要,表现了作者注重理论与实践的紧密结合,运用实例向读者展示如何进行此项工作。这就为教师正确确定学生需要并据此制定相应教学方案提供了依据。

本书读者对象为外语教师、外语学习理论的研究人员、研究生或对该领域研究感兴趣的其他各级各类人员。

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2000年5月

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Preface

This is a book which was inspired by the work of second language teachers as they attempted to *identify and meet the local needs of the learners in their classrooms*. It is consequently not a book which presents a single view of how language learning takes place, nor does it promote one global solution for all language teaching problems. Rather, it offers a range of ideas, techniques, and procedures which, in different classroom situations, have provided new insights concerning variability in learner language and the learning process, prompted different types of teaching activities, and fostered a qualitative change in the classroom experiences of many learners. *The common theme throughout all this work is a focus on first identifying the local needs of particular groups of second language learners and then working toward meeting those needs.*

We are aware that, at many points in the following pages, practicing teachers with a busy schedule will wonder where they could find the time to carry out some of the types of investigations proposed as useful in identifying learner needs. It is not our intention that this should be a concern at all. Quite simply, we offer some ideas and some techniques which we have found to be useful. Take what you think may be useful for your particular situation. Ignore what you disagree with, or what you suspect will be too difficult to implement given your current teaching situation.

Basically, we hope that anyone in the field of second language teaching who only has enough time to read this book, or sections of it, will at least gain something: a better understanding of how the process of identifying learners' needs can have a beneficial effect on the process of attempting to meet those needs. We feel that this understanding, in itself, is valuable.

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PART ONE

Basic issues

Introduction

Why is it that language teachers never seem to be quite satisfied with any one methodology or any one set of teaching materials? Why, for example, is it extremely common to observe language teachers spending a great deal of preparation time patching together lesson material from various sources, constructing their own readings and exercises, and then busily working with a photocopier or duplicator? It cannot be claimed that there are no available textbooks for language teaching. On the contrary, there is a wealth of commercially produced language teaching material and yet, even when supplied with the most recent of textbooks—often chosen after extensive consultation and review by experts—language teachers are still to be observed busily changing sections or creating additional material. In fact, one extremely experienced and very competent teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) recently told us: 'Even if I were using a text I had written myself only last year, I wouldn't use it without modification.'

What can account for this seeming perversity? It is our belief that the answer lies in the fact that no two foreign language classes are ever the same, and that language teachers recognize this. In order to successfully teach a second or foreign language to adults, teachers recognize that, at a very practical level, they must constantly adjust their methods and materials on the basis of their identification of the *local needs of their students*. If those perceived needs differ with each new class, then it ceases to be surprising that teachers seem to spend extra time preparing additional materials specifically designed for each new group. In a sense, then, the source of dissatisfaction among language teachers is their own intuitive awareness that there is not one fixed methodology which will work with all students, and that there is no one set of materials which will guarantee successful learning for all. Indeed, perhaps the most frustrating experience for many novice teachers on entering the language teaching profession is the discovery that there simply isn't a prescribed set of procedures which they will learn and then implement in the classroom. What the novices have to learn is that there exists a wide range of alternatives, both in teaching methods and in types of materials, and that the way to make their own lessons work effectively with their own particular students is to develop the ability to select from those alternatives (or even to create novel approaches) in accordance with what they perceive to be their students' needs. The teacher trainer must somehow impart to the novice a clear understanding of this process.

However, this process may also be a source of frustration for many experienced language teachers. They know that they do in fact work out ways to provide their students with appropriate lesson material, yet often they are not quite sure about how they come to achieve this, and they have great difficulty articulating the processes involved. It is a frustration which results from having a good intuitive sense of what will work, but not being able to explain why in any objective sense.

We hope that, in the course of this book, we shall be able to present arguments and illustrate procedures which will make sense in terms of language teachers' intuitions and which will not only provide guidance to the novice, but will in effect provide experienced teachers with ways to become more articulate about their own experience in the classroom so that they can say why they believe their approach worked. We shall try to show that the processes of identifying what the students need to know, investigating what the students do and do not know already, and gaining insight into how the students perceive their own abilities—far from being the purview of the expert outsider—are at the very heart of the successful classroom teacher's activities in second or foreign language instruction. In so doing, we hope we shall provide novice language teachers with guidance in a complex field and at the same time provide experienced language teachers with a number of incentives toward a greater sense of professionalism and a firmer conviction that what they do can have a powerful impact on the process of second language acquisition. In short, we would like to minimize some of the frustration and dissatisfaction mentioned above by providing language teachers with:

- a means to define their own teaching goals by working out the needs of their students in relatively specific terms
- practical methods, with accompanying illustrations of materials, to identify different aspects of their students' needs
- a sense of personal and professional security in their own ability to make decisions concerning the methods and materials used with a particular group of students, and to support these decisions with relevant data
- a means of critically assessing the claims of theorists in the field of second language acquisition by looking at their own data derived from their own practical experience with their particular group of learners.

This book, then, is *not* designed for curriculum developers interested in doing large-scale needs analysis projects: it is intended for classroom language teachers interested in improving their ability to analyze the needs of particular groups of learners in order to make practical teaching decisions. To this end, we will now look at some aspects of what is known about the language learning process itself.