

中国外语教学丛书



# Issues and Options in Language Teaching

语言教学的问题与可选策略

H. H. Stern

*edited by*

Patrick Allen and Birgit Harley

上海外语教育出版社



牛津应用语言学丛书

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*H. H. Stern*

原稿

*Patrick Allen*

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## 出版前言

本书由 P·艾伦与 B·哈雷根据 H·H·斯特恩博士的遗稿整理编辑而成,并由 H·G·威多森教授担任应用语言学顾问。斯特恩是研究第二语言教学问题的权威人士,加拿大卓越的教学法专家之一,为安大略教育研究学院现代语言中心的创建人,曾任该中心主任和该学院课程研究系名誉教授。斯特恩自 1981 年退休后致力于撰写两本书,第一本书《语言教学的基本概念》于 1983 年出版,其中阐述的理论很快为学术界所接受,被公认为语言教学的主要理论依据之一;第二本书即本书,作者在撰写过程中去世。本书研究的是第二语言课程实践方面的问题,虽然独立成书,但就内容而言,与第一本书为姊妹篇,两者相辅相成。

本书的引言及第一至第十二章内容,忠实地依照原稿,充分反映原作者的意图,书中对第二语言课程设计的主要问题作了详细分析,议论精辟严谨,实例丰富多彩。但斯特恩原来计划列入书中的有关词汇、社会策略、课程资源、评估等章节内容,或尚未成稿或仅为零星片断,致使编者在整理时只能尽量接近作者意图。斯特恩原来计划在总结中论述如何把课程多方位的组合连结成为一个有机的整体,编者为了填补上述空缺,根据斯特恩遗留的残稿撰写了一个总结,就整书的框架和课程一体化的问题作了简要陈述。

斯特恩在其《语言教学的基本概念》一书中阐述的是语言学和教育语言学的基本理论,以帮助教师理清基本理论概念,确定教学实践的理论依据。作为补充,本书重点转移至教育语言学理论与具体语言教学法的内容与关系,探讨可供语言教学机构选择采用的教学策略等问题。

本书旨在帮助读者提高对具体语言教学情况的分析能力,有助于语言教学机构和语言教师制定切合实际的教学计划和教学策略,也有助于学生更有效地学习第二语言或外国语。在写作上,本书也颇具特

色:叙述全面系统,评论客观公允;对可供选择参考的各个变项作了界定,对一些尚待教学实践验证的争议问题也提出了有价值的参考意见。

本书读者对象为第二语言或外语教师以及相关人士,包括从幼儿园到大学的各类语言教学机构的专业教师、培训管理人员和行政人员等。

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Every effort has been made to trace the owners of copyright material in this book, but we should be pleased to hear from any copyright holder whom we have been unable to contact.

## Editors' preface

Dr H.H. (David) Stern, founder and former head of the Modern Language Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, was a well-known authority on second language teaching and one of Canada's most distinguished educators. When Dr Stern retired from the Institute he set himself the task of writing two books which together would provide a comprehensive survey of the field of second language education. The first volume, *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*, gave an account of the theoretical foundations and rapidly established itself as a key reference. The second volume, left unfinished at Dr Stern's death, dealt with practical implications for the second language curriculum. Thus, although this book is designed to stand alone, it will be apparent that the two volumes complement one another, the first in an important sense being incomplete without the second.

Shortly after Dr Stern's death, we were asked by Mrs Rhoda Stern to prepare the second volume for publication, and we gladly agreed to undertake the important task of making this work available to the field. The manuscript we received was at various stages of completion. Some sections were in almost final form, some were in first draft form, and some were missing entirely. At an early stage in the work we decided that our aim as editors was to revise and reorganize the existing material, but that we would not add to the main text, apart, for example, from updating references and inserting footnotes. The reader can be confident, therefore, that the Introduction and Chapters 1-12 closely follow the author's rough draft, and that they convey his intentions with reasonable accuracy.

The present text provides a carefully argued and richly exemplified analysis of a number of central issues in second language curriculum design. The reader should nevertheless bear in mind that it has not been possible to carry out the author's original intention in every respect. We know that Dr Stern intended to include chapters on vocabulary, social strategies, curriculum resources, and evaluation, but these chapters were either non-existent or only in rough note form. Also missing was the Conclusion, in which Dr Stern planned to discuss how the various components of the multidimensional curriculum might be combined



into an integrated whole. In order to fill the gap left by the missing chapters, we have provided a new Conclusion, in which we briefly round out the framework and discuss the issue of curriculum integration, based wherever possible on source material from Dr Stern's files.

The original manuscript consisted of 23 chapters of varying lengths. These have been reorganized into 12 chapters, divided into four parts, with an Introduction and Conclusion. In Part One the author discusses a general approach to language teaching analysis, which forms the basis for his multidimensional curriculum framework. Part Two is concerned with the four language teaching objectives of proficiency, knowledge, affect, and transfer. These objectives relate in turn to the four content syllabuses—language, communicative activities, culture, and general language education—which are dealt with in Part Three. Finally, in Part Four, the author discusses a number of teaching strategies which are represented as options on three dimensions: intralingual–crosslingual, analytic–experiential, and explicit–implicit. A Conclusion has been provided by the editors, as already indicated.

We wish to acknowledge the help of the many individuals who have assisted us in the preparation of this volume. Our greatest debt is to Mrs Rhoda Stern, who generously made available to us all of Dr Stern's books and papers, and who helped us to trace a number of important documents. We are grateful to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education for administrative and financial assistance, to Oxford University Press for their encouragement and support, and to three anonymous reviewers who provided detailed comments on the manuscript. We would like to thank Roger Stern who helped us to transfer the text from Dr Stern's home computer to the Institute VAX. We are grateful to Ellen Jeske, text-processing specialist, without whose expertise and dedicated work it would have been impossible to complete the project. Our thanks are extended to Alice Weinrib, MLC librarian, who provided valuable assistance in tracing bibliographic references. We would also like to express our appreciation for the role played by our graduate assistants Iva Baltova, Michael Clouston, Sonia Fiorucci, Xiaowei Liang, Li Paper, Stephanie Paulauskas, Kathryn Shred-Foley, Yilin Sun, and Wenxia Wang, who performed a variety of editorial tasks with great efficiency.

Stern's hope was that this book would provide an impartial yet critical overview of language teaching methodology as a basis for educational decision-making and future research. In presenting this edited version of Stern's work, we hope that we have succeeded in capturing the essence of his thinking on the need for a more comprehensive perspective on language teaching theory and practice. It should be clearly recognized, however, that the present formulation is only a beginning. As the author himself put it in a book published over twenty years ago (Stern 1970: 42): 'Nowhere in the world can language teaching claim to have

found an easy and final answer to its instructional problems . . . The continuous questioning of our own efforts and the persistent dissatisfaction among learners do suggest that we are by no means at the end of the road.'

Patrick Allen  
Birgit Harley

Toronto  
December 1990

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# Introduction

## Aim of the book

This book is addressed to second or foreign language teachers in general. It is not specific to any one language and therefore concerns, for example, the teacher of English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) as much as the teacher of French, Spanish, Russian, or Japanese. The book is also general in another sense. It is not only meant for teachers who work in a particular type of institution, such as a comprehensive school, high school, or grammar school; it has in mind equally the teacher of young children as well as of adult learners; it ranges from kindergarten to university; it is for teachers of students who are taught informally through private tuition or formally in conventional classes of ten, twenty, or thirty pupils; it is also meant for teachers who reach mass audiences through radio or television. It should be of interest to teacher trainers, supervisors, administrators, and others whose business is second or foreign language teaching or some aspect of it.

The settings in which language teaching occurs are very diverse, but they all have two things in common: (a) the teachers must be able to analyse and interpret the situation within which they teach, and (b) they must be able to plan, develop a policy, and come to decisions in the interests of their students and their programme, so that the new language is learnt as effectively as possible. Consider, for example, a teacher who has been asked to take on a new ESL class. He<sup>1</sup> would immediately want to know something about the students: How old are they? How much English do they know already? How long have they been learning English? How did they acquire their knowledge of the target language? Moreover, the teacher would want to know whether there is a syllabus, programme, or plan which determines how this class should be taught. This kind of questioning is the beginning of planning, which is part of the curriculum process. As the lessons proceed, the teacher has to decide what to do in particular weeks or on particular days. He must choose activities which he believes will help his class to learn English. He will no doubt ask himself from time to time how his teaching is received, whether the pace is right for the class, and whether the students are making progress. Even more so, after the course is over,

## 2 Introduction

a conscientious teacher will review the success of the entire programme. Would he teach like that again the next time round? What changes would he wish to introduce? And so on. ]

Whatever the objective, the setting, or the scale of the operation, second language education requires us to think about the teaching/learning process. Such reflection may be piecemeal, arbitrary and casual, following the whim of the moment—in short, non-professional in character. For example, some language teachers claim that they ‘just do what works’; they switch from ‘method’ to ‘method’; they staunchly assert that in language teaching ‘you can’t apply a theory’; and they ask questions as if language teaching was purely a matter of fashion: Is translation old-fashioned? Is grammar ‘in’ or ‘out’? Is dictation still approved? Have you got a recipe for advanced students? Which is the right method these days? It is not our intention to offer pat answers to such flippant and naive questions, nor to present the reader with a definitive method or prescription. Rather, our purpose is to provide the necessary background knowledge to analyse particular language teaching situations, and to help readers develop the skills needed to ensure that their conceptualization of language teaching is systematic, coherent, and relevant.

With these goals in mind, we will examine language pedagogy as objectively, comprehensively, and systematically as possible. This book, therefore, is *not* a prescriptive guide for language teachers. Rather it is an attempt to analyse the main issues in language teaching practice, to define the parameters within which practitioners have to make choices, and to identify controversial questions and areas which require empirical research. The task we have set ourselves is one of fact-finding, describing, and documenting trends of thought and experience, analysing, synthesizing, and interpreting. We will draw on the past and current pedagogical literature and other relevant documentation, such as policy statements, reports, teaching materials, etc., and wherever possible we will bring together findings from North America and Europe and other parts of the world. Our hope is that this treatment of language pedagogy will not only provide an overview and a set of analytical concepts, but that it will be of direct assistance to practitioners in analysing language teaching situations and in making well-reasoned choices, that it will give direction to future experimentation and empirical research, and that, in a more general way, it will contribute to overcoming the unpredictable changes and ‘bandwagon’ tendencies that have been so prevalent in our field.

## Relationship to *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*

This book, then, like its predecessor, *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching* (Stern 1983a) (henceforth FCLT), is intended to help teachers to think and plan constructively. The relationship between the two books and the perspective of the present volume can best be understood if we look at a diagram which in FCLT provided the basic framework:

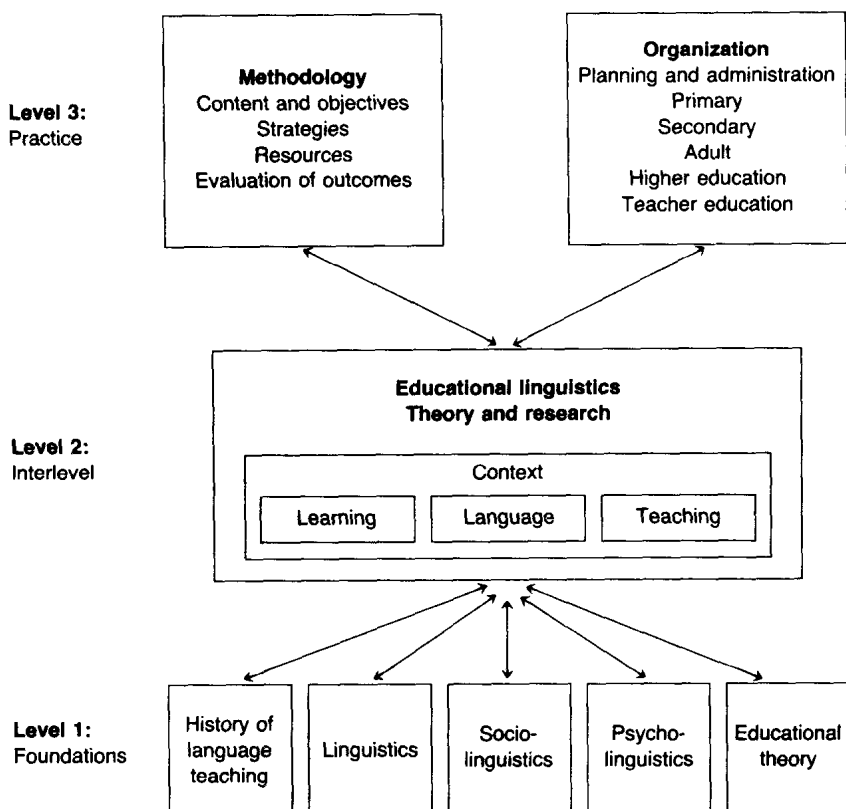


Figure I.1 A conceptual framework for second language teaching theories

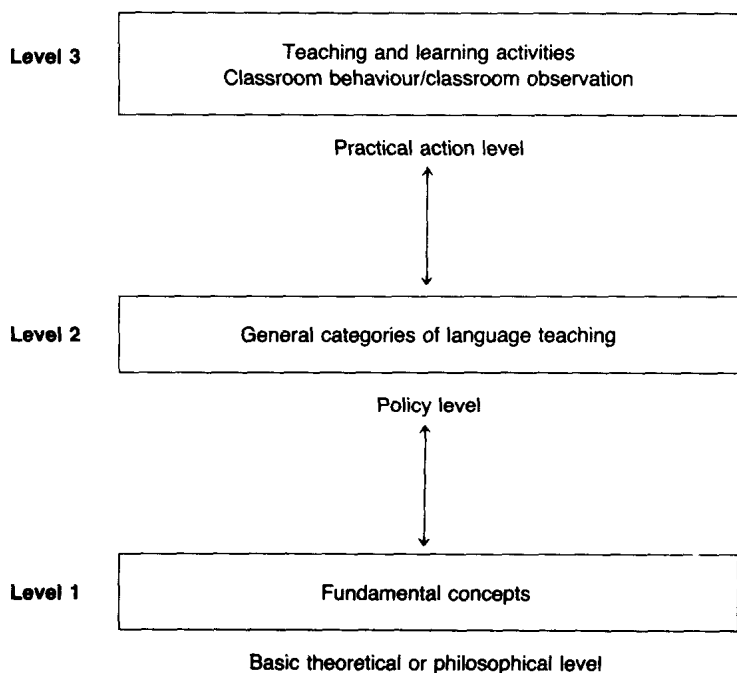
This diagram makes certain assumptions about the relationship between 'theory' and 'practice'. It is well known that language teachers do not fancy themselves as great theoreticians. They tend to believe in intuitive and practical approaches to the day-to-day tasks they are facing. In fact,

they are often quite negative about anything that is described as theoretical and they often look askance at 'ivory-tower' research. Nevertheless, being practical and down-to-earth does not mean being thoughtless. The earlier book gave particular attention to the theory-practice relationship which is reflected in Figure I.1. This diagram represents a theoretical framework of language teaching on three levels. The most abstract, general, and theoretical level is at the bottom and the most practical and concrete level is at the top.

The diagram can be read from the top down or from the bottom up. Starting at the first or lowest level, at least five major fields of study can be identified which have a bearing on language teaching, i.e. historical, linguistic, sociological, psychological, and educational studies. They are seen as contributing to language teaching by coming together at the second level, which is the level of applied or educational linguistics. This discipline deals with the fundamental concepts of language teaching: language, learning, teaching, and social context. Like any other scholarly discipline, educational linguistics develops theories and undertakes research, but its particular function is to provide the scholarly basis for practical language tasks, in this case second language teaching and learning. Because of its position at the second level, educational linguistics is well placed to act as an intermediary between the more general language-related disciplines at level 1 and the more specific practice of language teaching at level 3. The third level, practice, is divided into two cells, *methodology* (or pedagogy) and *organization*. *Methodology* deals with the practical concepts we need in teaching and learning languages, while *organization* refers to the institutions which provide opportunities for such teaching and learning. In this model, we visualize the practitioner operating at the third level. Practitioners are not only language teachers but also others directly or indirectly concerned with language teaching, such as politicians, advisers, administrators, curriculum makers, and so on.

In FCLT our main task was to delineate the four main concepts of language, society, learning, and teaching and to study the relationship between these and the underlying disciplines. In other words, FCLT was concerned with the first and second levels in Figure I.1. The chief purpose of FCLT was to help teachers and others concerned with language education to clarify these fundamental concepts in their own minds and thus to define the philosophy underlying their own practice. In the present work the focus has shifted from the relationship between levels 1 and 2 to the relationship between levels 2 and 3 in Figure I.1. At level 3 our interest is directed to the cell on the left, methodology, rather than the one on the right, organization. Methodological issues present themselves in all types of institution in which languages are taught. The institutional aspect of language teaching is a distinct topic which will not be dealt with in the present volume.

In order to locate the treatment of pedagogy in this book as clearly as possible we will refer to a second diagram (Figure I.2) which is, so to speak, carved out of the basic framework in Figure I.1. It is once more a three-level model:



*Figure I.2 From deep to surface levels in language pedagogy*

At the base, which corresponds to level 2 in Figure I.1, we find the fundamental concepts which were thoroughly explored in FCLT in relation to the theoretical disciplines. In the present model they constitute the basis of fundamental beliefs and represent the philosophical level of the model. The methodology/pedagogy cell of Figure I.1, which is the principal focus of the present book, is for the purpose of our discussion divided into two levels. The second level is the policy level which gives language teaching its characteristic shape and direction. At the third level we reach the surface of the model and consider the classroom manifestations of teaching which consist of the concrete behaviour of teachers and learners, materials in use, examination records, classroom tests, video or audio recordings of classroom episodes; in short, the actual situations in which teachers and learners find themselves in a



particular classroom in a given school or college. We will refer to this as the practical action level.

## // Historical perspective

The theoretical position we are adopting can best be understood against the background of historical developments in language pedagogy. It is sufficient for our purposes to provide a brief overview of the one-hundred-year period which began in the 1880s. At that time, there was a remarkable upsurge of interest in foreign language teaching in several European countries which made itself felt in all the educational systems of the Western world. The entire time span is characterized by three major trends of development which created the ideological climate within which present-day thought on language teaching has evolved. These trends represent the three major ways in which language pedagogy throughout this period has attempted to renew and improve itself:

- 1 Innovation through changes in teaching method;
- 2 Innovation through the language-related sciences and research;
- 3 Technological innovation.

### Innovation through changes in teaching method

One of the main features of the development of language pedagogy has been the continuous attempt to renew language teaching through changes in teaching method. These efforts have gone on unabated from the late nineteenth century up to the present time. During the final decades of the last century a vigorous reform movement arose in Western Europe and spread to most countries in which modern languages were part of the school curriculum. This movement focused on classroom teaching and initiated a century of debate on teaching method. The traditional grammar-translation method, then current in schools, came under heavy fire. The reformers advocated a new direct method, which emphasized oral practice and dispensed with translation as a technique of language teaching. The controversy about the new method was prolonged and often bitter. It had repercussions on language teaching not only in Europe but also in North America.

The debate on language teaching methods continued into the period between the two world wars, a period which from the point of view of language pedagogy is characterized by the search for realistic solutions to the method controversy. Some language teaching theorists recommended a compromise between the traditional method and the direct method. Others advocated the search for practical limited objectives, emphasizing in particular the usefulness of reading as an appropriate goal for language training.