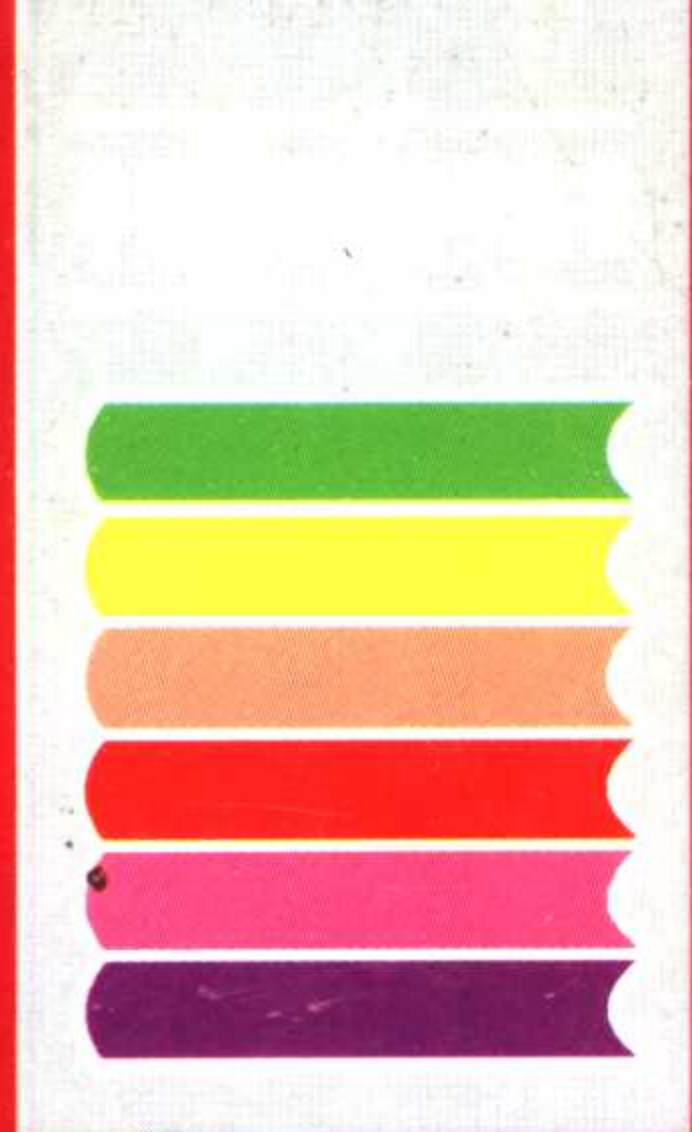




Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching

语言教学的基本概念

H. H. Stern

上海外语教育出版社



牛津应用语言学丛书

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出版前言

本书是一部从历史的、多学科的角度,运用应用语言学的研究成果对语言教学进行理论探讨的学术专著。作者 H·H·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一,1968 - 1981 年任安大略教育研究学院现代语言中心主任,1981 - 1987 年任该学院课程研究系名誉教授。本书由 H·G·威多森教授担任应用语言学顾问。

本书主要研究除母语以外的语言教学问题,试图从宏观的角度探讨各种不同情况下、各种环境中的非母语语言教学;但作者并没有在母语和非母语教学之间划出明确的界限,书中阐述的某些理论也适用于母语教学。

本书的基本思想有以下四个特点:

一、强调理论的指导作用。作者认为先进的教学实践是建立在把握先进的教学理论的基础上的,只有优秀的理论方能对实践提供有效指导。本书探讨的是语言教学理论,但并不是高不可攀的“象牙塔”中的理论,而是注重理论与实践相结合,提出了能对语言教学实践提供指导的实用性和操作性强的理论。

二、强调教学理论与具体教学实践相结合。作者并不要求读者照搬现成的理论,而是希望他们能将理论与各自的实践经验相结合。作者设想的理想境界是:读者通过阅读本书能对语言教学形成见多识广的、专业化的、成熟的、全面的“理论”,这种“理论”有助于指导读者个人的实践,使他们在对学生施教、课程设置、观察问题、作出判断和作出决策等方面都能获益。

三、注重提高读者的自我判断力。鉴于关于语言教学的论著浩如烟海,关于语言教学的方法众说纷纭,进行取舍和鉴别,分辨出真理和谬误并非易事。因此,对于语言教学所面临的各种各样的问题,作者并不给予现成的答案,而只是提供一个能用来分析语言教学问题和难

题的框架,使读者在框架的指导下自行作出判断。由于语言教学的复杂性,搞好教学应随情况、环境等因素而变化,不可能得出统一的结论,找到唯一的答案。

四、吸取诸多学科关于语言教学的研究成果。作者首先从语言教师的角度对这些学科的观点进行了评述,然后讨论了它们与语言教学的关系,特别是与关键概念的关系。作者在不同的章节中都要求读者考虑自己的观点,并回顾他们作为语言学习者、使用者或语言教师的体验。作者所期待的是:读者自身的体验能与语言教学的历史和诸多学科的研究成果相联系,从而确立语言科学研究和语言教学实践之间相辅相成的关系。

本书集作者毕生从事语言教学和培训语言教师的经验,经十多年酝酿和创作而成。可以说,本书对世界范围的语言教学进行了权威性的评述,为未来的语言教学建立了一系列的指导思想,为今后语言教学的发展指明了方向。本书自 1983 年初版以来一直深受读者的喜爱,至 1997 年已重印九次。

本书的读者对象是语言教学专业的教师或学生,也可供从事语言研究的各类人员参考。

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Introduction

It might as well be admitted right at the outset: this is a book about *theory* of language teaching. This ‘confession’ may immediately put off some readers who have no truck with ‘ivory tower’ theoreticians, and who may therefore feel disinclined to read any further. But taking a chance on it, I hope that, in the chapters that follow, those who have this deep antipathy to anything ‘theoretical’ can be convinced that ‘good teaching practice is based on good theoretical understanding. *There is indeed nothing so practical as a good theory*’ (Wardhaugh 1969:116).

This book is therefore addressed to anyone who has a serious interest in language teaching and who is prepared to give some time and thought to an understanding of what lies behind the practices of the classroom. The readers I have particularly in mind are the many thoughtful and responsible practitioners or student teachers who seek orientation or professional development. It may also be of interest to others who, in one way or another, are concerned with these questions: administrators, policy makers, teacher trainers, textbook writers, researchers, and students of applied linguistics, language pedagogy, and education generally.

The reader is invited to take part in an *exploration of second or foreign language teaching and learning*. We set out from the assumption that languages are difficult to learn and no less difficult to teach. Over the past one hundred years or so, and indeed for centuries before that, as Kelly (1969) has shown in his fascinating *Twenty-Five Centuries of Language Teaching*, a great deal of theorizing, experimentation, innovation, debate, and controversy has occurred in the hope of improving practice and of making language teaching more manageable, more effective, and more interesting. Teachers have for decades been told to follow this method or that. In recent times they have been urged to become scientific and to rely on the language sciences and on research. Then, again, they have been admonished to be self-reliant and not to depend on the dictates of ‘pseudo-science’.

For the thoughtful practitioner and the student of language teaching it is extremely hard to pick his way through the mass of accumulated information, opinion, and conflicting advice, to make sense of the vast literature, and to distinguish between solid truth and ephemeral fads or

2 Introduction

plain misinformation. Above all, it is hard for him¹ to decide what of all this contributes to any improvement in language learning.

This book makes no attempt to proclaim yet another ready-made solution. Our main purpose is to help readers to help themselves. Theorists and practitioners alike want to improve language learning, and they must decide for themselves what to do about it. The question is whether the decisions made individually or collectively are well thought out, informed, based on sound theoretical foundations, and are as effective as they can be expected to be, or whether they are patently naive, uninformed, ill-founded, and inconsistent.

This guide is meant to help readers in their quest, to sharpen their professional judgement, not to make judgements for them. It is an invitation to think about language teaching, to find out what is known, and to distinguish the known from the unknown or doubtful. Since language teaching is a complex affair, our exploration is not a simple one. If we are impatient and look for a quick answer, we will not get very far.

This book, which offers a framework for analysing language teaching issues and problems, is *not* specific to any particular language or to any particular group of language learners or teachers, nor to a particular country, educational system, or level of education. It is intended to be applicable to language teaching *in general* under the many varied circumstances under which it occurs anywhere in the world today.

Accordingly we will bear in mind a great variety of situations which are sometimes identified under such labels as: foreign language learning, second language learning, minority and majority language learning, bilingual education, third language learning, multiple language acquisition, acquisition of bilingual proficiency. *In short, the focus of the book is the learning of languages other than the mother tongue.*

Although this book, then, does not deal with mother tongue education, we need not draw a sharp line of demarcation between mother tongue and second language teaching. On the contrary, in many instances this line is so thin that it is practically indistinguishable. We support the principle of transcending the division between native and non-native language education and share the belief in a more unified view.² Much of what is addressed in the following pages to foreign language teachers has some application to native language education, and it is hoped that mother tongue educators can use this text as a basis for a common viewpoint. Nevertheless, in fairness to readers it must be made clear that our main concern is the learning of other languages and bilingual proficiency, not language arts in mother tongue education.

A limitation in another direction should also be pointed out. While this book aims to be 'practical' in a broad sense and, we hope, is not 'theoretical' in a pejorative sense, the *practice* of language teaching as such is not the main subject of this volume. This means that those

readers—particularly new teachers or student teachers—who seek information on class management and various teaching techniques would probably not find in these pages the kind of guidance they are looking for. There are a number of excellent practical guides on the market which are designed to fulfil this function.³

How, then, do we proceed? We begin our enquiry (Part 1) by clearing the ground through a discussion of a few commonly used terms in language teaching. We also examine the relations between theory and practice and the role of research, and establish a conceptual framework for our study. In Part 2 we will attempt to obtain the necessary historical orientation, particularly as it relates to recent and current developments. The remaining four parts of the book focus each on a key concept in language teaching: language (Part 3), society (Part 4), learning (Part 5), and teaching (Part 6). These concepts are discussed in relation to one or several disciplines: linguistics (Part 3), anthropology, sociology and sociolinguistics (Part 4), psychology and psycholinguistics (Part 5), and educational theory (Part 6). The disciplines are first looked at independently as studies in their own right, although always from a language teacher's perspective. They are then considered in relation to language teaching and with particular reference to the key concept in question. In each part readers are urged to think about their personal views and to reflect on their experience as language learners and language users, no less than as language teachers. Our expectation is that by relating our experience to the history of language teaching and various disciplines and research, we gain an understanding of the interaction between the language sciences, research, and language teaching practice, past and present.

Doing this systematically, it is hoped that we will end up by understanding language teaching better and by making sense of the multifarious influences that impinge upon us in our professional role. In other words, the 'exploration' about which we spoke at the beginning should give us a mental 'map' of language pedagogy and enable us to locate our own position on it. Ideally, we would wish that through this exercise we arrive at an informed, professionally sophisticated, and balanced 'theory' of language teaching which is personally valid for ourselves as a guide to action. If we reach that goal it should have an effect on the way we work with our students, deal with curriculum questions and, more generally, the way we examine issues, make judgements, and take decisions in our professional capacity. Our ultimate hope is of course that the suggested approach would in the long run help in overcoming some of the century-old frustrations and failures and contribute to the improvement and greater effectiveness of language teaching that we all strive to achieve.

This book has taken a long time to write and an even longer time to grow. Its view of language teaching has developed over far more years

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than I care to admit, out of a life-time of language learning, language teaching, language teacher training, and many years of language research and academic work with experienced teachers and advanced students in applied linguistics both in Britain and Canada.

Too many people, with or without their knowledge, have had a hand in this book that I could individually name them and adequately thank them. Their influence will be evident in the text itself, and the bibliography at the end of the book is perhaps the best list of credits to those friends, colleagues, and other writers to whom I feel indebted. Canada with its extraordinarily varied approach to language issues, the openness of Ontario language educators, and the privilege of frequent collaboration with them have created a very favourable ambience and a constant stimulus to thinking about the topics discussed in these pages.

The book, which was written during the major part of a period of service in the Modern Language Centre (MLC) of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in Toronto, Canada, has been shaped in its present form out of a dozen years or so of close association with a group of capable and enthusiastic colleagues, as well as with a variety of interesting and highly motivated students in the Modern Language Centre; and this has meant a great deal to me. In this Introduction I can only name a few of those who in one way or another had something directly to do with the preparation of the manuscript. I want to thank Alice Weinrib, the Librarian of the Modern Language Centre, for being ever ready with bibliographical information, Marjorie B. Wesche and Birgit Harley for perceptive reading and comments on early chapters and for co-operation on a joint paper which provided a condensed pre-run to part of the argument of this book (Stern, Wesche, and Harley 1978), and Jim Cummins for permission to make use of a paper on language learning which we wrote jointly and which has formed the basis for Part 5 (Stern and Cummins 1981). I am very grateful to Patrick Allen for reading and commenting on the manuscript in its final form and to Ellen Jeske, who transcribed the entire manuscript, for undertaking this arduous task with patience and professional skill. I also thank Oxford University Press for their forbearance, encouragement, and goodwill without which this project would not have been completed. Apparently I am not the most dilatory author. Somewhere in the history of the Press a writer kept them waiting for seventy years. I was determined not to beat that record. Lastly a long-term project like this makes inroads on one's home life and demands a certain sacrifice. For her unfailing support, balance, and timely shots of realism I dedicate this book to my wife.

Notes

- 1 He/she? Him/her? While I accept the principle of 'non-sexist language' in scholarly writing commonly recommended in recent years, I have tried not to make too much of an issue of it in this book and have used masculine forms 'he/his/him', etc. whenever they seemed natural and stylistically convenient on the argument that they can be understood as unmarked for sex unless otherwise indicated by the context.
- 2 A strong plea for treating native and non-native language education in an integrated fashion has been repeatedly made in recent years, for example, by Roulet (1980) who writes:

'Pour faire progresser les pédagogies de langue maternelle et de langues secondes, il est nécessaire de considérer l'étude de la langue maternelle et l'apprentissage des langues secondes à l'école comme un processus intégré' (op. cit.:27).

See also Hawkins (1981) who speaks of a new 'trivium of mother tongue/"language"/foreign language' (op. cit.:57).

- 3 Some mention should be made, above all, of Rivers' *Teaching Foreign-Language Skills* which is a broad-ranging practical guide with a strongly theoretical orientation. First published in 1968, it has been widely read for well over a decade; it appeared in a new and expanded edition in 1981. Rivers has also initiated a number of language-specific practical guides in French (Rivers 1975), English (Rivers and Temperley 1978), German (Rivers, Dell'Orto, and Dell'Orto 1975) and Spanish (Rivers, Azevedo, Heflin, and Hyman-Opler 1976). Other well known practical guides include: Finocchiaro and Bonomo (1973), Hornsey (1975), Chastain (1976), Paulston and Bruder (1976), Allen and Valette (1977), Grittner (1977), and AMA (1979). For an analysis of some of these works see Chapter 21.

PART ONE

Clearing the ground