

牛津应用语言学丛书



The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching

交际法语言教学

Edited by
C. J. Brumfit
K. Johnson



上海外语教育出版社



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Oxford University Press

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

交际法语言教学: 英文 / (英) 布伦特, (英) 约翰逊编著.

—上海: 上海外语教育出版社, 2000.6

(牛津应用语言学丛书)

书名原文: The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching

ISBN 7-81046-858-8

I. 交… II. ①布…②约… III. 语言教学-教学法-英文

IV. H09

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字 (2000) 第28391号

图字: 09-2000-066号

出版发行: **上海外语教育出版社**

(上海外国语大学内) 邮编: 200083

电 话: 021-65426300 (总机), 65422831 (发行部)

电子邮箱: bookinfo@sflap.com.cn

网 址: <http://www.sflap.com.cn> <http://www.sflap.com>

责任编辑: 王彤福

印 刷: 深圳中华商务联合印刷有限公司

经 销: 新华书店上海发行所

开 本: 880×1187 1/32 印张 8 字数 297 千字

版 次: 2000年6月第1版 2001年2月第2次印刷

印 数: 2 000 册

书 号: ISBN 7-81046-858-8 / H · 689

定 价: 18.00 元

本版图书如有印装质量问题, 可向本社调换

Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogota Buenos Aires Calcutta Cape Town
Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi Paris
Sao Paulo Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

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Oxford University Press

ISBN 0 19 437078 X

© This selection and section
introductions
Oxford University Press 1979

First published 1979
Ninth impression 1998

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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。

近年来，交际教学法一直受到从事外语教学与研究的我国学者的关注。这一教学法反映了外语教学发展的多方面成果。但是，有关的学术论著不易购得，特别是许多外语和语言学专业的研究生渴望得到的英语原文教学参考资料尤为缺乏。为填补这一空白，本社特引进出版了由C·J·布伦菲特与K·约翰逊(C. J. Brumfit & K. Johnson)选编的《交际法语言教学》(*The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*)。

本书精心选编了16篇由海姆斯(D. H. Hymes)、韩礼德(M. A. K. Halliday)、威多森(H. G. Widdowson)、威尔金斯(D. A. Wilkins)和纽马克(L. Newmark)等外语教学领域的专家所撰写的论文或专著中的部分章节，其中大多数论著在教学理论发展史上具有重要影响。此论文集从理论和实践两方面探讨了语言学对语言教学的影响，在肯定理论对实践的指导意义的同时，也指出实践者不能机械地照搬理论教条。本书于1979年出版至1998年已重印9次，可见其在外语教学领域中的地位与受欢迎的程度。

本论文集介绍了意念教学法(notional approach)、功能教学法(functional approach)和交际教学法(communivative ap-

proach)的语言理论,着重讨论了其中的核心问题,并指出这些不同的理论思想的相互关联之处。全书共分四章,前三章分别介绍了相关的语言学理论、教学理论、理论的应用与教学技巧,第四章则从教学方法的角度讨论了在教学实践中可能产生一些问题。

本书的编者认为,语言教学主要是实践行为,并且遵循一定规律。此论文集侧重语言学与社会语言学对语言教学的影响,并非意味着语言教学仅受此两个学科的指导。由于篇幅有限,本书没有对教学法悠久的历史作详细介绍,也没有探讨人类学、语义学、心理学、社会心理学与语言教学的关系。

本书的读者对象为语言教学的研究者、教师和师范院校学生,特别是外语教师、研究生和外语专业的高年级学生。

本社编辑部

2000年5月

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements are made to the following publishers from whose texts earlier versions of the extracts and papers have been taken:

Research Planning Conference on Language Development Among Disadvantaged Children, Yeshiva University June 1966 for 'On Communicative Competence' which is reprinted from *Sociolinguistics* published by Penguin.

Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., for 'Towards a sociological semantics', published in *Explorations of the functions of language* (see also *Language as Social Semiotic* by the same author);

AIMAV, for 'Directions in the Teaching of Discourse', and the 'Status of pedagogical grammars', both published in *Theoretical Linguistic Models in Applied Linguistics*, 1973; and for 'The deep structure of discourse and the use of translation', and 'Notional syllabuses and the concept of a minimum adequate grammar', from *Linguistic Insights in Applied Linguistics*, 1974;

Julius Groos Verlag, for 'Grammatical, situational and notional syllabuses' from Proceedings of the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics, Copenhagen 1972, Vol. II (applied sociolinguistics), pp 254-265, Heidelberg 1974; and for 'Teaching the communicative use of English' from International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching (IRAL) Vo. XII/1, 1974, pp 1-21;

Council of Europe, for 'Draft outline of a European unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults in and Systems development in adult language learning' in *Systems development in adult language learning* 1973; and for *The Threshold Level* 1975. These texts were commissioned by the Council of Europe as part of a research and development programme concerning the implementation of a European unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults;

Oxford University Press for 'The teaching of English as communication' from the ELT Journal, Vol. 27, No. 1;

British Council for 'Language Learning through Communication Practice' from ELT Documents 77/1;

vi Acknowledgements

University of Chicago Press for 'How not to interfere with Language Learning' published in *International Journal of American Linguistics* 32, I, II, 77-83.

Acknowledgements are made to the following publishers from whose texts the extracts in Section 5 have been taken:

Macmillan, London and Basingstoke for extracts as follows: Pupil's Book page 41, Teacher's Guide pages 214-6, and Teacher's Tapescript pages 36-7 from *Kaleidoscope English for Juniors: Stage 1* (University of York/Macmillan Education);

English Language Teaching for the Arab World/Oxford University Press for pages 76-8 of Pupil's Book 1 of the *Crescent English Course* by T. O'Neill and P. Snow;

Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd. for pages 88-9 of the Teacher's Book of *Say what you mean in English* by J. Andrews;

Longman Group Ltd. for Unit 10, pages 91-3 of Student's Book of *Strategies* by B. Abbs, A. Ayton, and I. Freebairn;

Cambridge University Press for 'Asking for Help, Section A, oral practice' from Student's Book, Unit 8 of *Approaches* by K. Johnson and K. Morrow; and for pages 41-3 of the Student's Book of *Functions of English* by L. Jones;

Oxford University Press for pages 30-1 of Student's Book of *English in Physical Science* by J. P. B. Allen and H. G. Widdowson.

Preface

'Communicative Language Teaching' has in recent years become a fashionable term to cover a variety of developments in syllabus design and, to a lesser extent, in the methodology of teaching foreign languages. Teachers and applied linguists wishing to examine the fundamental arguments underlying these developments have had to rely on the publications of the Council of Europe, many of which are difficult to obtain, and on access to journals and conference proceedings which few libraries stock. This book attempts to collect many of the important papers in this field, and especially those with relevance to the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. It is hoped that through these papers it will be possible to trace the major linguistic influences on language teaching from theory through to practical application in syllabus design and teaching materials. At the same time, the few papers which have been specially written for this volume relate the linguistic theory to the broader educational context. The papers in the first three sections illustrate the foundations of the communicative approach, the state of the argument at the time it began to be implemented in teaching materials. Most contributors have subsequently modified their positions, but these papers represent the approach in its purest form.

Language teaching, as a practical rather than a theoretical activity, draws on insights from many disciplines, and the emphasis here on broadly linguistic and sociolinguistic discussion is not intended to suggest that language teaching has been responsive only to these. The problem has been where to draw a convenient boundary. We felt that the general positions held by Hymes and Halliday—described in detail in the introduction—are central to any contemporary discussion of language teaching. There would certainly be room for another book of this length taking the argument further back historically, and further away from linguistics into the areas of anthropology, semantics, philosophy, social psychology and others which have been neglected here. However, to have attempted to cover such an enormous field in one book would have been foolhardy. The papers in this volume show various attempts to interpret language for classroom use in the light of recent theoretical

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developments which the authors see as significant. Any contemporary student of language teaching needs to evaluate such discussion, and it is hoped that this book will enable many more people to do so.

We would particularly like to thank Alan Davies for his helpful comments at many stages in the preparation of this book.

KJ CJB
November 1978

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SECTION ONE

The Linguistic Background

On communicative competence

D. H. Hymes

Towards a sociological semantics

M. A. K. Halliday

[It is often said that language teaching in the past few decades has shifted the emphasis away from (in Newmark & Reibel's terms) 'mastery of language use to mastery of language structure' (1968: 232). This emphasis on the teaching of structure has manifested itself in many ways. We have come to see the task of syllabus design, for example, as very much one of selecting structural items and grading them in suitable order for teaching. Our syllabuses have often been little more than ordered lists of structures, which we have then proceeded to teach by means of a strategy that has become all but universal. The strategy works like this: we present a structure, drill it, practise it in context . . . then move to the next structure (see Brumfit, this volume, p. 183). In this way we gradually, and in Wilkins' term (1976: 3) 'synthetically' build up the inventory of structural items our students can handle. And since we specify and execute our language teaching in such terms, it is natural that we should assess it in a similar way. We reward structural correctness and chastise structural inaccuracy. Success or failure in language learning, as interpreted both through examination results and through student or teacher judgement, has generally come to be assessed in terms of ability to manipulate the structures of the language.

'Mastery of language use'—teaching the student how 'to mean' as well as how 'to form' has not of course been entirely neglected. If (to employ a distinction made by Wilkins and others) we speak of meaning as having 'conceptual' ('semantico-grammatical', 'notional') and 'functional' levels, then both levels have received some attention in past language teaching, though in important respects their treatment has been inadequate. But no teacher introduces 'shall' and 'will' (for example) without relating the structure implicitly or explicitly to a

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conceptual meaning, usually that of futurity; nor would we teach (or be able to teach) the English article system without recourse to the concepts of countableness and uncountableness. Similarly, questions of conceptual meaning have always had a place in course design. Many courses, for example, contain a teaching unit contrasting simple past and present perfect tenses, often on the assumption not that the formal contrast will cause difficulty, but that the conceptual distinctions (like 'finished action irrelevant to the present' versus 'finished action relevant to the present') are hard for many to grasp. Similarly a course may (as in Broughton 1968: 243) treat formally different structures like 'the boy's leg' and 'the leg of the chair' in the same teaching unit because they share a conceptual feature (attribution) yet at the same time distinguish themselves conceptually (animate versus inanimate).

Nor has meaning as 'function' been entirely neglected. Language *has* been used to some communicative purpose in classroom practice (for *greeting, requesting and giving information, giving commands*, and the like) even if the purposes have been restricted and such practice over-sparse. Certainly to represent past language teaching as having taken place in a kind of communicative vacuum in which structures are learned like mathematical formulae, would be an oversimplification.

With these reservations it still remains true that 'form' rather than 'meaning' has dominated our teaching. Why should this have been so? How indeed is the direction that language teaching will follow determined at any point in history? The answer to this second question (which subsumes the first) will be provided partly by the linguist. For his view of language will influence, though not entirely determine, the language teacher's formulation of what the task of language learning involves. The linguist's answer to the question 'what is language?' will usually find reflection in the language teacher's answer to the question 'what knowledge and what skills are involved in language proficiency?'.

So it is that the language teacher's emphasis over the past few decades runs parallel to a similar emphasis within linguistics (or, more precisely, American linguistics) during the same period. The parallel is not hard to demonstrate. The proclaimed characteristic feature of Bloomfieldian and neo-Bloomfieldian American structuralism was its careful concern to restrict itself to the study of form, and the classification of the forms of a language, without reference to the categories of meaning. Linguistics was, almost exclusively, the study of language structure. Then, in the late fifties, Chomsky published his *Syntactic Structures*, and this event heralded the arrival of transformational generative grammar. The transformational theory of grammar does indeed represent a revolution in the aims of linguistic study. Taxonomic classification of structures is no longer considered adequate, and from thenceforth linguists became concerned with developing systems of

rules which account for, rather than merely describe by means of lists, the structural possibilities of a language. Yet transformational grammar shares one fundamental characteristic with structural linguistics: it is the importance given to the study of language structure. In Chomsky's model syntax remains central, and however much this model has changed the aims and techniques of linguistic study, the concern with syntactic structure remains. Linguistics—in Chomsky as in Bloomfield—is by and large the study of language structure. Perhaps this is why transformational grammar, so revolutionary in linguistics, has had such little effect on language teaching. After all, the most it can offer is alternative strategies for teaching grammar—new ways of teaching the same thing.

The language teacher's emphasis on mastery of structure is, then, paralleled by a similar emphasis within linguistics. And in both fields a parallel reaction has taken place. It is a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures; it is a reaction towards a view of language as communication, a view in which meaning and the uses to which language is put play a central part. In language teaching this reaction is crystallizing itself into the 'communicative approach' which is the subject of this volume, and our exploration of the background to this approach will take us into an investigation of the ways in which general linguistic studies have manifested a parallel reaction.

A particularly powerful and lucid expression of discontent with the transformational view of linguistic study is found in Hymes' paper 'On Communicative Competence', quoted at length below. A large part of this paper is taken up with a discussion of two concepts central to Chomsky's theory: the concepts of 'competence' and 'performance'. Hymes is critical of the way Chomsky uses these terms, and in the latter part of his paper he formulates his own redefinition.

For Chomsky it is 'competence' defined as 'the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language' (1965: 4) which is the prime concern of linguistic theory. Competence is an idealization: it is the knowledge of the 'ideal speaker-listener' operating within 'a completely homogeneous speech community'. It distinguishes itself from 'performance' which is seen as 'the actual use of language in concrete situations'. As Chomsky says (and Hymes quotes), 'a record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in mid-course, and so on'. In these senses performance represents both an incomplete and a degenerate reflection of the ideal speaker-listener's competence, and as such is considered to be of little relevance to the theoretical and descriptive linguist.

In its original form Hymes' paper was delivered at a conference on language development among disadvantaged children, and in its first section Hymes points to the irrelevance of the Chomskian notion of

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competence—dealing as it does with the ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous speech community—to the study of disadvantaged children. Indeed, says Hymes, what one is inevitably concerned with in such a study is ‘performance’—the actual use of language in a concrete situation; its use moreover by speaker-listeners who are far from ‘ideal’ and whose language behaviour cannot be characterized as that of any ‘homogeneous speech community’. Sociocultural factors, which for Chomsky are again associated with the realm of performance, will prove of prime importance in studies of this kind. For Hymes, Chomskian linguistics with its narrow concept of competence represents a ‘Garden of Eden view’ which dismisses central questions of use by relegating them to the area of performance. Indeed, it is a major characteristic of modern linguistics that (as Hymes says in a quotation directly relevant to the theme of this volume)

‘it takes structure as a primary end in itself, and tends to depreciate use. . . .’ (this volume, p. 8).

In the second section of his paper, Hymes exemplifies situations in which non-ideal speaker-listeners operate within a non-homogeneous speech community, situations in which one finds ‘differential competence within a heterogeneous speech community’. He argues that linguistics in general (concerned with issues going far beyond the study of disadvantaged children) requires a theory which will take account of such phenomena. A theory of this sort would give central importance (a ‘constitutive role’) to sociocultural factors.]

* * *