

# 走出英语教学的误区

——一项基于非英语专业  
研究生英语教学的研究

孙云波 著



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*Avoid Misunderstanding in English  
Teaching*

—— *A Study Based on the Practice  
of English Teaching for Non-English  
Major Graduates*

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## 前 言

研究生教育肩负着为国家培养高层次、高素质、创新型人才的重任。随着全球化的不断深入,科技和教育的发展日趋国际化,研究生教育面临前所未有的挑战,研究生英语教学改革也势在必行。

外语教学耗时低效已成为不争的事实,其中一个重要的原因就是学而不用,研究生英语教学亦如此。人们普遍认为研究生英语教学就是本科英语教学的简单延伸,无非是多认识几个单词而已。因此,不少老师和学生的大部分时间和精力仍然是阅读课文、学习词汇、分析句子,领悟课文的意义。理解固然重要,表达更需要重视。研究生经历了十余年的英语学习后具备了基本的听、说、读、写、译的能力,但说、写、译的能力仍然非常薄弱,尤其是边疆地区的学生,沿用传统的大学英语教学的方法,研究生英语教学已不能适应时代的要求,也无法满足学生的需求,只会呈现重复性,耗时低效性,从而缺乏吸引力。

英语的运用能力直接关系到研究生的专业学习和研究;没有扎实的英语语言基本功,过硬的听、说、读、写、译的能力,其学习能力和研究能力必然受到限制。作为各学科、专业的公共基础课程,研究生英语教学旨在培养学生的英语应用能力,使其成为具有综合文化素养,能用英语有效地进行一般社会交往、从事本专业学术研究和交流的高素质人才。如何实现这一教学目标成为研究生英语教学改革的重点。仅仅关注教学方法的改进就能解决问题吗?似乎不能,因为它涉及教师对研究生英语教学大纲、

课程大纲、教材、教学内容、教学方法、教学评估等一系列问题的理解。

英语教学大纲是制定英语课程大纲的依据。基于非英语专业研究生英语教学的研究对比了 20 世纪 90 年代出版的《非英语专业硕士/博士学位研究生英语教学大纲》和修订后的大纲《非英语专业硕士/博士学位研究生英语教学基本要求》，以及昆明理工大学在此框架下所制定的非英语专业硕士研究生主干英语课程大纲。课程大纲如何指导我们的课程教学？对教学目标的确定和教学内容的选择产生怎样的影响？换言之，针对该层次的学生，我们究竟“教什么”？如果我们把它简单地等同于从教材中选择“知识点”，我们就有可能误解英语教学的目的和过程，并在很大程度上影响英语教学的效率和质量。

改进教学方法、提高教学效率一直是人们所期待的，这是“如何教”的问题。如果教师只关注“教”，而缺乏对“学”的理解，如语言学习的过程、学习者个体差异对语言学习的影响、语言学习的基本条件和环境等，教师就无从改进和提高教学，因为教学的根本目的就是促进学习者的有效学习。该研究通过两个“说课”和“观课”的案例，深入探讨了研究生英语教学过程教师对语言、学习、教学、学生、课程大纲、教材、课堂、教辅设施等的理解。

作为一个复杂的过程，英语教学的改进需要来自学生、教师等不同渠道的反馈。评价是其不可或缺的一部分。然而不少教师和管理者仅仅把它视为对学生的终结性测试和学生对教师的评价。这是不足以反映“教”与“学”的全貌和过程，也不利于“教”与“学”的提高。本研究从课程评价和课堂教学评估两个方面展开讨论，前者包括课程评价的重要性和必要性，并结合实例分析如何进行课程评价；后者涉及终结性评估和形成性评估，尤其是难以实施而容易被忽视的基于行为表现的评估，并提供了针对说、写进行训练的评估方法。

总之，本书从课程大纲、教学实践和教学评估三个方面结合教学展开的讨论有望使英语教师走出英语教学的误区，通过英语教学真正培养学习者的英语综合运用能力，使其学以致用。

教师是教学改革的实践者。教师自身的语言素质、教学理念、教学理论水平、教学能力是教学改革成败的关键。只有在教学实践中不断谋求专业发展，才能提高教师的职业素养，成为称职的英语教师。

基于上述考虑，谨以此书奉献给广大非英语专业研究生英语教师。希望该书有助于英语教师提高反思教学的意识。这是研究生综合英语课程建设的成果之一。在课程建设中，课程组的老师积极参与，大胆实践，为课程建设和本书的撰写做出了贡献。课程组要特别感谢夏纪梅教授对说课及观课的精彩点评以及宝贵建议，其真知灼见使英语教师受益匪浅。在此向他们一并表示衷心的感谢。

鉴于作者对研究生英语教学的认知局限，书中难免有不妥之处，敬请读者批评指正。

孙云波

2014年4月

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# Introduction

It is evident that dramatic developments in English teaching have been achieved in China since its reform and opening-up to the outside world. The overall teaching proficiency among people involved in English teaching has greatly improved, because insights from theories and researches in various disciplines have led to the further understanding of the nature of language and language teaching. Teaching methods have undergone great changes from grammar-translation to communicative language teaching. Teaching aids have been supplied with the advent of computer assisted language learning (CALL), etc.

In spite of all the developments, there still exists for long dissatisfaction with English teaching, which is often at the great expenditure of time and effort by the students. Learning English for more than 10 years starting from grade 3 at primary school, graduate students have already had a basic knowledge of English grammar and a collection of words, but they have seldom put that knowledge into practical use. Consequently they are unable to communicate effectively both in class and outside. They find it hard to speak English or write in English on a daily topic, let alone an academic one. Many of them complain that if all that effort had been saved for other subjects, they would have done better. They say that they may not use English in their future work, and they just want to pass CET-6 so as to get a better job. They wonder what the real value of learning another language is.

One response to the questioning of the ineffectiveness of English teaching and the usefulness of English learning may resort to the understanding of language teaching and language education. Though only one-word difference, they mean differently. According to Cai (2013: 65), language teaching “focuses on the technical aspects” while language education “concerns itself with both technical and social aspects”. However, foreign language education in China has long been taken as the teaching and learning of a foreign language, mainly English. The two terms, ‘language teaching’ and ‘language education’ have been mixed up and used interchangeably. The theory and practice of foreign language education mainly concerns with ‘teaching’ ——the micro aspects, rather than the macro ones.

Then what is language teaching? Stern (1999: 21) defines language teaching as “the activities which are intended to bring about language learning.” He also points out that language teaching is not limited to “instructing a language class.” Widdowson (1990: 1-6) regards language teaching as “a principled problem-solving activity”; as “a self-conscious enquiring enterprise whereby classroom activities are referred to theoretical principles of one sort or another.” The classroom is seen as “the context for two related kinds of activities. In one, techniques are devised with regard to their practical effectiveness in the promotion of learning. ... In the other activity, techniques are related to principles with a view to enquiring into the relationship between the two. ... The most effective pedagogy is one in which the two act together, each informing and reinforcing the other.” He believes that the effectiveness of teaching lies in the bearings that the theory provides, and the techniques consistent with a principle.

In fact, “the success of language teaching”, apart from micro factors, “is

dependent upon major forces in society, such as the role, or perception, of languages in that society” (Stern 1999: 425-426). He compares literacy establishing through schooling with second language teaching in terms of the importance in society and the use inside and outside the school setting; and concludes that by looking outside school and inquiring what importance the society attributes to the second language, one can understand the reason that language learning is not successful in school. It is more of the social use than the value of second language that will decide.

The value of learning another language, according to Stern (1999: 422), involves “educational values”, as is often indicated in a curriculum of what contribution the learning of a language makes to the education of an individual; comparison of “cultural values” in the first language and second language societies; and “philosophical values”, as is also shown by the teacher’s treatment of the language learner as active or passive participants in the learning process.

The better understanding of foreign language teaching may help us know the underlying reason that foreign language teaching is differentiated from foreign language education. Apart from teaching theories, techniques and effectiveness, foreign language education involves more factors, such as foreign language and mother tongue, foreign language and social culture, history and heritage, ethnic identity and even a nation’s interest. They are not only the concerns of foreign language policy makers and researchers, but also the issues foreign language teachers should attach importance (Cai 2013: 65).

There seems not to be anything massively disruptive about the mixing-up of the two terms, but the two concepts should not be confused, a part not to be taken for the whole. The lack or the inadequacy of foreign language education is

likely to lead to randomness, blindness, and even disorder of foreign language teaching, with its functions and roles being made single or even one-sided (Cai 2013: 67). Exam-oriented English teaching is an example in point. Almost all attention is paid to various English tests rather than the appropriate use of English inside or outside class. The effort, time, and money spent on it mainly aims at the skills of taking tests rather than the skills developed through language learning that can be used in other subjects on the school curriculum, in the future workplace, and across cultures. This is not English teaching, let alone English education.

Another response to the questioning of the ineffectiveness of English teaching is to reflect on the instruction of English. Is our English teaching properly oriented? How does it achieve the goal set in the syllabus? How is teaching and learning evaluated? Misunderstanding of these questions will lead to inappropriate approach to teaching, which will inevitably influence learning in a negative way.

In a world that is increasingly globalized, the development of science and education has become more and more internationalized. The needs for talents of higher level are becoming greater, and the requirements for them also upgrade. Graduate students are expected to be able to use English to communicate effectively in the daily social life, and to engage in academic research and communication in their own fields. In other words, comprehensive capacity to use English is called for. If English teaching for graduate students still focuses on teaching facts about language and its rules, or test-taking skills through a transmission model, it is unlikely to meet the requirements of the society for graduate education. As a result, graduate English teaching will be repetitive, time-consuming, and ineffective.

Then what is the teaching content for graduate students? What approach do we take to teaching graduates? How do we evaluate teaching and learning? Reflection on the important aspects of teaching helps English teachers to see that we tend to equate teaching content to the content of the textbook, teaching approach to method, evaluation to testing. In fact, what to teach is not simply a problem of choosing ‘knowledge’ from the textbook, how to teach is not merely a question of ‘method’, how to evaluate is not just an issue of ‘testing’. All these involve the teachers’ understanding of language, learning, teaching, learners, syllabus, textbook, evaluation, etc. (Han 2011: 36). Lack of knowledge of the above mentioned aspects will influence the quality of teaching to a great extent.

What to teach is an issue about teaching goal and content, so the book starts with the discussion of syllabus, especially the syllabus for non-English major graduates. Then it proceeds to the implementation of English teaching for graduate students. Finally it ends with evaluation of teaching and learning. Each part includes related theoretical knowledge and its application in teaching practice. Hopefully, the discussion in the areas of syllabus, teaching philosophy and practice, and evaluation and assessment will enable English teachers to concern themselves about not only the micro aspects but also the macro ones and avoid misunderstanding in language teaching, and achieve the purpose of developing graduate students’ comprehensive capacity through language teaching.

# 1 Syllabus

As guidance and reference for teaching, a syllabus provides principles of instruction for teachers. Therefore, it is important for them to have a clear understanding of it in order to be well oriented in the teaching practice. If teachers have no knowledge of what teaching goal and content are, they are unlikely to turn the general and abstract goal into concrete teaching objectives, and use the appropriate methods and techniques for the activation of learning.

## 1.1 Syllabus or Curriculum

In discussing syllabus, mention should be made of curriculum. There have been discussions for long about the two terms —— ‘syllabus’ and ‘curriculum’. Are they synonymous or not? *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics* defines “syllabus (also curriculum) as a description of the contents of a course of instruction and the order in which they are to be taught” (Richards, Platt and Platt 2000: 461). It also lists several syllabuses as examples and indicates,

Language-teaching syllabus may be based on:

- (a) grammatical items and vocabulary (see Structural Syllabus)

- (b) the language needed for different types of situations (see Situational Method)
  - (c) the meanings and communicative functions which the learner needs to express in the target language (see Notional Syllabus).
- (Richards, Platt and Platt 2000: 461)

The dictionary equates ‘curriculum’ with ‘syllabus’, pointing out that ‘curriculum’ is another term for ‘syllabus’. It describes it as such,

A curriculum is an educational program which states:

- (a) the educational purpose of the program (the ends),
  - (b) the content, teaching procedures and learning experiences which will be necessary to achieve this purpose (the means),
  - (c) some means for assessing whether or not the educational ends have been achieved.
- (Richards, Platt and Platt 2000: 118)

However, many scholars and researchers differentiate between a curriculum and a syllabus. Dubin & Olshtain (2002), Johnson (2001), White (1988), Robertson (1971) have taken syllabus and curriculum as different terms. According to White (1988: 4), curriculum refers to “the totality of content to be taught and aims to be realized within one school or educational system”, while syllabus refers to content in just one subject area. Dubin & Olshtain (2002) regard them as entities of separate purposes as follows:

- (1) A curriculum contains a broad description of general goals by indicating an overall educational-cultural philosophy which appears across subjects together with a theoretical orientation to language and language learning with respect to the subject matter at



hand. A curriculum is often reflective of national and political trends as well.

- (2) A syllabus is a more detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements which translates the philosophy of the curriculum into a series of planned steps leading towards more narrowly defined objectives at each level.

(Dubin and Olshtain, 2002: 34-5)

Obviously, a curriculum is concerned with general goals, which combines educational-cultural goals with language goals, with three basic orientations, one concerning language, another language learning, still another pedagogy; while a syllabus deals with the specifications of the intermediate goals, with the particular language elements and the organizational system included. By differentiating between the two, Dubin and Olshtain (2002: 35) emphasize that “a single curriculum can be the basis for developing a variety of specific syllabuses which are concerned with locally defined audiences, particular needs and intermediate objectives”. In this way different types of syllabus can be used at different stage of the course in order to achieve positive results, which is believed to be “an eclectic manner” suitable for a foreign language setting. Hence, teachers are allowed more freedom to choose various approaches, methods, and techniques according to the levels of the learners.

Apart from the different views about the two terms, there exist regional differences in the use of the two terms. According to Nunan (2001: 14), in the United States the term ‘curriculum’ is often used instead of ‘syllabus’, “to refer to all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of curriculum. The term is also used for a particular course of instruction.” In this sense, ‘curriculum’ is another term for ‘syllabus’. In Britain, the term ‘syllabus’ is used “to denote that part of curriculum activity concerned with the specification and or-