

Foreign Language Teaching Methodology

外语教学法

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内容提要

本书共14章,在系统地总结分析国内现有的教学法教材的基础上,力求引入其他教学法教材所没有的内容,如国内外语言教学的历史和发展,教师教育以及教师的课堂语言等,是一本内容涵盖较全的教学法教材。本书是专为高等院校英语专业研究生的教学法课程编写的教材,同时也可作为英语专业本科生“英语教学法”课程的重要参考书及用于各类外语教师的培训课程。

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前 言

目前,国内大学的很多外语学院(系)中能够招收并培养英语专业研究生的,数量已然不少;高校培养英语专业研究生的重要任务之一,是为社会提供、造就大量合格的、高质量的英语师资。因此,有条件的高校一般都会为英语专业研究生专门开设“英语教学法”课程。中国地质大学(北京)外国语学院为英语专业研究生专门开设“英语教学法”课程已经多年,教师们在长期教学和科研实践中摸索出一些经验,也做了不少理论上的探讨,进行了一些总结。本书就是这方面理论与实践的总结和探讨。本书是专为高等院校英语专业研究生的教学法课程编写的教材,同时也可作为英语专业本科生“英语教学法”课程的重要参考书及用于各类外语教师的培训课程。

本书是在较系统地总结分析国内现有的教学法教材的基础上,力求引入其他教学法教材所没有的内容,如国内外语言教学的历史和发展,教师教育以及教师的课堂语言等,是一本内容涵盖较全的教学法教材。

本书共14章。第一章主要讨论语言教学理论及母语在第二语言习得中的作用,这是外语教学的基础。第二章主要阐述外语教学的历史,重温历史才能更好地把握现在。第三章讨论英语教学所应当具有的特殊的课堂管理、课堂组织、课堂环境、教师的作用以及教学计划的设置等。第四、五、六章分别讨论如何更好地培养学生的英语听说能力、阅读能力和写作能力。第七章讨论语音教学在第二语言习得中的作用,学习语音的必要性,教师如何帮助学生学习语音等。第八章在提出词汇教学重要性的基础上,主要介绍了词汇教学的方法。第九章从语法教学的重要性说起,介绍了语法教学的基本方法。第十章讨论如何培养学生的综合能力,怎样更好地把四种语言技能结合起来。教师语言是传播知识的重要途径,第十一章讨论了教师的课堂语言艺术及如何利用恰当的教师语言达到最好的课堂效果。第十二章主要讨论教师教育和促进教师职业发展的途径。第十三章从1862年清政府开办的中国第一所外文学校——京师同文馆谈起,阐述了中国的外语教学历史及状况。第十四章介绍了英语教学法的主要流派及主要教学方法。

本书从计划、设计、编写、多次修改、试用到如今正式出版,走过了五年的探索路程。本书的编写成员是高校外语学院的老中青教师。作为高校英语教学法的教材,本书当然还存在许多问题,还有许多我们预想中的内容没有包括进去,需要我们在未来的实践中

进一步修改和完善。在本书的编写过程中,我们得到了中国地质大学(北京)研究生院的大力支持,在试用过程中,学生也提出了许多宝贵的意见,外籍教师 Benjamin Tobacman 对全书进行了认真的审校,在此对他们表示衷心的感谢。

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Chapter One

Theories on Language Teaching

Language teaching has a long history, and it came into its own as a profession in the last century. In the course of its development, terms such as second language, foreign language, language learning and language acquisition have emerged. The differences between mother tongue or native language and second language or foreign language are obvious. At a more technical level, we have the term primary language and L1 for mother tongue and native language, secondary language and L2 for second language and foreign language. Language teaching has undergone many different phases, but the final goal of language teaching is to enable learners to use language in life or work. Actually, how to teach language efficiently and effectively involves many factors. Linguists and language practitioners have discovered many teaching methods and theories through their studies and teaching practice. What is the definition of language teaching theory, and how should it be evaluated?

This chapter addresses the following questions:

1. Is theory on language teaching necessary, and how does it relate to practice?
2. How do we define methodology, and what elements are involved in it?
3. What is Krashen's theory and what is its value to the field?
4. What is the function of one's mother tongue in language learning and teaching?

1.1 Theories on Language Teaching

1.1.1 Theories on Language Teaching and How to Evaluate Them

Generally speaking, theory refers to "... systematically organized knowledge applicable in a relatively wide variety of circumstances, especially a system of assumptions, accepted principles, and rules of procedure devised to analyze, predict, or otherwise explain the nature

or behavior of a specified set of phenomena" (H. H. Stern, 1983). When it comes to education, "theory" refers to the systematic study of thoughts related to a topic or an activity. In this broad sense, "theory of language teaching" matches the use of the term "theory" adopted by educational philosophers in discussions on educational theory (O' Connor, 1957; Hirst, 1966; Reid, 1965; Kneller, 1971). An even wider definition is suggested by Reid (1965) who calls educational theory "a large bag, a rag-bag if you like, containing all reflection and all talk about education", including "all discussions about the curriculum and content of education, good and bad teaching, teaching methods... and psychological, sociological, and philosophical questions that underlie these". For theory on language teaching, we must admit that different theories on language teaching enter the mainstream, especially in different time periods, based on different linguistic and psychological assumptions, often emphasizing different objectives, and relying on different procedures.

A good teaching theory enables us to view language teaching in a much better perspective and to recognize its relationship with other activities. The wider context for language teaching theory is education, social policy, national and international politics, and scholarship in related disciplines. The development of theory thus should make language teaching more meaningful and intellectually more satisfying. As a result of theorizing, the practitioner should gain a sense of greater professional assurance and develop a common feeling with practitioners in related fields. Good theory formation in language teaching should also be of value to the public, to politicians and administrators, and to language learners. Good theories can help the learners gain a better understanding of the tasks involved in language learning (H. H. Stern, 1983). Different theories on language teaching can be arrived according to the following six criteria:

(1) Usefulness and Applicability

Since a theory on language teaching involves practical activities, it should be useful, effective, and applicable. Its usefulness can be indicated by making sense of planning, decision-making, and practice. It should improve decision-making both on the broader policy level and at the level of classroom activities. It can also be tested by its effect on language learning.

(2) Explicitness

A theory should state its principal assumptions clearly. No language teacher—no matter how strenuously he may deny his interest in theory—can teach a language without a theory of language teaching, even if it is only implicit in value judgments, decisions, and actions, or in the organizational pattern. Without explicitness, no advance in thought would be possible (H. H. Stern, 1983).

(3) Coherence and Consistency

The third most important quality of a good theory is that it should reveal order, a pattern, and establish in our minds an awareness of relationships. A good theory should be an ordered statement applicable to the total range of language teaching. All parts relevant to language teaching should fit together. It is the logical relationship between parts that distinguishes a good theory from a poor one.

(4) Comprehensiveness

Language theory should be generally and easily comprehended. It's better to provide a framework of special theory if it is possible. But it is not absolute, since limits to the scope of any given theory are a matter of practical decision-making.

(5) Explanatory Power and Verifiability

This criterion is less applicable to a language-teaching theory than to the scientific theories underlying it which normally have explanatory power, or the capacity to predict and to give direction to empirical research. Theory and research support each other. However, to a certain degree, this criterion is necessary and important in judging theory on language teaching.

(6) Simplicity and Clarity

A good theory aims to be simple and it is expressed in straight-forward language as clear as possible. Thus, a stimulus-response theory on second language learning can certainly be regarded as very parsimonious. It employs the same model for first and second language learning, and indeed for all learned behavior. No matter how attractive the simplicity may be, the theory is open to criticism if it cannot account for many important aspects of language acquisition and language use (H. H. Stern, 1983).

1.1.2 Language Teaching in Practice and Methodology

The conceptualization of language teaching has a long, fascinating, but rather tortuous history. For centuries, language educators have attempted to solve the problems of language teaching by focusing attention almost exclusively on teaching method. The question of how to teach languages, which had been debated for a long time, provides the basis for recent interpretations on language teaching.

Every instructor starts teaching practice with an initial theory of language teaching and learning, based on personal experiences as a language learner and, in some cases, reading or training. And teaching practice mainly occurs in classrooms through teaching activities, or classroom observation. With the help of research and relevant studies, teaching methodology has been improved.

In the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, methodology is defined as follows:

Methodology is the study of the practices and procedures used in teaching, and the principles and beliefs that underlie them.

Methodology includes:

(1) The study of the nature of Language Skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and procedures for teaching them;

(2) The study of the preparation of Lesson Plans, materials, and textbooks for teaching language skills;

(3) The evaluation and comparison of language teaching methods (the Audiolingual Method).

Methodology includes such practices, procedures, principles, and beliefs themselves. One can, for example criticize or praise the methodology of a particular language course (Richards et al., 1985:177).

The domain of methodology in language teaching is concerned with developing and validating exercises and teaching activities by assessing the effect they have on the development of specific linguistic skills and abilities. Methodology is not developed independently of the processes of goal setting and syllabus design; it is but one phase in the sequence of activities known as language-program design. Methodology issues must in general be resolved on a case-by-case basis and evaluated within the constraints of the situation in which they are used. For this reason, methodology is best considered an ongoing process, involving experimentation, data gathering, and evaluation, and informed by constant reference to target objectives and to research on underlying learning and communicative processes in Second Language Acquisition.

There has been a tendency historically to equate methodology with method. As Richards (1987:11) pointed out that the goal of many language teachers is to find the right method.

Sometimes global proposals for teaching, when developed, derive from particular views on the nature of language and language learning, and relate to specific prescriptions as to how a language should be taught. These are referred to as methods. The grammar-translation method, for example, is based on a particular theory about how a foreign language can most effectively be learned and results in a specific set of principles and procedures being followed in the classroom.

Whereas methodology refers to language teaching within the context of language-program design, a method generally refers to language teaching outside the context of a broader framework of curriculum development; indeed, many method advocates promote their methods

as substitutes for language curriculum development and say nothing about the broader issues of needs analysis, syllabus design, and evaluation, all of which are crucial phases in language program development.

1.1.3 Relationship between Theories on Teaching Methodology and Its Practice

Theories on teaching methodology are of vital importance, with good theories being based on practical teaching, and guiding both teaching and research work.

Both successes and failures are accumulated in the practice of teaching, helping us understand the process of teaching much better. In the progress of discovering and polishing theories on teaching, people develop language teaching theories step by step. Therefore, English teaching methodology derives from teaching practice. On the other hand, English teaching methodology also serves practical teaching, instructing practical teaching to conform to certain theories. At the same time, theories can be verified through teaching practice and improved further in practice. Teaching methodology comes from teaching practice.

In conclusion, theories on language teaching methodology interact with teaching practices, while teaching practices also help improve teaching methodology. On the one hand, theories come from teaching practice; on the other hand, they give direction to teaching practices. And theories accumulate on the basis of further practices. This cycle of theory building, teaching practice and reflection continues throughout a teacher's career, as the teacher evaluates new experiences and tests or adapts theories to them. With the development of language teaching theories, some linguists and theorists have gained influence. Stephen Krashen is one of them. The following will be a brief introduction of him and his theory on language acquisition.

1.2 Krashen's Theory on Language Acquisition

1.2.1 Introduction to Krashen

Stephen Krashen, professor at the University of Southern California, is an expert in the field of linguistics, specializing in theories of language acquisition and development. Much of his recent research has involved the study of non-English and bilingual language acquisition. During the past two decades, he has published over 100 books and articles and has been invited to deliver over 300 lectures at universities throughout the United States and Canada. Krashen's theory on Second Language Acquisition is widely known and well accepted, and he has had a large impact on all areas of second language research and teaching since the 1980s.

The following is the outline and relevant explanation of his theories on language acquisition.

1.2.2 Stephen Krashen's Views on Teaching

"Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language—natural communication—in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding."

"The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready', recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production."

"In the real world, conversations with sympathetic native speakers who are willing to help the acquirer understand are very helpful."

"Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill."

1.2.3 Stephen Krashen's Theory on Second Language Acquisition

For many years, Stephen Krashen has been doing research on language learning, the acquisition of second foreign languages and the methodology of foreign language teaching. With the aim of facilitating language acquisition, he studies the rules of foreign language teaching.

His theory of Second Language Acquisition mainly consists of five hypotheses, which are the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

1. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis is the most fundamental Hypothesis of all the hypotheses, and it is the most widely known hypothesis among linguists and language practitioners. There are two independent systems of second language performance: the acquired system (acquisition) and the learned system (learning). The former involves meaningful interaction in the target language, which is called natural communication. The latter refers to the product of formal instruction, consisting of a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge about the language, such as grammar rules. According to Krashen, acquisition is more important than learning.

2. The Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor Hypothesis shows the relationship between acquisition and learning and

defines the influence of learning on the acquisition. The monitoring function is the practical result of the learned grammar. According to Krashen, the acquisition system is the utterance initiator, while the learning system performs the role of the monitor or the editor. Krashen also suggests that there is individual variation among language learners with regard to monitor use, dividing the learners into three groups: over-users (who use the monitor all the time) are usually introverts and perfectionists; under-users (who have not learned to monitor or not wish to do so) are usually extroverts; and optimal users (who use the monitor appropriately).

3. The Natural Order Hypothesis

The Natural Order Hypothesis is based on research findings (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980 cited by Krashen, 1987) which suggest that the acquisition of grammatical structures follow a natural predictable order. For any given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired earlier than others. This order seems to be independent of the learners' age, L1 background and conditions of exposure. There are statistically significant similarities that reinforce the existence of Natural Order of language acquisition. However, Krashen points out that the implication of the natural order hypothesis is not that a language program syllabus should be based on this order. In fact, he rejects grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition.

4. The Input Hypothesis

Krashen attempts to explain how the learner acquires a second language with the Input Hypothesis. This hypothesis explains how Second Language Acquisition takes place. Therefore, the Input Hypothesis is only concerned with acquisition, not learning. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the natural order when he receives second language input. For example, if a learner is at a stage "i", then acquisition takes place when he is exposed to Comprehensible Input that belongs to level "i + 1". Since not all of the learners can be at the same level of linguistic competence at the same time, Krashen suggests that natural communicative input is the key to designing a syllabus, ensuring in this way that each learner will receive some "i + 1" input that is appropriate for his current stage of linguistic competence.

5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The fifth hypothesis is the Affective Filter Hypothesis, embodying Krashen's view that a number of affective variables play a facilitative, but non-causal role in Second Language Acquisition. The variables include motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, good self-image, and low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in Second Language Acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem