

A COURSE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY FOR STUDENTS OF HIGHER NORMAL SCHOOLS

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高师 英语教学法教程

——国家教委直属师大基础教育改革与发展研究
《外语立体化教学法的理论与实验研究》专题报告

Preface

The speciality of English in higher normal schools must pay great attention to the course of English Language Teaching Methodology so that it can have its own features and serve elementary education directly. However, there are fewer course hours, and a shortage of regular teachers and good textbooks. These three issues require serious consideration in the construction of this course. In order to contribute a bit in this respect, especially in the construction of its textbook, the Southwest-Northwest China Research Association of Pedagogy in Foreign Languages organized the compilation of A Course in English Language Teaching Methodology for Higher Normal Schools. The Chinese version was published in 1990 while the English edition will be printed in 1993. The compilers and examiners of the Chinese version number 77, among whom there are 24 writers. It is a rare thing to have so many people participate in the work of the compilation of a textbook. Obviously there are advantages in doing it this way. First, the book can be used as textbook, either elective or required, for different class hours, and for higher normal schools of different levels. Second, a compilation needs the common efforts of teachers and researchers from the normal schools, middle schools and research institutes of education. Third, many of the compilers, writers and examiners are professors and associate professors, among whom there are veteran specialists in English language teaching methodology or prize

winners of monographs of educational science. Such a collective formed by the old, the middle-aged and the young on a voluntary basis has made it possible to change the process of compilation into a process of discussion, further study and lesson preparation. This has proved to be a help in directly raising the teaching quality of English language teaching methodology in colleges and universities involved.

Whether the goals can be obtained, however, depends on the examination of practice. We hope to have criticisms and suggestions from specialists, scholars, teachers and students, on the basis of which the book will be improved and revised and we believe that it will continue to improve.

Wang Changkai

April, 1992

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编后说明

Introductory Remarks

A. General Information on the English Teaching Methodology (hereinafter referred to as ETM)

1. *The nature of ETM*

ETM in nature is neither the teaching materials nor methods nor applied linguistics. It is, in a broad sense, a science(subject), or a branch of foreign language teaching methodology; in a narrow sense, it is the concrete methods of teaching and learning English. This course is one which deals with ETM in a broad sense.

2. *The object study*

ETM takes English teaching as a foreign language in elementary and secondary schools to be the object of study. It ranges from the country's foreign language educational policies, nation-wide teaching program, school syllabus, teaching materials to the varied in-class or out-of-class activities. This course of instruction is intended to explore the objective laws of English instruction, which in turn are used to guide and improve English teaching practice. Therefore the theories and principles of ETM are applicable to English teaching at schools beyond elementary and secondary levels; ETM, however, differs from those which are used in teaching English as a current or second language, and far more from the methodology in which English is learned in a natural environment.

3. *The contents and the theoretical base*

The nature, laws, functions and forms of various English instructional activities are all comprised in the contents of ETM. In a nutshell, the contents consider the students, the language, the

ways and means and the instructional environment. Precisely because of this, ETM must, by making use of psychological theories, study the students—the subject, the part and parcel of teaching; by utilizing linguistic theories, study the language — the object, a thing to which teaching activities are directed; by taking advantage of pedagogical theories, study the environment (including teachers etc). In addition, by employing anthropological and sociological theories, study the economic, political and cultural situation which hoop the subject, the object and the environment together. It is obvious that ETM involves the theories of quite a few subjects. But as an independent subject, it should have theories of its own to display its individuality, while sharing the theories in common with the methods of teaching foreign languages to display its generality.

B. Teaching Project of ETM (Graded Syllabuses)

1. The nature and current state of this course

(a) ETM should be one of the main courses of English study at higher normal schools. It should also be the very incarnation of the great thought in reforming the educational principles and the methods of teaching foreign languages prescribed in The Decision of the Central Committee of the C. P. C. on the Reform of the Educational Structure. So it plays a pivotal role in both the curriculum arrangements and the educational reform at higher normal schools. It is the position where English specialties and English teachers have a superior advantage in doing scientific research. This course, if well studied, not only can improve the students' teaching competence so as to guarantee that they will be competent for shouldering the task of teaching English at secondary schools after graduation, and thus raise the cultural qualities of the future generations, but also can cultivate their capacities of doing scientific research, broaden their horizons and enable them to take an active part in doing studious in-

quiry or experimentation and making innovation in the educational field. Obviously, the function of the course overweighs the time it takes up.

(b) The current state of ETM is not consistent with its function and status. Generally speaking, the authorities concerned failed to pay enough attention to what it deserves, the students are reluctant to learn and the ETM teachers can only teach with an effort. This state embodies itself in the following five aspects.

(1) People are at a loss why to study ETM for lack of a clear understanding of its nature and purpose. Quite a few are still not aware that ETM itself is a science. Instead, they think that it is nothing but either the introduction of some concrete teaching methods or the analysis of teaching materials for secondary schools, or a so-called art, the best use of which lies in the mind. They hastily concluded that anyone with the quality of being a teacher could grope forward without taking the trouble to learn ETM.

(2) Students are at a loss for what to learn because of the vague contents, which results in each's taking what he or she needs. In fact, ETM is a subject, or a branch of the trans-subject methodology of foreign language teaching, which consists of the teaching thought (theories and principles), the organization/conducting of class (the process), the concrete methods of teaching, and the ways and means of teaching (the instructional medium). It requires that equal emphasis be laid on both practice and theory. But the reality is that they have not been treated equally. Some propose, worse still, to teach the students limited knowledge and skills just needed as secondary school teachers so that they can guarantee that the students can get by; some insist on teaching such techniques as blackboard writing, drawing, singing and speaking; others advise introducing some native teaching experience in order to

relieve the students of their embarrassment as they step on the dais as a student-teacher or a fresh teacher; still others prefer to teach how to write teaching plans or just feel content with the offering of the course of ETM.

(3) ETM teachers sometimes have to fight in isolation. They seem puzzled at how to teach. ETM is a specialized course within the range of English subject. However, it is in essence a bilateral branch of both pedagogy and applied linguistics, people in charge of the arrangement of which are usually not good at it. Though they have the final say, they are not in a position to give any professional directions; accordingly, it remains somewhat independent. The task of this course is to teach neither English knowledge nor English literature. As one of the specialized courses, it is related to, yet independent of the others. The teacher of ETM are few in number, but more often than not, they are concurrently teachers of other courses and organizers of teaching practice.

(4) The class hours for ETM are very limited. In the 1950s, three semesters were devoted to this course with two class hours per week, there were 90 hours available for class teaching except the time taken up by practice, examination and reviewing. At present, one semester is usually devoted with three hours per week, and a total of 54 class hours is at the teachers' disposal; or at some schools, two semesters are devoted with two class hours per week, and the teachers have only 60 hours to teach; and what is worse, at some other schools, only one semester is devoted, and the actual time for class instruction is only 36 hours. Besides, the class hours are shared by lecturing, class-visiting at secondary schools (four hours at a time), classroom discussion, and various kinds of classroom work. There is almost no extracurricular time to review what one has learned. In this case, the teachers, even highly qualified

ones, can hardly do a good job, not to speak of the fact that most of the teachers who hold several posts simultaneously are not trained in ETM. As a matter of course, it is hard for them to do well in the teaching of basic theories and the training of performing skills in such a short time.

(5) Students are unwilling to become teachers, and consequently unwilling to learn ETM. In our country, graduates from schools other than normal ones can become teachers without being retrained. The shortage of English personnel makes it the worst job for English learners to become teachers. The students are hereby undisposed to accept this job and unwilling to learn ETM; so are most on-the-job students who are studying in the retraining institutes, for they harbour the sole idea of learning language just for the diploma.

2. The principles of reforming this course

To make ETM work at top efficiency, the existing flaws must be corrected. Proceeding from its trans-subject character and that of laying equal emphasis on both theory and practice, we should follow these principles in the course of reforming it.

(a) To incorporate the normal character with the academic one. The normal character should be the major premise for the existence of English speciality at higher normal schools and the grounds for the due status of ETM. To be a teacher is not the only way to embody the normal character. A teacher, if divorced from academic research, will become a hollow and mechanical artisan in teaching. Therefore, both the normal character and the academic one should thread the contents and methods of the course of ETM.

(b) The theoretic study must be three-dimensional. ETM involves such factors as students (the subject), the language (the object) and the environment (including native language, teacher,

ways and means, conditions and the like). Most of the present day theories concerning ETM stress primarily one of the three, which is apparently perverse. When reforming the contents, attention should be paid to this phenomenon.

(c) The drills and performance must be practical. This course contains some performance-based assignments, such as making teaching plans, trial lecturing etc. All the assignments must be practical. In doing so, the means and techniques already available and applicable at secondary schools, where the students will work after graduation, as well as the newly found ones should both be taught. Yet, to be practical does not only mean to be in tune with reality, but also keep pace with its development.

(d) To be flexible and to mix the compulsory courses with the optional ones. The offering of optional courses in addition to compulsory ones aims at tapping fully the students' talent, helping them develop in an all-round way, ensuring that they will be men of parts yet specialized in one aspect, and ultimately promoting their capacity of doing scientific research. Since ETM itself is somewhat isolated, it is not easy to set up its corresponding optional courses. At the same time, the higher normal colleges are divided into four-year ones and junior ones, each of them is subdivided into the ordinary ones and the retraining institutes, and in each college or institute, the students are made up of in-service students and pre-service students. The needs for ETM knowledge and skills by different students of different levels and categories are varied. So we must break the current rigid state in which all schools share the same course and all the students the same textbook. Flexible solutions must be adopted to divide the teaching materials into two parts, the one being compulsory, and the other optional, to meet different needs of different students, with a view to cope with all kinds of ex-

isting problems in the current state.

3. *Contents to be taught (the teaching material—this course of instruction)*

Since the curriculum at higher normal schools tends to be overloaded, it is desirable to run ETM course in these ways: one semester is to be devoted with three (or four) class hours a week; or two devoted with three (or four) class hours a week; or two semesters are to be devoted with two class hours per week. The teaching practice can be done in the next semester, or in the end of the same semester, or in the middle of the next semester respectively. The self-study time outside the class should make up one half as much as the class hours. The teaching practice does not take up any of the class hours.

With the above-mentioned tentative plans in mind, the curriculum can be arranged as follows:

(a) If one semester or two semesters are to be devoted, with 50 to 60 class hours:

(1) The pre-service students enrolled directly from senior secondary schools must take Point A of the Introductory Remarks, the first two parts, and Chapter 19 of the last part as compulsory materials; with the rest of the last part (Part 3) as optional.

(2) The in-service students must take Point A of the Introductory Remarks, Chapters 1, 2, 5 and Sections I, III, IV of Chapter 4 of Part 1, the whole of Part 2, and Chapters 19-21 of Part 3 as compulsory materials, while leaving the rest chapters of Part 3 as optional.

If two semesters are to be devoted, the compulsory materials should be finished before the teaching practice, while the optional chapters or sections can be done after it.

(b) If one semester is to be devoted with some 40 class hours:

(1) The pre-service students must take the Introductory Remarks, the whole of Part 1, Chapters 7, 9, 11 and Chapter 19 as compulsory materials, while leaving the rest chapters as optional.

(2) The in-service students must take the Introductory Remarks, Chapters 1, 2, 5 of Part 1, Sections I, III, IV, of Chapter 4, the whole of Part 2 and Chapter 19 as compulsory materials, while leaving the rest chapters as optional.

(c) The contents of Chapter 6, Part 1 is designed for reference at the time of class-visiting of teaching practice. They need no class hours. The above content allocation is a mere suggestion. The teacher should first of all make sure of the needs of the students by weighing the actual conditions of the school, the students and the level of English instruction of the local secondary school. Secondly, the teacher may freely readjust the contents according to the needs of the students. But one thing should be certain, i. e. , to divide the teaching materials into compulsory and optional parts, and students from those of the in-service students.

(d) As to the class-hour allocation, the proportion of lecturing to the assigned exercises (including classroom discussion) should be three to one, that of practice to theory at least two to one. To be in conformity with the features in compiling this book, classroom lecturing should be dominated by explaining, seeking after, and discussing the practical questions from which a theory is summed up.

(e) Individual guidance might be given to those who have an inclination for researching the foreign language teaching methodology after they have finished the whole course of instruction. This can be done in the following ways.

(1) By assigning other works as supplementary materials, which will be examined and guided in spare time outside the class.

(2) By giving them guidance in writing thesis on a special topic