

 《外国语言文学研究丛书》 郭涛 主编

# 外语教学研究

梁彬 汪兰 史雷鹏 / 著

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## 前 言

北方工业大学外国语言文学一级学科下设日语语言文学、外国语言学及应用语言学、英语语言文学三个二级学科，涉及的研究领域有语言学、文学、语言与文化、外语教育与教学、翻译理论与实践。现有导师 20 人，教授 8 人，副教授 12 人，还聘任了日本大阪大学古川裕教授、美国密西西比大学陈卫星教授、美国东田纳西州立大学 Roz Gann 教授等兼职教授 5 名。

近年来科研成果显著，2011—2015 年共承担了国家、省、市各类科学研究课题 40 余项，出版专著和教材 54 本，在各类学术杂志上发表论文 368 篇，一批优秀专著、论文和教材获国家、省部级奖励。外国语言文学一级学科与文法学院中文专业、法律专业相互融合、相互支撑，已形成以法庭同传研究为特色的翻译研究、以文艺批评为特色的中西方文艺理论研究、以中国学生外语习得研究为特色的外语教学理论与实践研究、以句式与隐喻研究为特色的中外语言研究团队。其中，文艺理论研究团队和翻译研究团队的学术成果在国内外产生了一定影响，获得了鲁迅文学奖和国家社会科学基金资助。外语教学理论与实践团队获得了北京市创新团队奖，中外语言研究也发表了不少高水平论文，形成了自己的特色。

外国语言文学学科每年招收 10—15 名硕士研究生，和国外大学联合培养，设有优厚的奖助学金制度；遵循因材施教、个性化培养的原则，根据每一名学生的特点制定个性化的培养方案，培养德、智、体全面发展，具有坚实的基础理论和系统的专门知识，严谨、求实的学风，综合素质较高的能胜任学校外语教学与研究的研究型人才或综合能力较强的能胜任外事、旅游、新闻、出版、翻译等行业



工作的应用型人才。

此次外国语言文学研究的系列学术成果能够出版，得到了学校出版基金的资助，研究内容涉及了语言、文学、翻译以及教育等方面，作者均为我校外国语言文学学科青年教师。该书的出版，既能检阅我校外国语言文学学科师资队伍建设和研究成果，也将促进我校外国语言文学学科的发展。

北方工业大学外国语言文学学科

2015年6月

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## **Part One**

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Teaching Chinese Children Oral English through Recitation and  
Communication Games





# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of Research on TCCOE

English had not been established as a compulsory course in primary schools prior to 2001. However, some teaching of English has taken place at this level since the mid 1980s from a very modest scale to an increasingly larger scale mostly in urban key schools over 27 provinces. It was estimated that about 8 million primary school pupils studied English in 1998, and the number had been growing rapidly, with an increase of one million every year since 1994 (Liu & Gong 2001: 36).

However, the teaching of English, especially TCCOE at this level had not been standardized, due to its unrecognized position in the school curriculum, limited availability of qualified teachers and lack of appropriate teaching methods and materials. The beginning age varied from age 8 to 11 and the weekly time allocation ranged from 1 period to 4 periods depending on the availability of the teachers. The approach to TCCOE was more often a mixture of a structural and functional one, with situational dialogues being the main texts together with a strong emphasis on recitation and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to ensure correct pronunciation and intonation at the initial stage. The textbooks used for primary schools were mostly produced locally along with a few licensed foreign textbooks published locally, such as Look, Listen and Learn, English 300, or New Concept English. Some schools simply used secondary school English textbooks for the primary level of learning. However, all students entering junior high school would restart from ABC no matter how much one has learned in the primary school.

On the other hand, some teachers do not seem to realize the salience of theories on TCCOE.

Some teachers said that they would teach the students in the way their teachers once taught them, or they would like to just follow their own feelings without considering the physical and mental characteristics of children (as cited in Zhang 2002: 1). Relying on their good linguistic knowledge, some teachers ignore the need for any theoretical guidance. As a result, little has achieved in the domain of TCCOE research.

In general, teachers on children's oral English teaching should reform their teaching attitudes as mentioned above and study teaching methodologies so as to improve children's communicative ability and improve their teaching efficiency to the largest extent.

Here rises an urgent problem of how to teach Chinese children oral English efficiently. Lu (2001: 157) points out the training on speaking is necessary for nowadays' Chinese children (children from the first year of formal schooling about five or six years old to the age of eleven or twelve years). Carless (2003: 486) pinpoints that how teachers implement changes in pedagogy is an important area which does not receive sufficient attention. The transition or continuity from the primary to the secondary levels has long been a problem but never seriously tackled as there has been little research conducted on foreign language teaching especially TCCOE at the primary level. Little has been found in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). Although 950 papers were found to contain the keyword "language game", only 14 papers were located when they were further narrowed down to "oral English". The number was zero when the word "children" was added. Here lies the research gap which prompted the author to do an experiment to investigate an effective teaching method that is suited for children's oral English learning. The hypothesis is TCCOE through CG is a more effective way of improving their oral English compared with the traditional RA.

## 1.2 Definition for Recitation and Communication Games

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* (1999: 1245) recitation refers to (instance of ) public delivery of passage of prose or poetry learnt by heart. In this thesis, recitation refers to memorization based on understanding. Traditionally speaking, recitation is regarded as an effective way of learning English, as Li (2001) says recitation is the representation and prerequisite of the solid basic skills that are required by learning English well. As also



mentioned by former president Jiang Zemin (as cited in Li 1999: 41) that no matter what languages you are learning, recitation is essential because it benefits people a lot.

On the other hand, the frequently mentioned word nowadays —Task-Based Learning (TBL)— has prompted various communicative tasks in oral English teaching. Communication games take on the characteristics of communicative tasks.

Communication games are activities with a non-linguistic goal or aim (Hadfield 1999: 4). The emphasis in the games is on successful communication rather than on correctness of language. Successful completion of the game will involve the carrying out of a task such as drawing in a route on a map, filling in a chart, or finding two matching pictures rather than the correct production of a structure. However, in order to carry out this task it will be necessary to use language and by careful construction of the task it will be possible to specify in advance exactly what language will be required.

Children acquire language by taking part in activities. To take part in activities, they want and need to communicate. The need to communicate in English is immediate and from the first lesson activities should take place in English. One embodiment of these communicative tasks is communication games that are oriented from communicative task-based language teaching, and there will be more elaboration on the close linkage between communicative task-based language teaching and communication games in later chapters.

Between the two approaches, which method is comparatively more effective, recitation or communication games? Is RA too traditional to be adopted for children? Do CGs provide us all we need without weakness? To answer these questions, a two-month experiment was conducted in Beijing Jingcheng Culture School to find out which is more effective in TCCOE, RA or CG? These two approaches were used in two parallel classes in a period of two months for 20 times respectively. RA was used in a controlled Class and communication games were used in an experimental class.

### 1.3 Aims of the Thesis

According to *New English Curriculum Standard* (2003), the task for English curriculum is: "...to arouse the students' interests in English learning and develop their positive attitudes



towards English learning so as to build up their confidence in English learning." In line with the implementation of the *New English Curriculum Standard*, this study intends to achieve the goal of motivating and encouraging children to speak English through an effective oral English teaching method, which will serve to improve the quality of English teaching at the primary level. At the same time, it is hoped that a different, if not a better, teaching model for children's oral English teaching is to be suggested.

## 1.4 Summary

In this chapter, the need for research on children's oral English learning and teaching is discussed through which the significant role of speaking in learning English is identified. In consequence, definitions of the two teaching methods—RA and CG—are provided along with the research question for project. The hypothesis of the thesis is stated as well. It is suggested that communication games be taken as the teaching mode in TCCOE.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This part will elaborate on the following sections: First, the importance of TCCOE. It exemplifies the significance of this thesis as well; Secondly, SLA theories. These theories link closely with oral English learning and teaching. A better teaching method is highlighted in line with the theory under discussion; Thirdly, a review on the two approaches to TCCOE, RA and CG. The former is a traditional approach, and the latter is a development of CLT and TBL; Fourthly, a review on some empirical studies. It connects the present study and former relative studies in TCCOE; Finally, a brief summary is presented.

### 2.2 The Importance of TCCOE

The importance of TCCOE will be elaborated from the following several aspects. Firstly, oral English is an important way of communication which underlines the need for TCCOE; Secondly, the characteristics of children are touched upon to remind teachers of an appropriate teaching method that motivates children's interests in English learning.

#### 2.2.1 Oral English is a Way of Communication

There are two forms in language communication, i.e. spoken form and written form (Chen et al. 2002: 61). According to Zhang (2002: 72), speaking is oral production, which is a basic communication skill. According to Chen et al. (2002: 61), language teaching cannot be limited to the passing down and learning of knowledge. It puts more emphasis on the practice of listening,

speaking, reading and writing. The learning and mastering of the knowledge in language is not just for storing knowledge, its ultimate goal is to apply what one has learned into the real life use. As also mentioned by Golebiowska (1990), the aim of teaching English should be to enable our learners to communicate in that language. This idea is shared by many other scholars and educationalists in English teaching field. Klippel (2003) says foreign language teaching should help the students master the communicative skills and make good use of any real and natural language environment and try to create more circumstances like this.

In general, speaking can be defined as the use of oral language to interact directly and immediately with others. In the Basic English Education, learning of basic language knowledge must be consolidated through the process of listening, speaking, reading and writing. At the same time, the practices of these four skills are the reliable guarantee of the basic language knowledge such as pronunciation, lexicography, grammar and so on. The teaching of oral English, which links closely with speaking, is to be studied in this thesis among the four skills.

### 2.2.2 Characteristics of Children

Children are quite different from adults in many aspects including learning a foreign language, so teachers should use different teaching approaches according to their characteristics.

Halliwell (1992) says that the young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed. They bring with them an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics, which will help them learn a foreign language. These features of children can be enumerated as follows. Firstly, children are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words; Secondly, they have the basic communication strategy to grasp the meaning in their cognitive aspects; Thirdly, they already have a great skill in using limited language resources creatively; Fourthly, they frequently learn indirectly rather than directly; Fifthly, they take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do; Sixthly, they have a ready imagination; Seventhly, they, above all, take great delight in talking. These instincts, skills, features and characteristics of children in learning should be taken into consideration when teachers set up the aims, contents and teaching methods for young learners in the classroom.

As a general rule, the younger the children are, the more holistic learners they will be. Unlike

adult learners, the young learners respond to meaning underlying the sentences but tend not to make analytical studies of the language. They are usually prepared to enjoy the activities that the teacher has prepared for them. These factors mean that it is important for teachers to think of different ways to maintain high degrees of motivation among children.

### **2.2.3 Motivating Children to Learn English**

Moon et al.(1991: 16) states "young children tend to be influenced by their feeling for their teacher, the general learning atmosphere in the classroom, the method used and by their parents opinions".

Children are different from adults who often have clear personal goals and objectives for learning a foreign language. For children, a foreign language is simply another school subject they have to do in school. Children do things that interest them and make them feel good about themselves. Children are active, creative and imaginative. They like to act and play games. Also, they need the opportunity to exercise their imaginations and creativity. Learning for children should be enjoyable with attainable targets. They do not like to be lectured but to be involved in actions and presentations. They need to be recognized for what they do and praised for their efforts and participation. Therefore, their experiences in learning a foreign language are very important in shaping their attitude and motivation. Participation, enjoyment and success are the three keys that make all the differences to children in building up their attitude and motivation towards English learning.

### **2.2.4 Summary**

It is obvious that the teaching method plays crucial roles in fostering children's interest in learning. A lot of children like to learn the language simply because they enjoy the classroom activities, in which they can demonstrate their capability and gain success. Similarly, children can develop a negative attitude towards the language simply because they do not like the classroom activities. Bearing in mind the theory of multiple intelligences, we need to design a variety of activities that cater for different needs and provide different opportunities for children to exercise their different intelligences.



## 2.3 Second Language Acquisition Theories and Communication Games

In this part, SLA theories will be explained in detail. The term "Second Language Acquisition" refers to the subconscious or conscious processes by which a language other than the mother tongue is learned in a natural or a tutored setting (Ellis 1985: 6). Four principal hypotheses within SLA field, namely, Critical Period Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, Affective Filter Hypothesis and Interaction Hypothesis are to be reviewed. In relation with these four hypotheses, the advantages of TCCOE through communication games emerge.

### 2.3.1 Critical Period Hypothesis

In TCCOE, age is a problem about which many people concern. There is a general belief that people learn English better at a young age (Chen et al. 2002: 5). Zhang Daozhen (as cited in Lu 2003: 52) believes that the age of 4 to 6 is the prime time of learning English, since they have good memory and ability of imitation. Although it is a debatable issue as to when is the best time for children to start to learn English, it has been widely observed in the field of SLA that children learn second languages more easily and arrive at better final proficiency than adults. This widely held belief has led to the hypothesis that there is an optimal age, a critical period or a sensitive period for L2 learning (Lenneberg 1967).

When English becomes more and more accepted as an international language, it is increasingly included in primary curricula. As recorded in Interpretation of New English Curriculum Standard (Chen, Wang and Cheng et al. 2002: 52), the primary school pupils aged from 9-12 have the characteristics of being curious and good at imitation. They like to draw people's attention, and seldom feel shy. They love playing, singing, drawing and etc.

From the discussion above, we can see that learning English at around 9-10 is hopefully to yield better results in terms of oral English learning. Consequently, the Ministry of Education has suggested four hours of English teaching every week for regions where conditions are permitted (Lu 2003). The *New English Curriculum Standard (NECS)* (2003) stipulates that English should be a required course in all primary schools in the near future.