

任务型语言教学：

任务、任务研究、任务型教学
与评价及教师培训

○ 罗少茜



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RENWU RENWU YANJIU RENWUXING JIAOXUE
YU PINGJIA JI JIAOSHI PEIXUN

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序

罗少茜教授的论文集《任务型语言教学：任务、任务研究、任务型教学与评价及教师培训》即将出版，她请我写序，我欣然答应，理由有三。第一，罗少茜是我多年的同事，也是教学、科研方面的合作者，我们理应相互帮助（她对我的帮助更多一些）；第二，把分散在不同出版物里的论文结集出版是很有意义的事情，这不仅可以帮助读者省去搜索论文的麻烦，而且有利于读者更好地把握这些论文（研究）之间的逻辑联系，更好地理解任务型语言教学研究的发展过程；第三，我本人对任务型语言教学的研究与实践也很感兴趣。重读结集出版的这些文章对我来说也是一个不错的学习机会。

任务型语言教学是20世纪80年代语言教育研究者根据第二语言习得研究的启示提出来的的一种教学途径，其核心思想是，使学生通过完成任务来学习语言。随后又有许多语言教学专家从任务型学习的认知理论和方法论以及社会文化观等方面做了进一步研究，丰富了任务型语言教学的基本理论。近些年来，国内外语教育研究者对任务型教学做了大量的介绍，并开展了广泛的实践研究。2001年开始实施的基础教育英语课程改革进一步推动了任务型语言教学在中国的研究与实践。

作为指导基础教育阶段英语课程的纲领性文件，《英语课程标准》（实验稿）（教育部，2001）除了规定课程目标以外，还要从外语教学发展角度倡导最新的外语教学理念、教学途径或教学方法。从20世纪80年代到现在，在外语教学领域，任务型语言教学可以说是一种新的教学途径和新的教学理论，也是一种比较有影响力的教学理论。鉴于此，教育部于2001年颁布《英语课程标准》（实验稿），倡导积极尝试和研究任务型语言教学。当然也有一些不同的意见，比如说有人认为任务型语言教学还在发展过程之中，还不是十分完善的一种教学途径。还有人认为，外语教学方法很多，而且趋势往往是推陈出新，倡导任务型语言教学也貌似有赶时髦的嫌疑。

《英语课程标准》（实验稿）之所以要倡导任务型教学，主要有三个方面的原因：首先，任务型教学是直接培养学生在真实生活中运用英语的能力的一种教学途径。课程改革要求培养学生的语言运用能力，尤其是把英语课程的目标确定为培养学生综合语言运用能力。在这个意义上来说，任务型语言教学有利于实现这个课程目标。其次，任务型语言教学强调学习过程。英语课程改革的一个重要理念就是强调学习过程，这与任务型语言教学的重点正是不谋而合。第三，新课程自然要倡导一些新的教学理念。任务型教学是外语教学发展的一个最新形态，也是值得我们倡导的教学途径之一。

外语教学方法一直在不断地发展，不断地进步。既然有新的理念、新的方法出现，我们就应该介绍、学习和研究，并在实践中大胆尝试。任务型语言教

学需要通过实践来进一步检验，而且我们对它的认识也还不够全面。所以，研究任务型语言教学，特别是任务型语言教学在中国的适用性，具有重要意义。

罗少茜教授在过去的十多年里一直潜心研究中国环境下任务型语言教学的理论和实践问题。她从2001年至2005年在香港大学攻读博士学位，师从任务型语言教学的国际权威Peter Skehan教授，并与国际上该领域的许多著名学者有着密切的学术交往。收入这本论文集的文章是她近些年来的部分研究成果。这些研究既有理论的高度，也有实际应用价值。我相信，这本论文集对任务型语言教学研究者来说，一定是不可或缺的重要材料。我也希望广大读者通过阅读这本书，积极参与有关任务型语言教学的讨论与研究，进一步推动任务型语言教学在中国的推广与传播。

程晓堂
2011年5月于
北京师范大学

内容简介

《任务型语言教学：任务、任务研究、任务型教学与评价及教师培训》论文集包括已发表的论文十七篇和未发表的论文三篇、共二十篇论文。二十篇论文按主题分为四大部分：第一部分是任务型语言教学和测试与语言学习，包括两篇论文，“任务型语言教学和测试”和“外语教学研究中的知识/能力与运用能力”。第二部分十篇重点在外语教学课程与教学大纲及外语课堂教学与评价。内容包括课程、课程中的话题与教学大纲之间的关系，课堂教学、语言评测之间的关系，根据课程所设计的任务型英语教材的使用情况，教材和课堂中的任务设计以及有效教学活动的设计，教学过程以及教学过程中，尤其是任务型课堂教学中任务前阶段的各种教学活动，还有任务的真实性和任务链的问题、任务与练习的区别等。此部分最后一篇是教学中如何采用能力行为表现评价。第三部分的七篇论文是关于任务型教学的研究，包括影响任务型语言教学中任务难度因素的研究、任务条件对于语言产出的影响以及从不同角度研究影响外语教学和评价中的任务难度因素的研究。第四部分是一篇关于任务型语言教学中的教师培训的论文。这篇论文源于作者在研究中发现影响任务型语言教学的一个重要原因是英语教师需要任务型教学方面的培训：从概念的认识到的课堂教学具体实施。

任务型教学不仅在外语教学中仍然是二语习得、语言教学和研究的重要课题，而且越来越多的汉语及对外汉语教师开始研讨和尝试任务型教学。希望本论文集可以给从事任务型教学和研究的研究人员、教师和学生带来一些启示。

对于《任务型语言教学：任务、任务研究、任务型教学与评价及教师培训》论文集的出版，我要感谢北京师范大学外国语言文学学院院长程晓堂教授的支持并为之写序；还要感谢中央教育科学研究所研究员龚亚夫老师的帮助并为本论文集写后序。两位专家均在任务型语言教学理论和实践上有很多研究。

最后要感谢朱晓军编辑、肖潇、易宝树对文稿的反复审读和核对以及高等教育出版社外语与国际汉语事业部的大力支持。

罗少茜

2011年5月1日

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第一部分

任务型语言教学和测试与语言学习

1

Task-based Language Teaching and Testing in China

Shaoqian Luo

The School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Beijing Normal University

Abstract: This paper covers a series of issues related to the current situation of English teaching and testing in China such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) approaches to English teaching and language assessment. Under what circumstances has TBLT become known in China? What role does TBLT play in the Chinese National English Curriculum (CNEC; Ministry of Education, 2001) and how is language ability perceived in the CNEC? To what extent is TBLT accepted in the realistic classrooms and language testing in a test driven context? In addition, what problems come along with TBLT?

To approach these issues, this paper first introduces the English educational system in China in order to make it explicit how English functions in the educational system, and when a new approach is advocated, how students and teachers are affected and how it is implemented. Subsequently, it presents the CNEC for schools. After that the relationship between problems in language teaching and language testing is examined, challenges and problems for implementing TBLT and task-based assessment (TBA) are identified.

Key words: communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, task-based assessment, the Chinese National English Curriculum

1 Introduction: English Education in China¹

English came into China with Western technology in the late 19th century

¹ For a brief historical review of ELT, see He (2005), Boyle (2000), Cortazzi & Jin (1996).

“under the philosophy of Chinese learning as the essence, Western learning for its usefulness” (Hayhoe, 1999, pp. 37-38; see also He, 2005; Hu, 1999). English language teaching (ELT) “first entered the Chinese secondary school curriculum together with German and Japanese in 1902” (He, 2005, p. 12; see also Hu, 1999) and has been through some dramatic ups and downs because of the overall sociopolitical changes in the country (Boyle, 2000). It has received significantly more attention than ever before from the Chinese government, particularly the Ministry of Education (hereafter MoE) since China’s open-door policy (1976) and entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO).

English is now officially designated a core subject in the primary and secondary school curriculums. It resembles Coniam’s (1999) description of English teaching in Hong Kong secondary schools: proficiency in English is one of the primary keys to overall student performance and development both inside and outside school and is crucial for success both at tertiary level and in employment after leaving school. English is “extremely important, because, as the global lingua, English is the language in which business, technological and educational transactions are conducted” (Coniam, 1999, p. 2). It is not only a compulsory subject in Chinese primary and middle schools but also, as stated in the Chinese National English Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2001; CNEC hereafter), is regarded as one of the necessary qualities for citizenship in the new century.

1.1 Student Population

There are 108.64 million elementary school students, 85.81 million regular secondary school students (61.72 million junior and 24.09 million senior secondary school students respectively) in China (2005 government statistics²; Zhang, L. 2006). This means that there are nearly 200 million students studying English in Chinese schools. The average class size is 35~45 students in primary schools and 50 in secondary schools. The class size may reach 60~70 (sometimes 100) in rural areas.

There is a huge gap between urban / developed and rural / less developed areas: In the urban areas, students spend large amount of time on studying English outside of school; children start English study at an early age in the kindergarten. However, the students in the rural areas have limited resources and little expose to English.

² Source: <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/html/U2106e.htm>

1.2 Teacher Resources

According to the government statistics, there are about 200,000 and 600,000 English teachers in elementary schools and middle schools, respectively (Gong, Y., personal communication, August 29, 2006; see also *Chinese Education: Annual Statistics, 2000*, Ministry of Education, 2001a). The number of teachers has met the MoE's requirements, however, only one third of them have met the MoE qualifications in the real sense. According to the MoE qualification targets, senior high-school teachers must have a university degree and junior high-school teachers must at least obtain a diploma of English at a two-year educational institute. Nevertheless, the reality is far away from that, especially at the elementary level where there is an acute shortage of English teachers. For example, although there are about 20,000 elementary teachers in Guangdong province, this number is only one third of the total needed to meet the needs of all school districts (Gong, 2002)³.

1.3 Instructional Time and Language Learning

The instructional time for language learning is 2–3 weekly 40-minute lessons for Chinese elementary schools and 5–6 weekly 45-minute lessons for the six-year secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2000a, 2000b, 2001b). According to Nunan (2002), as a minimum, learners need 200 hours per year of systematic exposure to the language in instructional contexts (p. 12). Therefore, the 2–3 weekly 40-minute lessons in the Chinese elementary schools convert into only 50–60 hours of instruction a year, “which is one third of the minimum number of hours needed for significant progress in a foreign language” (Nunan, 2002, p. 13). In the six-year secondary school, the 5–6 45-minute lessons per week translate into approximately 160 lessons or 120 hours per year (Yang, 2006).

1.4 Management System

The management system is of three levels: the MoE, the National Basic Education⁴ Curriculum and Textbook Development Center affiliated to the MoE, and the local teaching research sections under the supervision of the local education administration in every province, district, city or town. The

³ From 2005, the Ministry of Education has started the project of The Standards of Teachers of English for Primary and Secondary Schools (STEPSS) to enhance teacher development.

⁴ The elementary and high school education on the Chinese Mainland is called “Basic Education”.

Ministry of Education establishes educational policies and administers all levels of education from kindergarten to higher education. The National Basic Education Curriculum and Textbook Development Center is responsible for the implementation of the national curriculum, teaching guidance and research projects. The local teaching research sections are responsible for English teaching and research in that province, district, and city or town. The responsibilities of the coordinators in the local teaching research sections are, among other duties, to select textbooks, organize in-service teacher training and education, and conduct teaching seminars.

1.5 Textbooks and Teaching Resources

The MoE has approved a wide variety of textbooks, including those that are self-written or compiled, imported and jointly produced. Many major international education publishing houses have representative offices in Beijing and have their EFL textbooks published in China. Up to the present, more than twenty sets of different textbooks for Chinese schools have been approved by the MoE and are used throughout the country. Most of these textbooks follow the topic / theme-centered, and function-structure integrated approach with pre-described topics, function items and grammar structures in the scope and sequence.

The trend is for textbooks to be based on the communicative approach, especially the task-based language teaching (TBLT hereafter) approach (see 2.4), as advocated in the CNEC (Ministry of Education, 2001b). The ultimate objective is that students perform and accomplish tasks that are authentic or life-like by using the language they have learned. At the elementary level, the CNEC gives priority to student interest in learning English. Children learn the language through games, songs, and other activities or tasks.

1.6 Trends of Development

The major trends in ELT development in the Chinese mainland include (a) learner-centered foreign language teaching; (b) research on second language acquisition; (c) teacher education; (d) action research; (e) content-based language teaching; (f) foreign language testing and assessment; and (g) multimedia and Internet language teaching (Liu, 2004, pp. 272-274). The last trend, to provide access to the Internet, is also the MoE's main task in the coming years. According to Gong (2002), the MoE began the School Net Project in 2000 to connect all schools within five to ten years. In other words, every school will be connected to the Internet. Currently, there are about three million computers

in schools, among which 10,000 schools have intranets. To solve the problem of the lack of teacher resources in the western and other rural areas, the MoE and the Chinese Education Television channel (CETV) are working together to produce an English teaching TV program for the students in those areas. The government has also sent audio-video products to those places mentioned above. The MoE Teacher Education Department has also established a long-distance continuing education program for the school teachers. There are several software companies planning to provide all cities with interactive English learning programs, which are based on the most popular English textbooks, through broad band and cable (Gong, 2002).

2 Communicative Language Teaching and the National English Curriculum

2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT hereafter) has been in China for more than 20 years. According to Y. Li (2001), there are three periods in CLT study in Chinese Mainland. The late 1970s to the mid 1980s was a period when CLT was introduced; the mid and late 1980s was a period of acceptance of the concept which started to appear in the syllabus and textbooks; and the 1990s till the present has been a time when research on CLT has become more mature and reasonable. Chinese researchers and educators have been reflecting on CLT from a local perspective. The research can be classified mainly into three categories (Zhang, Y. 2006): introducing CLT theories; bridging the gap between theories and practice; and practice. The first group, for example, Hu (1982) and J. Zhang (1983), introduced basic concepts and features of CLT from social and theoretical perspectives. They also posed problems in implementing CLT, such as language item selection and sequencing, the relationship between language ability and communicative competence. The second group researched CLT goals, textbook writing and classroom teaching (Li, G., 1987; Jia, 1989). The third group has done more practical research, for instance, on English teaching in middle schools, and language testing (Xu, 1992).

Dai (2001) and Ming (2003) did surveys among tertiary teachers and Y. Zhang (2006) among middle school teachers on their perceptions of CLT. Results were similar in that while the teachers had positive attitudes toward CLT, there were problems in practice.

Considering the reality of the shortage of teachers and resources and lack of detailed implementation strategies, many theorists such as Gui consider CLT

inappropriate in China (Bao, 2004a). Z. Zhang, interviewed by Bao (2004b), commented that “it is impossible for foreign language learners to acquire communicative competence since it is decided by cultural proficiency”. It is, therefore, important to be “alert to the simple copy of foreign methodology” (Dai, 2001, p. 325) and be “more context-conscious so as to be on the way of developing our particular and more practical teaching and learning methods” (Zhang, Y., 2006; Li, G., 1995). China ought to have its own approach to foreign language learning and teaching.

2.2 The National English Curriculum

As a core subject and currently the one in which Chinese administrators expect rigorous, student-centered learning to occur, English now stands poised to be a catalyst for change throughout the Chinese school curriculum. The new CNEC has been introduced system-wide by the MoE and subsequently ratified and widely distributed in China at both primary and secondary levels. The CNEC stipulates that English is a compulsory subject from Grade 3 to Grade 12. As such it is what Candlin (2001) refers to as:

the complex of established and ratified guidelines and syllabuses, statements of contents, aims and goals, suggested resources, assessment schemes and systems, modes and models of teaching, ... whatever is set out, more less formally, as an approved and legitimate guide to enable, but also constrain, practices in educational institutions in schooling. (p. 230)

The CNEC (Ministry of Education, 2001b) emphasizes a humanistic approach by integrating the “whole-person” concept into language teaching and promotes communicative approaches, for example, task-based approaches toward language teaching and learning (author translation, Ministry of Education, 2001b, p. 29). The overall goal of the curriculum, which enhances students’ integrated ability to use the language and what they can do with language, covers five areas: (1) language skills; (2) linguistic knowledge; (3) attitude and motivation; (4) learning strategies; and (5) culture awareness (Table 1; author translation, CNEC, 2001, p. 6).

Table 1: The CNEC goals

Language skills:	listening, speaking, reading, writing
Linguistic knowledge:	phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, functions, topics
Affective factors:	motivation and interest, confidence and perseverance,

	collaborative spirit, national and international awareness
Learning strategies:	cognitive, adaptable, communicative, and resourceful
Cultural awareness:	knowledge, understanding, communicative, and interpretive

The structure of curriculum goals is shown in Figure 1 (overleaf). The language objectives in the CNEC are integrated into nine levels (see Appendix A: General objectives for the nine levels of language proficiency). The second level is the graduation standard for the primary school students. The fifth level (a mastery of 1500 English words) is for the junior middle students; the seventh level (a mastery of 3300-3500 words) for senior high-school students. The eighth level is for those who go to college and the ninth level for graduates of foreign language schools.

Other requirements are basic grammar structures and 350 phrases, four skills, 11 functional and notional items, ability to write a short passage of 80-100 words, and 24 themes (Appendix B), based on which teaching content is decided and textbooks throughout the country are compiled.

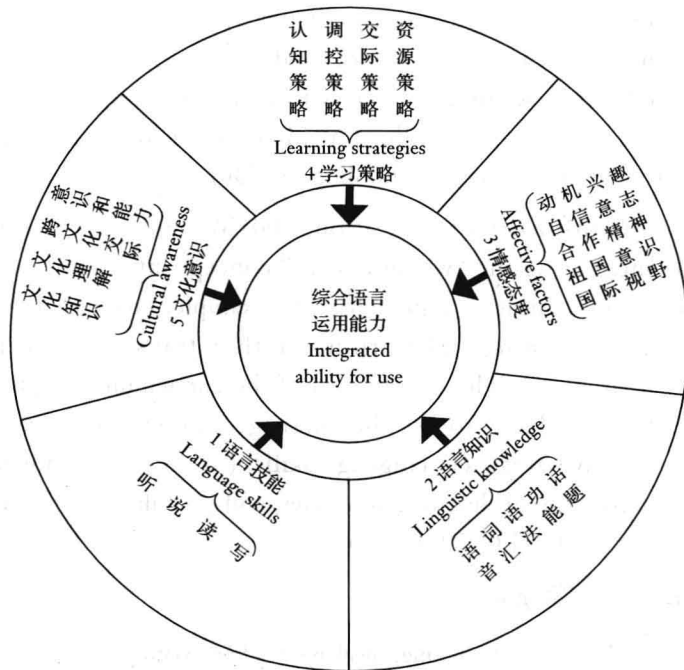


Figure 1 The structure of curriculum goals