A Course in English Language Teaching

英语教学论

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编写说明

　　为了进一步贯彻落实教育部关于"教材建设精品化,教材要适应多样化教学需要"的指示精神,加强成人高等学校教材建设,推动成人高等教育的改革与发展,我们组织力量开发、编写了此套成人高等教育教材。

　　这套教材的开发采取科研课题管理模式进行。首先严格按照《广西成人高等教育部分教材建设实施方案》申报立项,然后通过专家论证和评审,最后经广西高等学校教材建设和管理委员会批准,从200多项申报材料中确定首期研究开发项目46项,编写出版的教材共47种。这47种教材涵盖了文学、法学、教育学、医学、动物科学和艺术等几大门类的学科。为了适应本、专科学生不同层次的学习要求,我们对主要学科分设了本科教材和专科教材。

　　本套教材力求体现成人高等教育的教学特点,注重教材的实用性,并适合成人高等教育的教学形式和教学规律。在强调基础理论、

基本知识、基本技能的同时，着重考虑内容的深入浅出，注意科学性与实践性的结合。在内容的选择上，教材注意面向大多数学生，既确保落实教学大纲的基本要求，又具有适当的弹性，能够适应学生进一步提高的要求，也给授课教师留有较大的选择和发挥空间。在教材编写体例上，采取了总论和分述的编写结构：总论部分概括阐述了课程的主要内容和知识点，分述部分则对各知识点进行详细的讲解。同时，为了帮助学生全面深入地掌握教材内容，便于学生自学，我们根据教材内容的特点编写了相应的学习指导书，对教材中的重点和难点予以点评和解析，并提供习题或自测题给学生自学，力求提高学生的学习效果。

本套教材已经广西高等学校教材建设和管理委员会审查通过。教材得以顺利编写、出版和使用，与广西教育厅领导的高度重视和大力支持是分不开的，同时，凝聚着广西各高等院校成人教育机构的领导和有关专家特别是广大编写人员的心血和汗水，在此谨向他们表示诚挚的谢意。

由于时间仓促，书中难免有错漏之处，恳请各位专家、广大师生批评指正。

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成人高等教育教材编写组
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Contents

Unit 1
An Introduction to English Language Teaching

Aims of this unit:

In this unit we will discuss some general issues about English language teaching, focusing on the following:

1. General concepts and principles in English language teaching
2. Linguistics and foreign language teaching
3. Requirements for an English language teacher

In the 21 st century, with the integration of world economies, and China's entry into WTO in particular, the Chinese people have come to view English language teaching as highly significant in the promotion of cooperation and development, and the maintenance of world peace. In fact, English language education in China has never been so strongly emphasized. English training centers and English schools are springing up throughout China. The Ministry of Education has prescribed the English Curriculum Criteria for basic education in this new climate. As a result, teachers of English are actively participating in all levels of reform and research related to English language education. This ranges from practical issues to do with the curriculum, methodology and testing, to more theoretical questions about the nature of English language teaching and

learning. These questions include consideration of the principles of teaching, different approaches to teaching or learning, affective variables in the process and so on. All these concentrate on one fundamental question, that is, how to teach English so that learners will develop their communicative competence in the shortest possible time, allowing them to use English effectively for their different purposes.

1.1   General concepts and principles in English language teaching

1.1.1   Teaching English as communication

Language is a tool in communication. People use language to exchange ideas and understand each other. Why do people learn English? There are different reasons. It may be necessary for some people to pass an examination in English to enter a university. Some people hope to go abroad for further study or work in international enterprises. Or it may be needed by people who hope to get a better job or a promotion. Different as the reasons may be, people study English with the hope to use it in their work or life.

Since English is used to fulfill different purposes, we should teach English in the way that it is used in real world. That is, English language teaching must be communicative. To be more specific, the final goal of English language teaching is nothing but to develop students' communicative competence.

How do we understand communication? Communication between people is very complex and ever-changing. By effective communication we mean that there is a desire for the communication to be effective both from the point of view of the speaker and the listener. Harmer (1983:43) describes the nature of communication in this way:

speaker/writer	wants to say something has a communicative purpose selects from language store
listener/reader	wants to listen to something is interested in communicative purpose processes a variety of language
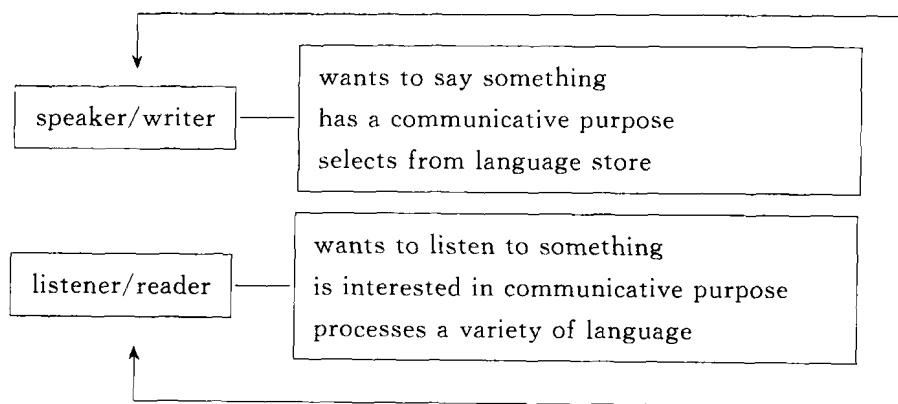
The above figure tells us that whenever communication takes place, there is at least a speaker/writer and a listener/reader. In other words, during communicating, anyone may be a speaker, a writer, a listener, or a reader. The role changes according to the changing situation. As such, in English language teaching, what we ought to do is to help our students to be fluent speakers and writers, and efficient listeners and readers as well.

However, recent surveys show that a considerable number of freshmen in colleges or universities, who have learned English for about six years from junior to senior, are still unable to use English in normal communication when speaking or writing, though they can understand English by reading. The reason for this disadvantage lies in the teacher's way of teaching. The traditional teaching approach tends to isolate language from its context. Many teachers of English in middle schools, affected by traditional grammar-translation methodology, would teach English knowledge, giving students a system of grammatical rules without pointing out to students the function of language. In fact, language must be taught as communication. Students can only learn how to use the language through active communication.

Task 1

Discuss with your partner:

（1）Why should we teach English as communication?

（2）How do we understand "effective communication"?

1.1.2 English class must be conducted in English

It is a must for teachers to teach English in English. This refers both to the instruction itself and to the organization and procedures of teaching. However, we still find that in many schools English classes are not taught in English but in Chinese, or even in local dialects. Such an unhelpful practice must be eradicated without hesitation. The advantages of teaching English using the target language are quite self-evident.

Firstly, an English-speaking environment is created. Students' motivation can be stimulated. Students are listening, speaking and playing games in English. Their whole minds are concentrated on English, and English seems familiar to them.

Secondly, it helps to cultivate students' feel for the language and ability to think in English. Since middle school students are exposed to the target language, they have the chance to listen to and read English, that is, they can experience how the target language sounds and is generated. Gradually, they will develop good habits in speaking and writing without thinking of ways to translate.

Thirdly, it helps to consolidate what students have learned. English in class proves to be useful for reviewing previously learned knowledge and building up new knowledge. Without immersion in English, students tend to forget the words and expressions they have already learned and so they can make slow progress.

Fourthly, it is good for the teacher to improve his or her English. Learning a foreign language depends on constant use of that language. If a teacher of English teaches English without using it, his or her English will become rusty.

English teaching in middle schools, therefore, must be conducted in English and students should practise English in class. By doing so, they will have more opportunities to use the target language in listening, speaking, reading and

writing. Undoubtedly, the more they practise, the more familiar they will be with English, and the better skills they will develop.

To sum up, teaching English in English also means the restricted use of Chinese in an English classroom. Chinese is only used when some language points are too abstract or complex for students to understand in English, such as in the explanation of comparison or contrast between the two languages. Of course, the English used in class should not be too difficult for students to understand, or the desired effect would not be obtained.

Task 2

Discuss in a group of four on the following:

(1) Did our middle school English teachers use English in class? How often did they use English?

(2) What are the advantages of using English in class?

1.1.3   Making the class student-centered

It is still common in English language teaching that the teacher dominates the whole class by speaking on his own, while students have very little or limited time to practise the target language. Some teachers explain too much about language knowledge, and students are not required to think but just listen to the teacher, or take some notes when necessary. In such teacher-centered lessons, students become passive and English learning seems very dull and boring. As a result, students fail to reach their potential. In fact, students should play the major role in class while their teachers provide them with opportunities, resources, encouragement, expertise and guidance. In other words, the whole process is student-centered with every activity focusing on the improvement of students' language skills. How, then, is the class made student-centered?

Firstly, the teacher must have his students in mind. In lesson preparation, teaching and marking, the teacher should consider what his students think and

care for, and know how and what students have learned so that in his next lesson he can adjust his teaching method or procedures.

Secondly, the teacher should not be authoritative in class. Instead of a ruler of the class, the teacher is the guide, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant or resource-provider. For example, when students are actively engaged in a communicative activity, the teacher can be a prompter or a resource-provider. He should not intervene. By "intervene" we mean telling students that they are *making mistakes, insisting on accuracy and asking for repetition, etc. This would* undermine the communicative purpose of the activity. The teacher may be involved in the activity as a participant, and will also be watching and listening very carefully in order to be able to conduct feedback.

Thirdly, the teacher should give students more opportunities for practice. As the saying goes, "language cannot be taught; it must be learned". It is impossible to learn English well without a great deal of practice. In the course of learning, if students are motivated to participate in the language-learning activities, they will learn how to use the language in real situations and thus speed up their improvement in communicative competence.

Task 3

Do you prefer a teacher-centered or student-centered style in class activities? Talk with your partner and give your reasons.

1.1.4　Integrating linguistic knowledge with language skills

Linguistic knowledge refers to pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar while language skills refer to listening, speaking, reading and writing. These two parts together make up the fundamental components in communicative competence.

There are two means of communicating—oral communication and written communication. When people communicate, they have to use the sound language (listen and speak) or the recorded language (read and write). If there

is a lack of linguistic knowledge, there can be no effective communication. We can say that linguistic knowledge is the basis for developing language skills. Therefore, the goal of our language teaching must include the mastery of linguistic knowledge and the development of language skills, which should be put into effect in our teaching. Language teaching involves not only the imparting of knowledge and mastery of knowledge, but also developing students' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Conversely, the four language skills cannot be improved quickly without the solid foundation of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. The teaching of linguistic knowledge must go hand in hand with the practice of listening, speaking, reading and writing. How can we integrate the teaching of linguistic knowledge well with the practice of language skills?

Firstly, we should combine the teaching of pronunciation with listening and speaking practice. Students are made to participate in the listening activities and express themselves in the target language. With the development of their intelligence and the improvement of their listening skills, students will attain a certain degree of fluency and accuracy in pronunciation.

Secondly, we can combine grammar teaching with reading and writing practice. Explanation of grammatical points ought to be concise and instructive. This can be done by providing cues, having students observe, discover, compare and summarize, avoiding overemphasis on mechanical practice. Of course, at beginners' level, imitation is undoubtedly a good way to learn English as a foreign language.

Thirdly, we should link vocabulary teaching to reading, writing, listening and speaking practices. The vocabulary tasks we require students to do should not always be for rote learning. With meaningful practice, students learn to settle problems on their own through various approaches: consulting books or reading other materials, asking for teacher's help, or by means of discussion with partners. In this way language learning becomes interesting and the integration of linguistic knowledge with language skills is possible. What is more, students learn English for real tasks and thus improve their communicative competence.

Task 4

Discuss in a group of four the necessity of integrating linguistic elements with language skills. Give an example if possible.

1.1.5 Integrating language teaching with culture

Modern linguistics suggests that language is not only a communication tool, but also a carrier of culture. There is little doubt that every language is part of a culture, for "culture consists of all the shared products of human society" (Robertson, 1981). Because of the close relationship between language and culture, it is impossible to teach English language without introducing the culture of English-speaking countries.

Some people say that learning a foreign language means having mastery over a set of rules for grammar and pronunciation, and a set of vocabulary; once he grasps the three linguistic elements in English language, the learner can exchange his ideas with other people freely. Such an opinion is not entirely right. It is true that pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary are the basic elements of a language, but armed only with a good knowledge of the three, communicating with other people is still a problem. Lots of examples have proven the disadvantages of communicating without considering the target culture. An American socio-linguist, Hymes, summed up four elements in effective communication. They are possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and what is actually performed. The last two elements have something to do with culture. "Appropriateness" refers to the appropriate use of language according to different persons, discourses, occasions and social status, which is related to culture. "Actually performed" means to use authentic and idiomatic English, which is also connected to culture. Accordingly, language teaching must include culture.

Integrating language teaching with culture to let students achieve effective communication, we should pay attention to two aspects. One is how to

understand foreign cultures. It is not enough to just introduce foreign cultures to students. We must help students learn foreign cultures in two ways. The first is to understand the concrete culture, such as the literature, history, art and religion, and from them deducing concepts of morality, values, outlook on life. The second is that our attitude towards the foreign cultures ought to be objective and tolerant. We should not, however, follow or blindly imitate the foreign cultures. And we must reject those decadent elements of the culture which go against our own criteria of morality, values and outlook on life.

The other aspect is how to treat our own culture. As globalization sweeps across China, opportunities for the use of English are increasing greatly. More and more people greet one another in English, or in a mixture of English and Chinese. Moreover, advertisements and many product descriptions, in top hotels and restaurants, shops and companies, etc. are bilingual. English is so emphasized that many people, especially young people, only know foreign culture and remember great events of western countries. Some students even go so far as to forget or criticize our native culture. Teachers of English should be aware of this tendency, and explain to students how a good mastery of our own culture is helpful for the learning of foreign language, understanding of alien culture, and for better cross-cultural communication.

Task 5

How do you understand the saying that "every language is part of a culture"? Discuss with your partner and state your views.

1.1.6 Integration of teaching methods

A teaching method is a way for language teachers to achieve the goals and fulfill the tasks of teaching. The first language teaching method that can be traced back to is the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) which was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since then different teaching methods and approaches came in succession, such as the Direct Method, Audio-Lingua