



英语教学理论与实践新探

New Directions in TESOL

季佩英 范 焯◎主编

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前 言

为了进一步探索大学英语教学的新理念和新模式,为广大教师和研究者搭建一个相互交流和学习的平台,复旦大学外文学院大学英语教学部和悉尼大学教育和社会工作学院于2012年2月10—11日在复旦大学联合举办了TESOL国际研讨会。此次会议的主题为“英语作为第二语言教学的新动向”,海内外70多名学者参加了论坛。悉尼大学荣誉教授 Jack Richards、上海外国语大学《外国语》主编束定芳教授、悉尼大学的 Brian Paltridge 教授先后作了精彩的主旨发言。在随后的分论坛上,与会代表们就专门用途英语、语言测试评估、英语演讲教学、写作教学、语法教学等领域宣读论文并展开了热烈的讨论。

此次研讨会共收到来稿51篇,经过专家们的认真审阅,最后有13篇论文被收入此论文集,内容涉及学术英语教学、专门用途英语教学、写作教学、阅读教学、语言测试、中介语错误分析、学生需求分析等。另外,论文集还收录了两篇主旨发言: Jack Richards 教授关于英语教师应具备的学养和技能的分析以及束定芳教授关于大学英语教学与中国高等教育国际化的研究。这些研讨成果对于未来我国高校英语教学的课程设置、教学方法、教师培养及水平测试等都有着重要的借鉴意义,有助于进一步推动大学英语教学的改革与发展。

我们衷心地感谢参与审阅论文摘要和全文的专家以及所有参加大会的老师。我们还要感谢复旦大学出版社的全力支持。由于我们自身的水平所限,不妥之处,敬请广大读者和专家指正。

编 者

2013年5月

Contents

Competence and Performance in Language Teaching	Jack C. Richards	1
College English Teaching (CET) and the Internationalization of Chinese Higher Education	SHU Dingfang	37
Guided Writing: A Communicative Approach	LIANG Zhengliu	54
English for Academic Purposes in College English Curriculum	ZENG Jianbin, LIU Wen	67
New Direction in University English Language Training: Blended Delivery	Julia Chen	86
A Cross-sectional Study of the Errors on the Use of Past Tense in English Interlanguage and Implications	SUN Qingxiang	104
A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to Error Diagnosis: Reconsidering the Role of Faulty Analogy	ZHANG Ningning	121
Developing a Code of Practice for EFL Testing in China: How Is Code Development Informed by Stakeholders' Perceptions?	FAN Jinsong	141
Formative Assessment in College English Listening Comprehension: A New Perspective on Improving Student Learning	RAO Xiaofei, JI Pin, CHANG Yaqing	158

Translation Practice as an Effective Strategy for Teaching ESL in Higher Education in China	YE Rulan	183
Revealing the Relationship Between L1 and L2 Reading from the Perspective of Metacognitive Awareness of L1 and EFL Reading Strategies: A Case Study of Chinese University EFL Readers	LUO Jincao, WU Qinlin	196
The Effect of Reader-based Factors on Immediate Vocabulary Gain Through Reading	ZHANG Lei, BAO Gui	224
An English Learning Needs Analysis of MFA Undergraduates	LI Lin, YAN Lijun, WANG Haiyan, ZHANG Mei	245

Competence and Performance in Language Teaching

Jack C. Richards

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In order to plan for the professional development of English language teachers, we need to have a comprehensive understanding of what competence and expertise in language teaching consists of. What essential skills, knowledge, values, attitudes and goals do language teachers need, and how can these be acquired? This paper seeks to explore these questions by examining ten core dimensions of skill and expertise in language teaching. These are: language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focused teaching, specialized cognitive skills, theorizing from practice, joining a community of practice, and professionalism. Each construct will be examined, relevant research summarized, its contribution to teacher competence and performance illustrated, and implications discussed for the development of English language teachers and teacher education programs.

Introduction

What is it that language teachers need to know and do to be effective classroom practitioners and language teaching professionals?

How is this knowledge and practice acquired? And how does it change over time? The issue of language teachers' knowledge and skill base is fundamental to our understanding of effective teaching and to approaches to language teacher education. In this paper I want to explore the knowledge, beliefs and skills that language teachers make use of in their practice. My focus is on the understandings and practices of those teachers who would generally be regarded by their peers as exemplary language teaching professionals. We all recognize those teachers when we work with them. But what distinguishes the way they understand and approach their work? In trying to answer this question I will focus on ten core dimensions of language teaching expertise and practice. They are not in any hierarchical relationship and there is some overlap among them but they help lay out some of the basic territory and will hopefully help conceptualise the nature of competence, expertise and professionalism in language teaching.

But first a word of caution. The nature of what we mean by effectiveness in teaching is not always easy to define because conceptions of good teaching differ from culture to culture (Tsui 2009). In some cultures a good teacher is one who controls and directs learners and who maintains a respectful distance between the teacher and the learners. Learners are the more or less passive recipients of the teacher's expertise. Teaching is viewed as a teacher-controlled and directed process. In other cultures the teacher may be viewed more as a facilitator. The ability to form close interpersonal relations with students is highly valued and there is a strong emphasis on individual learner creativity and independent learning. Students may even be encouraged to question and challenge what the teacher says. These different understandings of good teaching are reflected in the following teacher comments:

When I present a reading text to the class, the students expect me to go through it word by word and explain every point of vocabulary or

grammar. They would be uncomfortable if I left it for them to work it out on their own or if I asked them just to try to understand the main ideas.

(Egyptian EFL teacher)

If a student doesn't succeed, it is my fault for not presenting the materials clearly enough. If a student doesn't understand something I must find a way to present it more clearly. (Taiwanese EFL teacher)

If I do group work or open-ended communicative activities, the students and other colleagues will feel that I'm not really teaching them. They will feel that I didn't have anything really planned for the lesson and that I'm just filling in time. (Japanese EFL teacher)

The way a person teaches and his or her view of what good teaching is will therefore reflect his or her cultural background and personal history, the context in which he or she is working, and the kind of students in his or her class. For this reason teaching is sometimes said to be “situated” and can only be understood within a particular context. This is reflected in a comment by an Australian student studying Chinese in China and reacting to the “Chinese approach” to teaching:

The trouble with Chinese teachers is that they've never done any real teacher-training courses so they don't know how to teach. All they do is follow the book. They never give us any opportunity to talk. How the world do they expect us to learn?

Compare this with the comments of a Chinese student studying in Australia:

Australian teachers are very friendly but they can't teach very well. I never know where they're going — there's no system and I just get lost. Also, they're often very badly trained and don't have a thorough grasp of their subject. (Brick 1991: 153)

Notwithstanding the reality of culturally determined understandings of good teaching, I will focus in what follows on those dimensions of teacher knowledge and skill that seem to be at the core of expert teacher

competence and performance in language teaching, at least from the perspective of a “Western” orientation and understanding of teaching.

1. The language proficiency factor

Most of the world’s English teachers are not native-speakers of English and it is not necessary to have a native-like command of a language in order to teach it well (Canagarajah 1999). Some of the best language classes I have observed have been taught by teachers for whom English was a foreign or second language. Conversely some of the worst classes I have observed have been taught by native-speakers. So the issue is, how much of a language does one need to know to be able to teach it effectively, and how does proficiency in a language interact with other aspects of teaching (Bailey 2006; Kamhi-Stein 2009)?

To answer the first question we need to start by considering the language-specific competencies that a language teacher needs in order to teach effectively. These include the ability to do the following kinds of things:

- To comprehend texts accurately.
- To provide good language models.
- To maintain use of the target language in the classroom.
- To maintain fluent use of the target language.
- To give explanations and instructions in the target language.
- To provide examples of words and grammatical structures and give accurate explanations (e.g., of vocabulary and language points).
- To use appropriate classroom language.
- To select target-language resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, the Internet).
- To monitor his or her own speech and writing for accuracy.

- To give correct feedback on learner language.
- To provide input at an appropriate level of difficulty.
- To provide language-enrichment experiences for learners.

Learning how to carry out these aspects of a lesson fluently and comprehensively in English is an important dimension of teacher-learning for those whose mother tongue is not English. There is a threshold proficiency level the teacher needs to have reached in the target language in order to be able to teach effectively in English. A teacher who has not reached this level of proficiency will be more dependent on teaching resources (e.g., textbooks) and less likely to be able to engage in improvisational teaching (Medgyes 2001).

For teachers who *are* native speakers of English, other discourse skills will also need to be acquired — skills that enable the teacher to manage classroom discourse so that it provides maximum opportunities for language learning. These discourse skills relate to the following dimensions of teaching:

- To be able to monitor one's language use in order to provide suitable learning input.
- To avoid unnecessary colloquialisms and idiomatic usage.
- To provide a model of spoken English appropriate for students learning English as an international language.
- To provide language input at an appropriate level for learners.

However, apart from the contribution to teaching skills that language proficiency makes, research has also shown that a language teacher's confidence is also dependent upon his or her own level of language proficiency, so a teacher who perceives herself to be weak in the target language will have reduced confidence in her teaching ability and an inadequate sense of professional legitimacy (Seidlhofer 1999). This may be why research into what teachers' views of their needs for professional development generally identifies the need for further language training as a high priority (Lavender 2002).

A variety of approaches have been proposed to address the language proficiency of non-native speaking English teachers. Many link the language component to the methodology component, so that teachers practice the language skills needed to implement particular classroom teaching strategies (Cullen 1994; Snow, Kahmi-Stein & Brinton 2006). In this way language proficiency is linked to classroom teaching and to carrying out specific instructional tasks. Cullen (2002) uses lesson transcripts to help teachers develop a command of classroom language. However, in general, insufficient attention has been given to the issue of language proficiency in many TESOL teacher-preparation programs.

2. The role of content knowledge

A recurring issue in second language teacher-education concerns what the content knowledge or subject matter of language teaching is, and consequently the question of what it is that we think teachers need to know in order to reach their full potential as language teachers. This is the “content knowledge dilemma”, and it has provided a ripe field for debate and discussion since SLTE emerged as a discipline. Here I am distinguishing “knowledge” from “skill”, since while there is little disagreement concerning the practical skills language teachers need to master, there is much less agreement concerning what the formal or academic subject matter of language teaching is. Content knowledge refers to what teachers need to know about what they teach (including what they know about language teaching itself), and constitutes knowledge that would not be shared with teachers of other subject areas.

Traditionally the content knowledge of language teaching has been drawn from the discipline of applied linguistics, which emerged in the 1960s — at about the same time that language teaching was being

revitalized with the emergence of new methodologies such as audiolingualism and situational language teaching (Richards & Rodgers 2001). Applied linguistics generated the body of specialized academic knowledge and theory that provided the foundation of new approaches to language teaching, and this knowledge base was represented in the curricula of MA programs which began to be offered from this time. Typically it consisted of courses in language analysis, learning theory, methodology, and sometimes a teaching practicum, but the practical skills of language teaching were often undervalued. The debate over the relation between theory and practice has been with us ever since.

Some of the confusion that often appears in debate over the theory-versus-practice issue is due to a failure to distinguish between *disciplinary knowledge* and *pedagogical content knowledge*. Disciplinary knowledge refers to a circumscribed body of knowledge that is considered by the language teaching profession to be essential to gaining membership of the profession. Such knowledge is acquired by special training, and possessing knowledge of this kind leads to professional recognition and status. It is important to stress here that disciplinary knowledge is part of professional education and does not translate into practical skills. When language teaching emerged as an academic discipline in the 1960s this disciplinary knowledge was largely drawn from the field of linguistics, but today it encompasses a much broader range of content. For example it could include; the history of language teaching methods, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, phonology and syntax, discourse analysis, theories of language, critical applied linguistics and so on.

Pedagogical content knowledge on the other hand refers to knowledge that provides a basis for language teaching. It is knowledge which is drawn from the study of language teaching and language learning itself and which can be applied in different ways to the

resolution of practical issues in language teaching. It could include course work in areas such as curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, classroom management, teaching children, teaching the four skills and so on. The Teacher Knowledge Test developed by Cambridge ESOL is an example of a recent attempt to provide a basis in relevant pedagogical content knowledge for entry-level teachers.

The language teaching literature often divides clearly into texts addressing either disciplinary knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge. So for example we can compare a book such as Ortega's recent book *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (Ortega 2008), with Lightbown and Spada's *How Languages Are Learned* (Lightbown & Spada 2006). Ortega's excellent book, like many tomes on second language acquisition, contributes to disciplinary knowledge, throws valuable light on such issues as the critical period hypothesis, language transfer, cognition and language learning, aptitude, and so on but does not deal with practical application. Lightbown and Spada's book on the other hand contributes to pedagogical content knowledge since it is a part of a series designed to resolve practical issues in language teaching. Although it covers some of the same topics that are included in Ortega's book, the focus is not so much on research issues involved in investigating a phenomenon but practical implications of research. Similarly a book such as Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday 2004) as with similar books dealing with models of language analysis, belongs to the domain of disciplinary knowledge, while Parrott's *Grammar for English Language Teachers* (Parrott 2000) belongs to that of pedagogical content knowledge.

A sound grounding in relevant pedagogical content knowledge should prepare teachers to be able to do things such as the following:

- Understand learners' needs
- Diagnose learners' learning problems

- Plan suitable instructional goals for lessons
- Select and design learning tasks
- Evaluate students' learning
- Design and adapt tests
- Evaluate and choose published materials
- Adapt commercial materials
- Make use of authentic materials
- Make appropriate use of technology
- Evaluate their own lessons

The role of pedagogical content knowledge is demonstrated in a study by Angela Tang (cited in Richards 1998), in which she compared two groups of English teachers in Hong Kong — one with training in literature and one without such training — and how they would exploit literary texts in their teaching. Some of the differences between these two groups of teachers are seen in the following summary of the research findings :

Table 1 Differences Between Literature Majors and Non-literature Major in English Teaching

Literature Majors	Non-literature Majors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saw ways of dealing with any difficulties the texts posed; • Saw a wide variety of teaching possibilities with the texts; • Addressed literary aspects of the texts; • A variety of strategies were used to help students explore the meanings of the texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried about how to deal with the difficulties the texts posed; • Planned to use the texts mainly for reading comprehension; • Did not address literary aspects of the texts; • Mainly used questions to check comprehensions of the texts.

So we see here that possessing relevant content knowledge made a substantial difference to how teachers planned their lessons. Teachers with relevant content knowledge should be consequentially be able to

make better and more appropriate decisions about teaching and learning and to arrive at more appropriate solutions to problems than a teacher without such knowledge. However the central issue of what constitutes appropriate disciplinary knowledge and what is appropriate pedagogical content knowledge, remains an unresolved issue, and studies that have sought to investigate the impact of content knowledge on teachers' practices have produced very mixed results (Bartels 2005).

A further important component of professional knowledge in today's classrooms has been terms "technological pedagogical content" knowledge, or TPCK (Mishra & Koehler 2006) — that is, the ability to incorporate and integrate technology into teaching. Reinders (2009: 231) points out that depending on the teacher's level of technological expertise, this could involve "being able to first, *use* a certain technology; second, being able to *create* materials and activities using that technology; and third, being able to *teach* with technology". The use of technology in teaching becomes more important in present times because teachers also have to be able to keep up with the technological knowledge of their students. Young learners today have more access to information and more tools available to them to manage their own learning. Reinders (2009: 236) suggests that "the challenge for teachers will be more one of helping learners develop the skills to deal successfully with the increased control and independence that technology demands."

Becoming a language teacher also involves learning to "talk the talk", that is, acquiring the specialized discourse that we use among ourselves and that helps define the subject matter of our profession. This means becoming familiar with several hundred specialized terms such as *learner-centredness*, *learner autonomy*, *self-access*, *alternative assessment*, *blended learning*, *task-based instruction*, *phoneme*, *common European Framework* that we use on a daily basis in talking about our teaching. Being able to use the appropriate discourse (and of