



附：外语教学法自学考试大纲

外语教学法

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全国高等教育自学考试指定教材 英语专业 (本科段)



全国高等教育自学考试指定教材
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组编前言

当您开始阅读本书时,人类已经迈入了21世纪。

这是一个变幻难测的世纪,这是一个催人奋进的时代,科学技术飞速发展,知识更替日新月异。希望、困惑、机遇、挑战,随时随地都有可能出现在每一个社会成员的生活之中。抓住机遇,寻求发展,迎接挑战,适应变化的制胜法宝就是学习——依靠自己学习,终生学习。

作为我国高等教育组成部分的自学考试,其职责就是在高等教育这个水平上倡导自学、鼓励自学、帮助自学、推动自学,为每一个自学者铺就成才之路。组织编写供读者学习的教材就是履行这个职责的重要环节。毫无疑问,这种教材应当适合自学,应当有利于学习者掌握、了解新知识、新信息,有利于学习者增强创新意识,培养实践能力,形成自学能力,也有利于学习者学以致用,解决实际工作中所遇到的问题。具有如此特点的书,我们虽然沿用了“教材”这个概念,但它与那种仅供教师讲、学生听,教师不讲、学生不懂,以“教”为中心的教科书相比,已经在内容安排、编写体例、行文风格等方面都大不相同了。希望读者对此有所了解,以便从一开始就树立起依靠自己学习的坚定信念,不断探索适合自己的学习方法,充分利用已有的知识基础和实际工作经验,最大限度地发挥自己的潜能,以达到学习的目标。

欢迎读者提出意见和建议。

全国高等教育自学考试指导委员会

1999年10月

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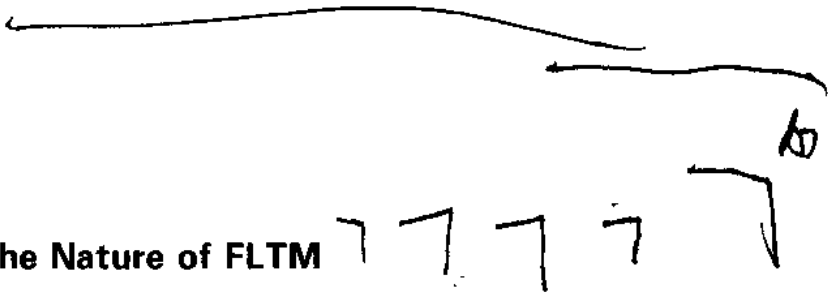
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Chapter One General Introduction

Generally speaking, the goal of foreign language teaching is to help the learner master the target language in the shortest possible time. By mastering the target language, we mean that the learner is able to have successful communications with others in the target language. In order to reach the goal, foreign language teachers as well as applied linguists try very hard to find out the most efficient and effective ways in foreign language teaching. The purpose of this book is to introduce the reader to different foreign language teaching approaches and methods being practiced in the world, thus enabling the reader to use the most appropriate ways in his own teaching according to the actual circumstances. To help the reader to have a better understanding of those approaches and methods, we think that it is necessary to set up a common ground by discussing the nature of foreign language teaching methodology (FLTM), relevant theories, and the history of foreign language teaching.

The Nature of FLTM



FLTM is a science which studies the processes and patterns of foreign language teaching, aiming at revealing the nature and laws of foreign language teaching. That is to say, it examines the practices and procedures in foreign language teaching; studies approaches, methods and techniques; and also studies principles and beliefs that underlie them. Foreign language teaching involves a lot of disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. Only when we have a sound knowledge of these disciplines, can we make a study of FLTM. Suppose that we are going to teach a foreign language to a group of pupils or to our own children, then the first question we have to answer is "What should we teach?" Obviously, we cannot teach the whole of the language in one hour or one session. We have to divide the task into smaller ones that can be dealt with in a few minutes or in a few hours. But how to divide the language into small manageable units largely depends on our understanding and knowledge of the language. That is to say, our views of language will directly or indirectly determine the content of our teaching. For example, if we think that a language is a set of sound symbols that are combined in different ways according to specific rules to carry meaning, we may start our teaching by dealing with those sound symbols one by one and then go on to teach the combinations of these sound symbols.

However, if we think that a language consists of a vocabulary and a grammar, we may choose to teach words and the rules for the combination of words to form sentences. Since linguistics is the scientific study of language and will provide theories and means for the division of the language teaching task into smaller units, we will devote one section to the introduction of the main linguistic theories that provide the theoretical basis for a number of foreign language teaching methods.

Once we have decided the content of teaching, the next question we have to answer is "How should we teach?" Usually our understanding of learning, especially our understanding of language learning will directly or indirectly influence our choice of a particular method in our teaching. If we regard language learning as a process of imitation, then we will provide our learners with a lot of models and ask them to imitate the given models. If we think that language is learned best in social interactions, we will create appropriate situations for our learners to use the language. That is why we will use one section to introduce some important theories of psychology and the most common theories of second language acquisition.

In short, FLTM is an inter-disciplinary science and it makes uses of theories of different subjects. Therefore, to study this course requires us to have some knowledge of those theories and to understand the relations between this discipline and other related ones.

Theories of Linguistics

The study of language has a very long history. Although we are not sure when people began to show interest in the languages they were using, we are quite certain that, according to the records available, language study is at least more than 2500 years old. During the long history of linguistic study, a lot of theories and schools of thought emerged. Because of the

limited space here, we will only introduce the theories of the following four schools.

Traditional linguistics

By traditional linguistics we mean the linguistic theory that comes directly from or is in line with the traditional study of language in ancient Greece. It has a tradition of more than 2000 years. In the fifth century B. C. the ancient Greeks began to make a serious study of language in the realm of philosophy. There were two famous controversies at that time. One was between the naturalists and the conventionalists on the relations between form and meaning. The naturalists argued that the forms of words reflected directly the nature of objects. They use onomatopoeia and sound symbolism as their evidence to justify their point of view. On the contrary, the conventionalists thought that language was conventional and there was no logic connection between form and meaning of words. The other was between the analogists and the anomalists on the regularities of language. The analogists claimed that language in general was regular and there were rules for people to follow. The anomalists maintained that language was basically irregular and that was why there were so many exceptions and irregularities in the Greek language. Although the two sides of the two controversies could not convince each other, their debate roused people's interest in language and led them to the detailed study of Greek. The direct result of this was that in the first century B. C. there came out a book of Greek grammar written by Dianysius Thrax. In this book he summarized views and achievements of his predecessors and classified all the words of the Greek language into eight parts of speech. About three hundred years later, a Greek scholar called Apollonius Dyscolus made an extensive study of the syntax of Greek. He worked on the basis of Thrax's book and built his syntactic description on the relations between the noun and the verb. From then on, the mo-

del of language description set up by Thrax and Dyscolus was followed by different scholars at different times in their analyses of languages.

Traditional study of language was, to a large extent, practical in nature. People made a study of language in order to understand the classic works of ancient times and in order to be able to teach students, enabling them to understand and appreciate those classic works. These practical purposes together with other factors such as the availability of written records made traditional linguists believe that the written form of language was superior to the spoken form which was regarded as the corrupted form of language. So in their study of language, they gave priority to the written form and took words as their starting point. When discussing the rules of language, they usually took a prescriptive approach, because they wanted to set up principles and standards for people to use language correctly.

American structuralism

American structuralism started at the beginning of the 20th century and was very popular and influential in the 1930s and 1940s throughout the world. The two forerunners of it were Franz Boas and Edward Sapir. Boas, as an anthropologist, worked in the field for about 20 years at the turn of the century, recording the native languages and cultures of American Indians which were dying out very quickly. Since all of the American Indians' languages had no written forms, he had to make investigations into those languages before recording them. In his investigations, he found that the traditional grammatical model could not be used to analyse the structures of those languages. Therefore, he had to describe them as they were used. Sapir began to do the fieldwork in 1904 and recorded a dozen and a half American Indians' languages. He found that although those languages had no written forms and were regarded as primitive, they were virtually very systematic and were very efficient in communications within their communities.

Leonard Bloomfield, a linguist in America, is regarded as the father of American structuralism. He accepted the theories and principles of behaviourism which was a dominant approach in psychology in that country. He agreed with the views of the psychologist John B. Watson that only things that could be observed publicly and objectively could be studied scientifically. So he held the position that if linguistics was going to be a science, it should only admit data that could be objectively verified. His adherence to the objectivity was also reflected in his approach to the study of language. He maintained that linguists should describe instead of prescribe what people actually say and should take an inductive approach in analysing data. He characterized language and language acquisition in terms of behaviourist terminology. For him, a language was a habit of verbal behaviour which consisted of a series of stimuli and responses. He argued that to acquire a language was to form a habit of verbal behaviour and learning a second language was learning a new habit. Based on the anthropologists' fieldwork and his own research, he concluded that the proper object of linguistics was speech and he thought that speech was primary and writing was secondary because for him writing was a later development to represent speech. He stated, in agreement with Sapir's view, that each language had a unique system of its own and it was wrong to fit it into the established grammatical patterns of Greek. In 1933, he published the book *Language* which is a comprehensive statement of his ideas and principles of the linguistic science. Soon after its publication, the book became the bible of linguistics and remained unsurpassed as an introduction to linguistics after more than 3 decades. During the years of World War II, a lot of American structuralists joined in the training of military personnel and they summarized the ideas and principles of structuralism and applied them systematically to the teaching of foreign languages. Their methods were so successful that they set a new approach to foreign language teaching on its course.

Transformational generative linguistics

The year 1957 saw the publication of Noam Chomsky's book *Syntactic Structures*, which started a revolution in the linguistic world and ushered in a new school-the transformational generative linguistics. Although Chomsky was trained in the structuralist tradition, he was not satisfied with the theory of structuralism, which was inadequate in explaining some common linguistic facts and phenomena. For example, it would be very difficult for the structuralists to explain why children acquire their first language in a few years, and why the same structure can be used to express different meanings and different structures can be used to express the same meaning.

Chomsky assumes that children are born with a language acquisition device (LAD). This LAD is made up of a set of general principles called universal grammar. These general principles can be applied to all the languages in the world. Once the child is born, the particular language environment will trigger the LAD. Chomsky assumes that the child will make hypotheses on the basis of the general principles, then he will test the hypotheses against the actual language data, then he will modify the hypotheses accordingly, test them again against the data. This hypothesis-testing procedure will repeat again and again until the hypotheses agree with the actual grammar of the language. Children's language acquisition process completes when the universal grammar is successfully transformed into the grammar of a particular language. Only in this way, is it possible to offer explanations for the facts that all children acquire their first language at roughly the same speed, that they will make mistakes that never occur in the adult language, and that they can understand or produce sentences they have never heard before.

Chomsky has also made the distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. Linguistic competence refers to the internalized

knowledge of the language that a native speaker of that language possesses. It includes the ability to understand and produce an infinite number of sentences, to detect ambiguity contained in sentences, to tell whether a sentence is grammatical or not, to understand the internal structure of sentences, and to detect paraphrases. Linguistic performance refers to the actual utterances produced by the native speakers. The native speaker may make mistakes or errors in his performance, but this does not mean that he has not got the ability to produce grammatical sentences. Similarly, when a man runs along a street, he may stumble if he is in a hurry, excited or exhausted, but this does not mean that he has not got the ability to run.

Chomsky opposes the structuralist position of taking classification and description of linguistic performance as the goal of linguistics and attacks the inductive approach the structuralists used in their research. According to Chomsky, the data they collected in the field is bound to be very limited because it is virtually impossible to collect all the sentences of a language, including those that have been produced and those that will be produced in the future. Comparatively speaking, what they can collect is just like a drop of water in the vast sea. So they are sure to have problems when they use the rules from their analysis of the limited data to account for all the sentence structures of a language. Chomsky holds the position that linguists should study the linguistic competence, not the performance, of the native speaker and try to set up a system of rules that will generate an infinite number of grammatical sentences of the language and none of ungrammatical ones, will demonstrate and explain the various kinds of relations including ambiguity among sentences, and will be able to characterize the creative property of language. In order to reach this goal, Chomsky argues, a deductive, hypothesis-testing approach should be taken. That is to say, linguists should form a hypothetical grammar according to their observation of a given language, test the