

牛津应用语言学丛书



Individual Freedom in Language Teaching

语言教学中的 个体自由

Christopher Brumfit

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Preface

Two of my research students, both practising teachers, are partly responsible for the shape and form of this book. They both remarked on the consistency of my ideas over the years, and I felt slightly hurt, as if I had been accused of failing to learn from experience.

But when I read papers I had written over the past 20 years, and when I examined the theses written by my students, I realized that there is a pretty consistent view of language in the world struggling to emerge. Articulating this in full theoretical detail is a task which will require substantial leisure and some years of further work. But in the meantime, the chapters of this book attempt to show how these ideas can affect the practice of language teaching (broadly conceived to include work on literature and culture also) in many different settings.

First, though, it may be helpful to summarize the key beliefs underlying the arguments in this book. Most are defended in detail in the following pages, and all underlie the recommendations for improvement of practice that are offered. Each chapter may be regarded as an attempt to address a particular setting, and a particular educational problem, in the light of the following set of beliefs (chapters which argue these points in detail are indicated):

- the rules of language use, and much of the language system, are inherently fluid and negotiable, but the teaching of languages has to act as if they are stable and unnegotiable in order to offer a supportive base for learners (Chapters 1 and 6)
- because of this paradox, language teaching risks becoming repressive by relying too heavily on generalizations that are no more than artefacts of language study in the past, and thus preventing language being used creatively to express individual and group difference (Chapters 2 and 4)
- because experience (of language and the world) is in constant flux, scholars, teachers, and learners have to cope with the complex and confusing data they receive through their senses; they do this by simplifying, generalizing, and by deriving principles, and all of these involve distortion of experience, though that distortion can be done in a more or less principled way (Chapter 3)
- because of the risk of distortion, all principles, generalizations, and examples derived from experience need to be thought about and discussed with fellow human beings; through such discussion we can reduce the risk of exploitation

by anticipating ill effects and error by minimizing confusion or idiosyncratic interpretation (Chapters 12 and 13)

- because such discussion creates cultural groupings and sub-groupings with shared beliefs and shared points of reference, language is an especially dangerous object of study, for each item studied is an example of 'language' and also of 'culture' in that it instantiates ideas or objects which develop a cultural load independent of the language they are expressed by (Chapters 6, 8, and 9)
- because the same referents can have different significances in different cultural systems, culture can be independent of language barriers and language can never be the same as culture, but every linguistic group has the capacity to incorporate many cultures (Chapters 9, 10, and 11)
- because language is both shared by different groups, to enable us to communicate, and individual, to enable us to think, create, and imagine, language use potentially threatens group solidarity and challenges personal identity, so it is always risky and value laden (Chapters 5 and 8)
- because its use is risky and value laden, language teaching and learning are bound up with ethical and social concerns that need to be openly discussed if they are not to become secret and repressive (Chapters 7, 9, and 11)
- because these complexities need open discussion, any consideration of language in education is partial unless it is prepared to call upon a range of associated disciplines to clarify the object of study: a responsible 'linguistics of education' cannot avoid psychological, sociological, ethical, economic, historical, political as well as pedagogical considerations (Chapters 12, 13, and 14).

The chapters of this book show an attempt to address a variety of settings and practices with these beliefs as a background.

Thus you could say that I examine the science of the study of language teaching within the art of language making. Like most people with an academic background, I believe we should try to understand our field of study as clearly as possible, through examination of empirical evidence and through clear and logical thinking. But like most experienced teachers and language users, I am all too aware that language use and language development reflect human creativity, reveal human identity, and contribute to human aspirations far beyond what can be revealed by the idealizations and generalizations that scientific procedures unavoidably impose. Anyone concerned with language is concerned with human behaviour. Anyone concerned with human behaviour must rejoice and celebrate, empathize and criticize, deplore and oppose, just as much as investigate—for human beings are creative for both good and evil; they identify with communal aspirations which are both constructive and destructive, and they use the power which language gives to dominate as well as to liberate. Amid this welter of conflicting motives and confusing values, language teachers must live—contributing their small offering to world peace and understanding, or (wittingly or unwittingly) to exploitation and suffering.

In the chapters that follow I have drawn upon a view of language which starts from the variety of uses users impose on it, but recognizes that we are partly made by our linguistic inheritance. We make language together, but who we are is partly made by language. What we receive we never hand back unchanged. In addressing key aspects of language teaching theory and practice, I have drawn upon the many disciplines that help us to clarify language and literacy practices in the world and processes of learning and teaching in, and out of, the classroom. No serious discussion of practice calls exclusively on a single discipline, but readers will find that in different chapters I tend to concentrate on philosophy (Chapters 3, 7, 14), psychology (Chapter 2), curriculum theory (Chapters 5, 9), assessment (Chapter 8), ideology (Chapter 9), political theory (Chapter 11), history (Chapter 10), while sociolinguistic and applied linguistic principles underlie most chapters. At the same time, while a few chapters (1, 3, 12, 13, 14) offer general bases for any kind of language work in education, most link for practical exemplification to particular settings or particular types of teaching. Thus second language classrooms are the prime focus of Chapters 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 11; mother tongue classrooms in the UK are significant in Chapters 1 and 6; higher education is concentrated on in Chapter 5, literature teaching in Chapters 7 and 8, cultural studies in Chapter 9, and teaching outside the rich industrial countries (from an African perspective) in Chapter 10.

In short, each chapter is an essay trying to integrate understandings from whatever disciplines are relevant, with specific illustration from policy and practice in a particular area of language in education. Where the argument depends on reference to scholarly literature I have provided it, but on occasions I have preferred to outline widely agreed basic issues as clearly as I can as a background to my argument, and I have not referred such uncontentious summaries to standard textbooks.

Overall this book reflects an attempt to develop bases for an educational linguistics; I am currently working on a fuller theoretical development of these ideas. But I hope that as it stands, this book offers a persuasive perspective on the ways in which we use language to educate.

CJB
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The debt I owe to past and present students and colleagues is immeasurable, both for their willingness to argue and force me to clarify, and for their persistently motivating insistence on the central role of language in the education process. I cannot name everyone from whom I have borrowed (and no doubt distorted) ideas, but people who have made specific contributions to the thinking underlying this book include Professors Michael Benton, Jill Bourne, Debbie Cameron, Ronald Carter, Guy Cook, Alan Davies, Eric Hawkins, Keith Johnson, Gunther Kress, Neil Mercer, and Robin Usher, together with George Blue, Dr Michael Grenfell, John Mountford, Elissa Mugarza, Dr Florence Myles, Dr Alison Piper, Dr Ben Rampton, Euan Reid, Alison Sealey, Michael Swan, Catherine Walter, and two anonymous readers. I have long-standing debts in thinking to Dr Dick Allwright, Alan Maley, Earl Stevick, and the late Professor David Stern. Rita Corbidge and Hazel Paul have provided strong secretarial support over the years. Above all, I have benefited from the support of Professor Henry Widdowson (who always believed a project such as this was possible and who has offered many helpful comments, though I have stubbornly failed to act on some of them). My wife, Professor Rosamond Mitchell, has provided expert knowledge, professional collaboration, and personal support, all of which I have persistently exploited. To her, and to my sons Simon and Francis I owe also many personal debts—not least that they allowed a summer holiday to be devoted to writing the first draft of this.

Material in this book has had early versions in presentations to AILA, The British Council (in Belfast, Brussels, Colombo, Ibadan, London, Madras, and Paris), BAAL, BALEAP, BERA, Cambridge University Summer Institute, IATEFL, Korean Applied Linguistics Association, London University Institute of Education, The Open University, South African Applied Linguistics Association, and Vancouver TESOL, and draws upon work which has been funded by the ESRC, University of Southampton, Yapp Educational Trust, BAAL, and my own department. Earlier versions of some of the chapters have appeared in Southampton *Centre for Language in Educational Working Papers*, *AILA Review*, *ELT Documents*, *Franco-British Studies*, *Review of ELT*, and *British Studies in Applied Linguistics*, and in edited volumes published by Oxford University Press, RELC, CILT, Macmillan, Multilingual Matters and Routledge. But overall this is an entirely new work with every chapter either newly written or substantially reworked.

As always, I am solely responsible for errors and omissions, and will welcome correction.

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出版说明

本世纪初，外教社先后引进“牛津应用语言学丛书”（19种）和“牛津应用语言学丛书（续编）”（10种）。这些图书由于内容权威、选择精当而受到了外语界的好评，在科研论文中被广泛引用，对推动我国外语教学和研究的发展起到了重大作用。

近年来，随着研究的不断扩展和深入，国内学界对研究资料有了新的需求，像“任务型教学法”、“英语作为国际通用语”、“二语习得的跨学科研究”等逐渐成为了热门的话题。有鉴于此，我们又从牛津大学出版社出版的应用语言学图书中精选了10本，以更好地满足广大教师和科研人员的需求。希望这次出版的这10本图书，能够和以前的29本一起，反映出国际应用语言学重要领域研究的前沿，为全面、深入推动我国外语科研起到新的作用，做出新的贡献。

But the whole story of words is full of mystery, and the attempt to reduce the process of words to a science has always seemed to me ridiculous enough ... human speech is naturally not a set of a few official languages, but a mass of innumerable dialects, all melting one into the other.

Watch carefully, and you will note that in the area covered by the great official languages, most people are bilingual. They can speak the official language, but they usually speak among themselves a dialect of their own ...

Hilaire Belloc, *The Cruise of the Nona* (1928: 14)

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PART ONE

Language and education

1 Language, linguistics, and education

Introduction

Language is central to education; linguistics is the discipline devoted to the study of language. But the study of language within the educational process takes us far beyond linguistics alone, as the discipline is currently conceived. This book outlines some of the ways in which language interacts with human behaviour, and the ways in which that interaction affects education. The purpose of this book is (1) to describe a field of human enquiry which has only fairly recently been studied in any detail, and (2) to exemplify an approach to educational linguistics which reflects the many disciplines beyond linguistics that must inform our attempts to understand language in social use. Inevitably, therefore, I shall be drawing upon knowledge from recent research and simultaneously describing a current research programme—the process of trying to understand language in education. In this chapter most of my specific examples relate to British education, but the British educational context is shared by many other countries, and as later chapters show, I hope, the principles described below are relevant to most education systems.

We are only just beginning to assimilate recent developments in linguistic understanding to the varying practices of different groups of human beings, and language within the educational process is still a relatively unformed field of study. Indeed, when I was appointed to the Chair of Education at Southampton, in 1984, it was the first appointment of a linguist to such a chair in Britain. Others had been appointed to chairs concerned with the direct teaching of particular languages, but this was the first time that a chair had been set up to relate to the general field of language and linguistics in education. When I gave my inaugural lecture, delivered primarily to a non-specialist audience, I entitled it *Is language education? or Is education language?* Of course, neither ‘language’ nor ‘education’ is as limited as this formulation implies—but there is still a sense in which, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, education is conceived of as the accumulation by individuals of discourses relating to different areas of activity, communicating with groups of people with shared interests: in science, in sport, in culture, in technologies. And there is a further sense in which language can be seen as a never-ending process of repertoire extension (and repertoire reduction), in which the learning process cannot be separated from our constantly changing linguistic knowledge and linguistic practice. Understanding

how these processes interact is exciting and challenging; but it is also immensely demanding, for if our aim is to understand human beings using language, we are addressing at once the most complex and the most creative aspects of human behaviour. We need to be not just rigorous scientists if we are to comprehend language as fully as possible; we need to be poets and mystics as well.

Academic studies and educational practice

'Language' and 'Education' share two disadvantages that many other areas of study avoid: they are both too familiar. We all use language, and many of us have strong views about it; we have all been educated, and we all have strong views about that. Expertise confronts experience, and experts have a difficult task defending their own expertise against others' perceived experience.

Yet language is full of puzzles that experience alone cannot solve, and one of the greatest of these is the exact relationship between speech, writing, and the whole educational process. For a start, language operates on many levels and with many functions simultaneously, so that the relationship is always complex. Consider as an example a highly formalized educational event, such as the inaugural lecture referred to above. The structure of an inaugural lecture (at which customarily new professors deliver a public introduction to their field to an audience of colleagues, students, and outsiders) seems to be a carefully erected memorial to the relationship between education and language. What, after all, could be more of a memorial to language than a lecture: a text of dead words written to be spoken as if living? And what could be more of a memorial to education than a ritual recitation by an elderly person in formal dress intoned to a silent gathering of fellow mourners? Typically, the inauguration of a new professor is celebrated in a rite of words; typically too for education, some would cynically say, they are words that cannot be interrupted or debated. Yet no one who has experienced education in any form will doubt the major role that language plays in the practice of educational institutions. The desirability of this can be disputed, but we must concede the fact.

The inaugural lecture is partly a means of communication, to a very diverse audience, but it is also a formal rite, a symbolic event in academic life, and perhaps in the social life of the community outside the university. It is a means of communicating knowledge, but it is a means also of establishing solidarity, across academic departments, between the university and the outside world, between staff and students. It may even be a means of challenging ideas, by asking questions rather than providing answers, by asking the audience to rethink long-standing assumptions—and it may also be a demonstration of particular procedures, or particular ways of thinking. It is not just a physical event and a mental event, but an emotional one, and even sometimes a spiritual event. But it can only demonstrate these qualities because of the medium of language: however technical the content, however good the visuals, however spirited the delivery, it is crucially a linguistic event.