Exploring the Foundation of a New Curriculum Design for Teaching English in Taiwan

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Abstract

Traditional English curriculum design tends to be heavily correctness-oriented and produces few encouraging results, despite all that efforts by so many teachers and students. One of the key issue lies in the view of learning a language. The traditional approach views learning as a highly structured sequence in which students progress piece by piece. Their progress is thus measured against the pre-designated goals of each sequence. This is the core of product-oriented approach.

There is a different view about learning a language, including learning a second or foreign language. It is called the Process-oriented approach. This approach stresses that human learns a language in an interactive process that utilizes the utmost opportunities to expose students to the target language and to encourage them to use it. Because this approach believes that the growth of language involves both an intellectual and a linguistic development. In essence, language and thought grow with each other, in the context of constant interaction with the language.

The fundamental difference between the two approaches lies in the methods of research. The product-oriented approach relies heavily on products—scores from writings or proficiency tests. This reliance invariably leads to the emphasis on the apparent features of the language.
This approach, sound though, has its weakness in understanding a student’s problems in learning. The process-oriented approach emphasizes on understanding a student’s problems in the process of learning. Consequently, it employs qualitative case study a lot. This approach presents its argument with less objective evidence, it, nevertheless, does present valuable findings, like its appeal for watching individual characteristics and allowing each student to develop at his/her pace.

Applied in an ESL (English as a Second Language) situation, the process-oriented approach provides another option for the curriculum design. A stark contrast between the two different approaches is most vivid on ESL writing. The product-oriented approach focuses on apparent features of an ESL writing--grammar, wordings, organization, and, of course, content.

The process-oriented approach, on the other hand, emphasizes developing ESL writing capability in a process of writing and learning English. Since students are to develop in the long learning process, students should be allowed time to progress and, then, correct themselves. This takes time.

If we believe that growth in English is a result of constant exposure not a result of sequenced drills and exercises, emphasizing on fostering a learning process through which students will be in constant exposure to English is surely the way to go. "Correct" English does not come from direct teaching, it is the natural result of a constant interaction with English instead.
I. Introduction

Any report about the booming prospect of the Pacific Rim countries is hardly a news now. As these countries strive to prepare themselves to reap the benefits of this golden opportunity, English has become an essential means of trade. However, except for countries that used to have strong ties with English culture, most Pacific Rim countries' citizens are still struggling to find a better way to learn English.

In Taiwan, English has been the required foreign language from junior high to college for more than four decades. A huge number of our college graduates have gone to America for further study. International trade has been the cornerstone of Taiwan's economic miracle. Nevertheless, the result of teaching English in Taiwan is still not very encouraging. The great majority of our graduate students in America still have difficulty to communicate in English. The trading firms communicate with international clients in either model sentences or fragmented expressions. Yes, in appearance, we all managed to get by. However, the question for we scholars and teachers of English is this: have we really tried hard enough to explore a better way of teaching English that may make the process of learning smoother and the results more fruitful?

The teaching of English in Taiwan now, in either curriculum design or teaching methods, still resembles that of four decades ago: grammar-based instruction and classics--oftentimes called meaningful articles--as the ideal reading material. This is the model that American secondary schools and colleges used to follow (Applebee, 1974). English education in America has evolved a long way while the English curriculum design in Taiwan has remained basically the same. As a result, our students learn a lot of knowledge about English but have difficulty to communicate in English.

Since our English program followed outdated models of teaching English in America, this paper will first take a brief look at the evolution of English education in America. Based on such a background, this paper will search for a foun-
dation for a new curriculum design for teaching English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) in Taiwan.

II. Traditions of English Education

Scholars of English have always attempted to make English a serious subject matter, either by literature or by linguistics. This endeavor transforms English into fields of knowledge and, in the end, serves to force students to learn English as a knowledge not as a language (Applebee, 1974). Realistically, this endeavor only satisfies university scholars not students and educators of English. Because, as Applebee points out, students can not feel the connection between English the subject and their own needs and concerns. In addition, educators are at a loss about how to help students to cope with the changing world with the teaching of English.

The drive to make English a serious subject inevitably leads the teaching of English into a product-oriented approach. In such an approach, goals of learning are generally set by external criteria—teaching "good taste" or "eloquent expression"—and students are required to demonstrate their mastery of those goals. The essence of this approach is to first determine the "unique components of a desired product and teach the important ones" (Chen, 1992). Consequently, in reading, literary genres and anthologies were once the prevailing materials for the sake of teaching "taste." In composition, format, editing and correct mechanics were the focus, in the name of teaching "eloquent expression." Everything is imposed from top-down.

One explanation for these is that the subject is usually based on the logic of the discipline instead of the psychology of students (Applebee, 1974). Applebee points out that "psychological patterns are far more complex and less fully understood than logical ones..." (p. 253). Consequently, logical principles are easily established to substitute psychological sequence as the backbone of a discipline. As a result, scholars and teachers of English try to teach such a discipline directly, believing that they can bridge the knowledge gap through a seemingly
Take composition as an example, Hairston (1982) points out the dominant characteristics of product-oriented approach:

First, its adherents believe that competent writers know what they are going to say before they begin to write; thus their most important task when they are preparing to write is finding a form into which to organize their content. They also believe ... that teaching editing is teaching writing... [T]he traditional paradigm did not grow out of research or experimentation. It derives partly from the classical rhetorical model that organizes the production of discourse into invention, arrangement, and style, but mostly it seems to be based on some idealized and orderly vision of what literature scholars, whose professional focus is on the written product, seem to imagine is an efficient method of writing. It is a prescriptive and orderly view of the creative act... Its proponents hold it a priori; they have not tested it against the composing process of actual writers (p. 78).

In essence, the goals the product-oriented approach advocates to achieve are oftentimes incompatible with the methodology it adopts. Teaching skills that can be easily formulated directly may give teachers a sense of doing something seriously but is, more often than not, incongruent with what goes on in the classroom as well as in a student's mind. Take mechanics errors as an example, English teachers still can't resist the urge to teach grammar directly as well as correct errors constantly. Yet, study results and personal experiences have proved them almost futile.

III. New Breeze to English Education

1966 is a landmark year for English education in America. In that year, American scholars and educators of English invited a group of British specialists in English to a month-long seminar at Dartmouth college. The seminar was held to bring American English scholars and educators to a close contact with British approach. In the following year, the National Study of High School English Programs included 42 British outstanding schools in its survey. Findings from
both contacts shocked Americans.

The British model explicitly puts great emphasis on the personal intellectual and linguistic growth of the child, instead of on the demands of the "discipline." The American fact-finding team found British English classroom provides "improvised drama, imaginative writing, personal response to literature, and a large amount of informal classroom discussion. Instruction is centered on the pupil—his interests, his response, his view of the world" (Squire & Applebee, 1969, p.52). Findings like this were contrary to what American educators were brought up in their profession. Nevertheless, the evidences were convincing enough to make them converts. Jerry Walker of the University of Illinois had gone to England believing that the British approach was wrong and came out dramatically converted. His speech to a 1968 convention was titled: "Bach, Rembrandt, Milton, and Those Other Cats" (1968).

The British model introduced American educators to the notion of "process-oriented" approach and the psychologists who provided the theoretical foundation for such an approach. Jean Piaget and L. S. Vygotsky were recognized as the cornerstone of this new approach. In essence, their theories advocate that thought and language development are two unfolding processes which involve constant interaction with one's environment. In the developing process, thought and language help each other to grope and grow. Both Piaget and Vygotsky agree that human acquire language through a long process which begins with socializing with one's environment to acquire the language code and, then, proceeds to internalize the language. As one starts to internalize the language, his/her fledging mind is beginning to take shape.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky refuted the idea that language and thought develop along a parallel line. Vygotsky believed that thought and language start from a reverse direction— an infant starts with no thought but with thoughtless language. The two intersect somewhere in the child’s development and become intertwined ever since. The two assist each other to grow into a more elaborate state. At this stage, inner speech becomes a mature person’s most concise
thought. The inner speech is highly condensed thought, but needs explicit language to shape it into being. Piaget (1969) declares: "... there is a surprising degree of correlation between the language employed and the mode of reasoning... indicate that language does not constitute the source of logic but is, on the contrary, structured by it" (p. 90). Vygotsky (1962):

The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. In that process the relation of thought to word undergoes changes which themselves may be regarded as development in the functional sense. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them (p.125).

The implication of Piaget and Vygotsky’s theories is that language and thought development are continuing processes. What matters is the interaction with one’s environment in the process. This interaction begins with sheer receiving the language code, proceeds to trial and error, and, finally, refines in constant communication with other minds. In this sense, a student’s active involvement in the learning process becomes crucial. Passive learning of a designated content and practices and drills which don’t have strong enough relevance with a student’s interests or concerns are deemed inappropriate.

The emphasis on the process inevitably forces an educator to pay more attention to the way a student develops. Since each person develops in his/her own unique way, expecting every student to learn the same material with roughly equal pace and enthusiasm is unrealistic. This new emphasis forces educators to take a critical view of their traditional believes about English the subject and student’s needs. They can no longer think about the curriculum simply from the view of the subject. Freedman and Pringle (1980) pointed out this new emphasis:

This shift implies different set of values, different epistemologies. It requires as well new and explicit theoretic constructs, and large-scale revisions of research methodology and pedagogy (p. 177).

Take composition as an example, the process-oriented approach believes that
writing is a generative process through which a writer finds out what he/she has to say. This approach repudiates the traditional notion that depicts writing as a linear process. Instead it sees writing as a recursive process in which a student goes back to the text again and again to make it more elaborate. The student is encouraged to elaborate on the text instead of paying great attention on format or mechanics. The new thinking sees writing as a creative process of immense perceptual, linguistic, and cognitive complexity in which meanings are made through the active and continued involvement of the writer with the unfolding text (Freedman & Pringle, 1980).

The critical point of this approach is that whatever a student does in the process it must be relevant to his/her interests or concerns. Therefore, the immediate goal of writing is not to learn a specific skill but to encourage the student to explore and express his/her mind. Under this circumstance, this unfolding process fosters both personal and linguistic growth. In order to facilitate this process, the teacher’s responsibility is to encourage and facilitate the student’s willingness to write, read, and discuss more. The teacher no longer attempts to teach writing as a certain skill, nor spends great energy on teaching and correcting format and mechanics.

The obvious impact of the process-oriented approach on English education can be seen on three aspects:

1. Student characteristics begins to receive attention (Applebee, 1974). According to both Piaget and Vygotsky, from birth to about adolescent a child goes through several stages of development. Each stage has its own distinctive mental and linguistic characteristics. Therefore, from an educator’s point of view, we need to take these stages into consideration when designing a curriculum.

2. Research methods aimed at investigating the process better are honored (Freedman & Pringle, 1980; Chen, 1992). Since this new approach emphasizes on the process of learning and demands an understanding about a student’s characteristics, the traditional quantitative method can no longer satisfy educator’s
need to know more about students. Quantitative methods, based on quantifiable results, describe the whole picture; it, however, can’t tell specifically what is happening in the process.

3. Relevance is the focus of concern (Applebee, 1974). Students’ interests and concerns must be the center of curriculum design. In other words, the academic logic can no longer be the rationale for a course. Activities or materials that can encourage students to use the language more take precedence over demands of a discipline. Therefore, informal discussion, acting out dramas, journal writing are all the norm of classroom activities. In addition, language instruction is no longer divided into reading, speaking, and composition. They are integrated into "language arts."

IV. New Challenge to the ESL/EFL

The purpose of discussing the evolution of the English education in America from the product-oriented to the process-oriented approach is to prepare the background for the discussion of ESL/EFL theories. From the above introduction, we can see some very familiar characteristics in the field of ESL/EFL. Be it from the point of view of research methodology, curriculum design, or teaching methods, the field of ESL/EFL has borrowed heavily from the field of English education. Its dominant research methodology has been quantitative methods. Its curriculum design still focuses on literary materials and grammar. Its teaching methods center around English the discipline. As process-oriented approach becomes widely accepted belief of American English education, the field of ESL/EFL has begun to feel the impact.

The process-oriented approach brought the qualitative research methods back to the spotlight. Methods like case study and longitudinal observation were once branded unscientific or not objective received new attention because of the need to understand what is happening in the process. No where is these new methodologies more crucial than in the field of writing. The field of writing in ESL/EFL first adopted a case study method in 1976 by Zamel.
The field of writing in ESL/EFL used to depend solely on quantitative method and the results inevitably showed English language proficiency as the primary factor. The reasons are simple:

1. When researches rely on quantitative method to study writing, no one can be certain what they test is representative of "real writing" (Lloyd-Jones, 1982, p.3). Be it the indirect, objective measure--a standardized test--or the direct measure--students write a sample article--, the results are always inferred to represent the student's overall writing capability. Odell (1981) criticized indirect measures for their undue emphasis on error recognition and their failure to reflect the skills that are needed to generate good writing. He also criticized direct measures--writing samples--for being vague on both the purpose and audience for the writing and for the difficulty of consistent ratings.

2. The way writing is assessed, be it indirect or direct, language always plays a pivotal role in the scoring system. Lloyd-Jones (1982) contends that writing is a blend of skills, not of an additive sum of these skills viewed separately, and that indirect, objective measures are based on limited, discrete elements of language. Raimes (1985) suggests that holistic assessment inevitably takes language proficiency into account. Take the ESL Composition Profile, developed by Jacobs, Zingraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey (1981), as an example: three of its five scoring categories (50%) are "linguistic-specific assessment" (Raimes, 1985, p.232). They are: Vocabulary (20%), Language Use (25%), and Mechanics (5%). Neither writing strategies nor behavior are assessed.

Since quantitative studies prove that language to be the primary factor, small wonder that so much attention has been paid to features of language in the classroom of English writing. Styles, format, organizational skills, and mechanics have been the focal points of ESL/EFL writing instruction; whereas personal experiences and researches have doubted their effect on writing.

Qualitative methodologies brought in by the process-oriented approach opened a new dimension. Case study is the most common method, in which researchers use writing protocol, thinking aloud, or measuring pauses (Chen,
1992; Matsuhashi, 1981) to study the process. An experimental design with tightly controlled variables can not provide in-depth information about each complex situation. A case study approach can provide additional dimensions of views. The trade-off is generalization for deeper understanding. Merriam (1988) explains:

...most case studies in education approach a problem of practice from a holistic perspective. That is, investigators use a case study design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (p. xii).

Zamel is among the first researchers who adopt case study method to study the composing process of ESL students. Her series of studies first aimed to challenge the dominance of the formal aspect of language. The first research question Zamel attempted to answer in her 1982 case study of eight proficient ESL students was:

Are ESL students experiencing writing as a creative act of discovery, or are they attending so much to language and correct form that writing is reduced to a mechanical exercise? (p. 199).

Zamel and many other researchers' findings challenged not only the traditional product-oriented instruction but also the value of assessing students' writing performance through indirect, objective tests.

Because of the shift of emphasis on the process, researchers have found that exactly due to an over-concern over mechanics-- grammar, spelling, vocabulary -- students can't focus their attention on the content and coordinate all necessary skills (Pearl, 1979; Pianko, 1979). Pearl (1979) found even unskilled writers demonstrated "a highly consistent and deeply embedded recursive process. "Their poor writing may be due to their rigid attention to being correct which "truncated the flow of composing" (p. 328). Pianko (1979) also concluded that unskilled writers showed "truncated writing process" (p.20).

Another consequence from this new trend to process is the mounting chal-
lenges to the traditional product-oriented and correctness-minded tests of ESL/EFL writing. The Council of Graduate Schools in the U.S. (1980), worrying about the unspecified use of TOEFL scores, pointed out:

While [TOEFL] scores from the low to the middle or high 500s are the most widely used for admission purposes they are probably the most difficult to interpret in terms of the candidate's ability to speak and write in English (p.18).

Researchers like Greenberg (1986), Owen (1985), and Raimes (1990) have questioned the usefulness and applicabilities such tests can claim. Their criticisms center around two issues: types of writing being sampled (Greenberg, 1986; Raimes, 1990) and the rating method and the interpretation of the scores (Owen, 1985; Raimes, 1990).

As the challenge on the formal aspect of language matures, the process-oriented researches gradually open up another front on ESL/EFL writing: the distinctive functions of English proficiency and writing expertise. One common theme emerged from many such studies was that students writing in a second language proceed in similar fashion as native language students. Zamel (1976) found the skilled ESL students "who are ready to compose" (p. 67) demonstrated behavior and used strategies similar to those exhibited by native writers. They all are engaging in a process of discovering and refining meanings. Their strategies cross languages; those who plan little in second language (L2) plan little in first language (L1) as well (Jones & Tetroe, 1987). Raimes (1987) concluded that composing strategies are common to the ESL students across course placement and language proficiency levels and to L1 and L2 writers. "Good ESL writers" according to Jones (1983), exhibit high amount of interaction with the text and they, too, "separated ideas from text," and they, too, shaped text while the low interactors simply "generated text" (p. 135). Raimes (1985) concluded:

With context, preparation, feedback, and opportunities for revision, students at any level of proficiency can be engaged in discovery of meaning (p. 250).

Then, researchers started to examine closely the distinction between
language proficiency and writing expertise. In Zamel's 1983 study, two of her six "skilled" ESL students were judged as unskilled after their products were holistically graded. However, the two "unskilled" students had taken and passed two semesters of freshman composition courses. Raimes (1985) suggests that the way writing products are graded may be at fault.

The language proficiency issue is complicated. Zamel, who in her 1983 study reported her subjects were not "particularly occupied by language features," modified her view in her 1984 article: "we need to find out if a minimum level of language competence is required before students are able to view writing in a second language as a process of discovering meaning" (p. 198). On the other hand, Raimes (1985) sounded more up-beat: "All of these student writers, even those laboring to produce text, were uncovering the language they needed to express ideas and at the same time discovering new ideas." If given enough time, Raimes so advocates, ESL student writers will develop adequate vocabulary for the text because of "this extraordinary generative power of language" (p. 248). Along this line of thinking Raimes (1987), again, found language proficiency has little correspondence with judgments of writing ability and composing strategies.

Brooks (1985) conducted a case study on five "unskilled" students of New York University. All five had been grouped in the same ESL class, yet they exhibited a wide range of differences. Brooks categorized them into three stages. Each stage differs in terms of personal characteristics, language proficiency, composing process, and needs. A major difference of language proficiency between Stage 1 and Stage 2 writers is that Stage 2 writers demonstrated "linguistic and rhetorical knowledge and skills" (p. 304). The Stage 3 writers exhibited "a sophisticated awareness of and sensitivity to language. Because they are experienced readers and writers,..." (p. 307). But Stage 3 students are still restricted by their limited proficiency in English. "They come into the English composition classroom with a good deal of knowledge of and experience in composing, but they are restricted by the limitations of their English abilities"
Cumming (1989) studied the process and the products of 23 French-speaking Canadian high school students. He divided them into three levels of native language writing expertise and two levels of English proficiency. Cumming formally proposed the separation of language proficiency and writing expertise: subjects with better native language writing expertise demonstrated more skilled process of writing in English. Subjects' second-language proficiency is only "an additive factor, enhancing the overall quality of writing produced, and interacting with the attention that participants devoted to aspects of their writing. But second-language proficiency did not visibly affect the processes of composing" (p. 81).

Cumming found three characteristics of writing expertise: 1. extensive use of heuristic search strategies for evaluating and resolving problems; 2. attention to complex aspects of writing while making decisions; and 3. the production of effective content and discourse in compositions.

Chen (1992) compared five Chinese graduate students' writing processes and products in both English and Chinese to see how English proficiency and writing expertise were at work. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. His study investigated the process by measuring the pauses of each writing. The products were compared by T-units. In addition, personal profiles were constructed to assess each subjects' writing behavior and their self-estimates of performances.

Statistical analysis showed, in English, subjects experienced significantly more word level problems, paused longer and more frequently, and spent more time pausing. Their writing methods and behavior in English was basically no different from that in Chinese, though English did hamper their efforts. Through personal profiles we know that though statistical analysis show subjects encountered more word level problems, these were only part of their concerns during writing.

The study found that subjects, although struggling to generate ideas and put
them into words, exhibited the same commitment to produce a coherent text. They applied the method they were most familiar with. The second language problem impeded their process but their products in both languages did not show dramatic difference. The study also found that an English proficiency test like the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) did not have an evident connection to either the subjects' English writing process or performance. Personal experiences and skills of writing had more to do with a subject's writing methods, process, and performance than language proficiency.

The implications of these findings on the teaching of ESL/EFL writing are:

1. Writing is a very complex topic, so it is very dangerous to measure students' needs by one measure only. To study the subject with quantitative methodology solely, based on scores, can produce misleading results. What is happening in the process must be taken into consideration.

2. Writing performance is composed of two factors: language proficiency and writing expertise. Krashen (1984) attributes ESL students' poor writing to two factors: 1. Lack of acquisition of the code (written English); 2. A poor or inefficient composing process (p. 29). Therefore, when judging students' needs, a teacher must look from both angles, to say the least.

3. Students' native language literacy has a strong connection with their performance in English. This is especially true in the case of writing. Therefore, looking at a student's written product only gives an incomplete picture about his / her strengths and weaknesses. Since language problems can impede an ESL/EFL writer's performance, the writing of a skilled writer with low English proficiency may be graded as similar to that of an unskilled writer with a slightly better English proficiency. In reality, the two student each needs different kind of help.

4. Both language proficiency and writing expertise are not skills that can be taught or learned directly. They need to be accumulated. Every ESL/EFL student hopes to find a cure fast. Since magic doesn't exist, the next best method is to help them overcome their difficulty in generating and presenting
ideas. Therefore, opportunities that encourage them to explore topics they are interested and exchange their views can work their interests the best. The essence is to facilitate students' willingness to explore and interact through language. No wonder Widdowson (1983) distinguishes "social activity" from "language exercise" (p. 44).

V. New Trends on ESL/EFL Curriculum Design

From the above description about the development of ESL/EFL writing, we can see the strong impact the process-oriented philosophy can have on the teaching of language, be it native language or ESL/EFL. The emphasis on the process of learning has opened up a new scope that fertilizes the soil for new thinking.

The theme of the new thinking centers on two aspects:

1. The need to distinguish student characteristics--developmental as well as personal characteristics.

2. Extensive exposure--yes, exposure is the key word--is replacing traditional intensive study of course materials. Even informal activities become acceptable.

Student Characteristics

The needs of ESL students vary very much for each individual (Brooks, 1985; Zamel, 1983; Chen, 1992). It is academically and economically necessary to categorize ESL/EFL students according to external criteria but it is not practical to define students' needs by theory alone. The first problem is always how to diagnose students' problems and needs. Corder (1967) preached a close examination of individual student's needs:

By examining the learner's own "built-in" syllabus, we may be able to allow the learner's innate strategies to dictate our practice and determine our syllabus; we may learn to adapt ourselves to his needs rather than impose upon him our preconceptions of how he ought to learn, what he ought to learn and when he ought to learn it (p. 170).
Developmental Characteristics

According to both Piaget and Vygotsky, a child goes through several stages of mental development before he/she ventures into formal reasoning--forming abstract concept--at about adolescent. Since thought and language develop interdependently, language education must take those developmental characteristics into consideration. Piaget (1969) asserts that "between eleven or twelve and fourteen or fifteen": a child is ready to understand abstract concepts:

This final fundamental decentering, which occurs at the end of childhood, prepares for adolescence, whose principal characteristic is a similar liberation from the concrete in favor of interest oriented toward the non-present and the future. This is the age of great ideals and of the beginning of theories, as well as the time of simple present adaptation to reality (p. 130).

Vygotsky (1962) presents this stage as a more fluid state, through which the child moves back and forth among several current and previous stages. The child is able to function in "true concept" but he/she only decreases the frequency of primitive forms of thinking gradually, not abandoning them suddenly:

Adolescence is less a period of completion than one of crisis and transition. The transitional character of adolescent thinking becomes especially evident when we observe the actual functioning of the newly acquired concepts...a striking discrepancy between his ability to form concepts and his ability to define them (p. 79).

Considering the fact that Chinese students begin learning English from junior high school at the age of 12, we make them to start at an awkward time. The implications from both Piaget and Vygotsky are that:

1. The most fruitful time to learn language naturally--Krashen (1982) terms it "acquisition"--is before adolescence. Leki (1992) concludes that: "There does seem to be a 'critical age' beyond which an L2 learner no longer develops the kind of competency which would make the learner's use of the L2 indistinguishable from that of a native speaker" (p. 12). Nevertheless, the "critical age"
remains illusive to pinpoint. Before adolescence the child absorbs everything coming into contact automatically and, at the same time, strives to establish links and classify relationships. Adolescence is already a difficult time for children both mentally and emotionally-- Krashen (1981) used similar rationale to suggest his "filter" hypothesis. Now they are forced to learn a totally strange subject that has no connection with their past knowledge at all.

2. Since there is a discrepancy between adolescent's ability to learn and to define concepts, it is dangerous to teach English primarily as a formal knowledge. Adolescents may be expected to learn grammar rules but it will be too much to expect them to understand them perfectly in tests or to apply them correctly in a real situation. The best strategy is to teach English as a language. Because of the nature of the discrepancy, trial and errors must be been as natural instead of as a bad sign that will doom the learner.

The knowledge about English is usually taught in isolated fragments and in pure forms. Before students have much experiences with the target language, pieces of grammar rules are introduced, without much preparation; the teacher determines the need based on his/her consideration about the discipline. The presentation is almost always explanation about the rules. After the presentation, practices and drills are introduced as a follow-up. Almost without exception, by this time students still have very limited contact with the target lesson. Most teachers believe they are doing a fine job, but they don't realize students are getting very little out of it. In addition, oftentimes teachers see students' errors as a sign that they are not doing their part.

**Personal Characteristics**

Ellis (1985) lists age, language aptitude, cognitive style, personality, and motivation as important features of each student's profile. This study will focus on factors attributable to the process of learning; the student's readiness---native language proficiency--- and motivation, namely the student's interests and concerns.
One fallacy of the ESL/EFL community is that ESL/EFL students are treated as a homogeneous group. Take the term foreign students, non-native students, or ESL or EFL students as an example, they can be first grade students in some studies, graduate students or adult immigrants in other studies, each with varying degrees of literacy in their native language. They are from various cultural backgrounds. Some learned English through grammar-oriented drills, some acquired and learned it through integrated language activities. It appears, therefore, precarious to transplant findings of one study to another setting without careful examination.

Studies have shown that a student’s native language literary has a direct bearing on his/her English performance (Lay, 1982; Brooks, 1985). This is more so when considering their writing or speaking performance. Leki (1992) contends that "ESL students will appear in the writing classroom in every combination of personality, congnitive style, motivation, and level of proficiency of spoken English" (p.13-4). Chen (1992) and Cumming (1989) identify the student’s native language writing expertise as an important factor in ESL/EFL writing.

Traditional product-oriented approach views motivation as a method that a teacher must employ to make sure students will learn. Because both the curriculum and the materials used to be imposed on students, so the teacher needs to arouse students' interest. Under the new emphasis on process, students' interests and concerns are honored. Consequently, the teacher's job is not to do something to motivate students. Instead, the teacher solicits students' input and encourages them to take an active role in picking materials. The teacher guides, but does not impose. We will touch on this topic again in next section.

**Extensive Exposure.**

"Socialization" is the term both Piaget and Vygotsky use to describe how language is learned an mastered. By socialization Vygotsky means meaningful interactions. For a child striving to make sense of everything around him/her, extensive exposure and trial and errors should be widely accepted. It will be
wise to defer in-depth, intensive study until at a later stage when the child's mental and linguistic developments are mature for this task.

The essence of Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1981, 1982) is that they acquire the language code through "comprehensible input." Krashen advocates the process of learning L2 is no different from that of L1 -- a lot of meaningful interactions. Krashen (1984) advocates that students acquire the language through "large amounts of self-motivated reading for interest and/pleasure" (p. 20).

The purpose of meaningful exposure to the target language is to enable the student to "internalize" (Leki, 1992) the language. According to Vygotsky (1962), we learn language, first unconsciously, in a "structural way" (p. 100). In plain words, extensive exposure serves to familiarize students with the target language in context. At this stage, students may not know how this or that sentence is produced or what does a certain word mean exactly. But by decoding the meaning first they indirectly come into contact with the structure. In essence, understanding the story takes precedence over understanding the language. Therefore, the student's interests and concerns are of pivotal concern for encouraging the student to read more.

Of course, reading or listening alone only constitutes the passive side of learning a second language. The other half -- the active side -- of learning a second language is to try to use the language to accumulate the "capacity for making sense, for negotiating meaning, for finding expressions for new experience" (Widdowson, 1981, p. 212). Without actual use of the language in creative, meaningful interactions, "the learners' language will fossilize at the communicative stage, in which the learner will be able to use the language to get what he/she wants from the target culture but will develop limited capacity for full self-expression" (Leki, 1992, p. 20). Therefore, all language activities -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing -- should be integrated under one course title.
VI. Implications to Teachers

To design a process-oriented curriculum challenges an ESL/EFL educator and teacher's sense of authority and security. This challenge is especially keen for Chinese teachers. Because, they can no longer impose a curriculum or pre-determine an instruction to the last detail. Applebee (1974) explains:

We can attempt,..., to list the end points of the program; and given the end points we can define a beginning as 'where the student is.' The territory between these two extremes is vast and uncharted; there is no reason to assume that the best way from one to another will be a straight line-- or even that there is one "best" route that students should follow (p. 254).

Nevertheless, the strengths of the process-oriented approach are obvious. Especially in this diversified, information saturated global village, individual rights and needs in education must be honored. Only through the emphasis on the learning process can we understand exactly what students need. The emphasis on the process has enabled researchers to understand the complex nature of learning in more detail. In addition, because of its stress on students' interests and concerns, the process of learning can be more fun and meaningful.

The new curriculum prerequisitises a new teacher education program. The new program will, among other things, distinguish itself on three points:

1. Since in a process-oriented approach, the curriculum can not be predetermined and imposed from top-down, the process is not predictable. Considering the complex nature of learning, to expect one best way of teaching language falls in the trap of traditional product-oriented approach.

From Piaget and Vygotsky's theories as well as process-oriented researches, we have learned that student's needs and interests are varied. This phenomenon of multi-facet needs and interests is particularly acute in teaching writing. Facing this situation, it would be wise for a language teacher to diagnose needs carefully and not rely on one predetermined instructional scheme. Besides, the social dynamics of each classroom is different. Adapting to the changing inter-
ests and needs can sustain the learning interesting. Therefore, teachers should be
given the freedom to design and carry out his/her own curriculum and students
should be offered opportunities to choose. The teacher leads and guides, but does
not dominate.

2. English teachers need to distinguish the knowledge that informs their
teaching from what students need. In most cases, English teachers teach what
they are most familiar with. Unfortunately, this almost always means grammati-
cal knowledge. This is particularly so when our traditional English teachers
education programs don't aim at improving their English proficiency. As a
result, most English curriculum designers and teachers put too much emphasis
on grammatical knowledge and not enough emphasis on learning the language.
Therefore, the new teacher education program must limit its undue focus on liter-
ary and linguistic knowledge and let them experience that learning English can
be interesting and meaningful. Only then will they understand the value of teach-
ing English as a language not as a knowled

3. English teachers will change their role from that of a knowledge distribu-
tor to a cheer leader, a facilitator, and a guide to learning. In order to encourage
students to expose to English more, a teacher will have to defer judgment on
errors. Instead, he/she will encourage students to go on trying. His/her primary
concern is to find out each student's "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky,
1962, p. 103) and to assist the student learn:

   What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone
tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that
which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be
aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions (p.
104).

   In terms of teaching language, this means to "go through the language with
the student." Instead of correcting errors and teaching skills, the teacher guides
and encourages students to experience meaningful language activities so that
they master the language gradually.

Our traditional English curriculum takes the fun out of learning. The knowl-
edge-oriented instruction makes learning English dull. Furthermore, the rewards are meager. The process-oriented approach may not be a magic cure, but it aims high. Applebee (1974) sums up the essence of this new approach:

What we seek to do in English is not to add discrete components of skill or knowledge, but gradually to elaborate the linguistic and intellectual repertoire of our students, a process that is more fluid than linear, more fortuitous than predicatable (p.255).

REFERENCES


淺論新的英語課程設計的理論基礎

陳 達 武

摘 要

傳統的英文教學的課程強調正確的英文知識，但成效卻一直不彰，關鍵因素之一可能是看待語文 (Language) 學習的觀念。傳統的英文教學的課程偏重按部就班的學習，學生遵循預定的目標逐步學習，教師則依據預定的目標測驗學生學習的成效，這種方式就是成品導向 (Product-oriented) 的教學方式。

另有一種不同的教學方式：過程導向 (Process-oriented) 的教學方式。這種教學方式強調人類學習語文是藉由在學習的過程中因與周圍的環境相交流，密集的接觸該語文而學得的。過程導向教學方式深信語文的成長，同時包括智力 (Intellectual) 和語言 (Linguistic) 的成長。言之，語文與思想同步、相互扶持地成長。

這二種教學方式最根本的差異在於運用於研究的方法上，成品導向的教學方式依賴分數 (寫作或英語文測驗的成績)，如此的依賴學習的結果（成品），很自然的就使教學與研究傾重於明顯可見的現象，如此的方法並非不可用，而是它無法確知學生在學習時所面臨的實際的困難。過程導向的教學方式強調從學生實際學習的過程中去瞭解學習的困難，因而常採用個案做質的研究，如此的研究方法的說服力較弱，但因強調瞭解學習的過程，其結論倒也不容忽視，如重視學生個別特性的呼聲。

將過程導向的教學方式運用在以英文為外語的學習環境下，它可以提供課程設計另一個選擇。最鮮明的差異可見於英文寫作教學中，成品導向的教學方式先針對明顯可見的現像，當然專注於如文法、用字、組織、與內容，過程導向的教學方式則強調製造一個同時增進英文程度與寫作能力的學習過程，協助學生在如此的過程中成長。在這個學習的過程中，讓學生因有英文程度與寫作能力的提昇而能自行修正文法與用字等的錯誤。當然，這須要時間，也就是一個過程。
如果我們同意英文程度的提昇是因爲密集的接觸英文，而不是因
為按步就班式的練習與習作，我們當然應選擇強調在學習的過程中密
集的接觸英文的課程設計。讓學生在學習的過程中成長，而不必在按
步就班的學習中一再直接的教授所謂的正確的英語文的知識。