

CHAPTER 1

Basic Concepts of English Language Educology

As the beginning and pavement of the whole book, this chapter focuses on the following major issues:

1. Introduction to English language educology;
2. The study of education and its relation to language educology;
3. Language acquisition/learning theories;
4. A brief survey of English teaching models.

In so doing, we put forward the paramount factors in educology—teaching, learning, and the interactive theories guiding practices in English language education.

1. Introduction to English language educology

1.1 Why educology

With the modernization and globalization of the world, studies on English language teaching have become increasingly vigorous in recent years. So far various terms have been applied to the field: English teaching, English education, English pedagogy and English educology. While they roughly refer to similar practice guided by similar theories, English educology, as we observed, is more theory-oriented, which is in line with our purpose of writing this book—providing a theoretical basis of studies in ELT and ushering English teachers and student teachers into further theoretical and practical studies. It is, therefore, necessary for us to understand the term educology and subject educology as a first step.

The term “educology” refers to the entire fund of recorded knowledge about the entire educational process. It has been in use since the seminal work in educology by L. W. Harding in the 1950s. This fund of knowledge can be extended through three types of disciplined inquiry: *empirical*, focusing on scientific knowledge; *normative*, focusing on the intrinsic value of aspects of education; and *analytical*, focusing on the analytic philosophy of education, the history of education, and the jurisprudence of education. Like anthropology, sociology, and psychology, educology refers to the effects of variables on its central subject (ERIC)¹.

Subject educology is a discipline with the school subject education as its focus of study. Its final purpose is to completely realize the educational aims. The theoretical basis is taken from research achievements of relevant disciplines, studying the whole process of aim-making, course-setting, syllabus-designing, teaching, learning and evaluation of teaching programs. The development of subject educology has roughly experienced three stages—teaching methods and teaching materials; teaching theories; and branched educology (Tao, 2001)². As for English language educology, the research objects and significance are illustrated as follows.

¹ ERIC: <http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal>, retrieved March 25, 2006.

² Translated from 陶本一. 《学科教育学》. 人民教育出版社. 2001

1.2 Research objects of English subject educology

In the process of education and training, general education that is realized through curricula and teaching programs is generally oriented towards three directions: the development of cognitive competence, the development of the personal and social, as well as professional competence. While it is fundamental to strive to achieve the goals of general education in English language education, educology of English has its specific objects of study.

1.2.1 English subject curriculum

Since the birth of modern science, a close science system has been established. The way of resolution and specialization lays the foundation of modern scientific research, which helps the exploration of human race go from integration and roughness to differentiation and fineness. However, in the process, the inner link between different areas of knowledge has been broken, thus creating separations and limitations. In the case of English subject educology, especially as foreign or second language, there has been the long practice of dividing the process into various language skills like listening, speaking, reading, writing, etc. This arrangement has contributed a lot to the setting of English teaching **curricula**. However, with time going on, a complementary voice has already been heard: In the age of knowledge economy, the knowledge system of schools needs reconstruction while the main basis is the basic personal qualifications. The knowledge system should be characterized by integration, comprehension and openness. It should be noted that there is a phenomenon of discipline in the knowledge system. The construction of the knowledge system, as embodied in teaching **curricula**, requires the resolution of dialectical relations between consistency and difference, stability and deviancy, resolution and integration, as well as limitation and selection. The basic principles for the construction of the knowledge system include: to place emphasis on the fosterage of integrated personality, to establish a **curriculum** system balancing consistency and difference, to realize the integration of the knowledge system and to carry out multi-cultural education (Tao, 2001: 82). The past few years has seen the trial of integrated course books in the EFL (English as foreign language) field in China.

1.2.2 English subject learning

The research on learning in subject educology is first of all, directed towards the study of learning effect and learner factors. But it is not only engaged in the traditional research on learning behavior of people, but also involves research on learning as an important means of fitting into the society, seeking self-actualization and striving for self-perfection. Nowadays the conception of “live and learn” has penetrated into people’s lives. “An integrated person” can be realized only through lifelong learning (Tao, 2001: 128). This is not only an opportunity but also a big challenge faced by the modern “individual being” during the process of seeking self-realization. Therefore, as an important element of subject learning, new and ample contents have been added to the connotations of modern English learning, especially some breakthroughs in English language learning theory. This book will expound learners’ variables as well as some learning problems within the domain of subject education and review some researchers’ achievements of study in such aspects of students’ learning subjects as meta-cognition in English learning, strategies of English learning and case study of English learning.

1.2.3 English subject teaching

The ultimate goal of subject teaching is to promote and facilitate the production and growth of knowledge in learners to realize their overall development. The development of contemporary society makes the function of subject teaching in educational institutions continuously expand. Under the idea of lifelong, autonomous and integrated learning, the role of subject teachers in the communication of knowledge is also continuously changing. In today’s English teaching field, while more and more emphasis is being laid on individualized learning, English teaching researchers and teachers spare no efforts in activating students’ positive thoughts on teaching practice. The aim is that general students can be guided and helped to positively, actively and independently gain knowledge and to form a knowledge structure with their own individualized characters (Tao, 2001: 170).

And in the process of English teaching, the advantages of various teaching methods and approaches should be taken into consideration. Decisions should be made according to the practical conditions of teaching environment and students being taught. English teachers should advocate and improve the spirit of democracy in the process of English instruction and establish good relationships with their

students through joint participation and collaboration. They should also create a teaching environment that is harmonious and beneficial to the production and growth of knowledge so that the classroom subject teaching activities may become invigorating. In such an environment, the skillful instruction of English teachers will deeply influence students' learning activities while the level of teachers' teaching arts will be continuously enhanced in the process of the teachers' subjective and initiative efforts; then the style of teaching arts with individualized characteristics will gradually be formed.

1.2.4 Contemporary educational technology in English subject educology

Teaching aids have long been a focus of study for teaching researchers and curricula developers. The impact of modern educational technologies on English language teaching is too big and strong to be neglected. Contemporary educational technology makes use of contemporary information technology in language teaching in order to promote the teaching reforms and students' learning achievements. Generally speaking, the function of the application of contemporary educational technology in English language teaching has experienced a gradual process of cognition:

Media → Tools → Resources → Environment

In the present digital and information age, contemporary educational technology has been becoming one of the basic means, resources and environment for acquisition and growth of knowledge. It is apparent that with the rapid development of multimedia technology and the Internet, great changes have taken place in school teaching activities such as curriculum and teaching materials, teaching models, different roles of teachers and students, etc. For instance, multimedia equipment like computer, DVD, EVD, MP4, etc. has enriched and freshened the meaning of audio-lingual and communicative approaches. The use of digital information in English teaching will become an important challenge in our nation's next major education paradigm and will trigger a revolution in all educational and learning approaches. However, regarding the flexibility of the role of technology in English teaching and learning, the discussion of educational technology is penetrated into various parts of this book.

1.2.5 Teacher training in English subject educology

Compelling evidence and various studies show us that the quality of a teacher is one of the most critical components of how well his/her students can achieve. In most cases we can even say teachers are the single biggest influence on how well students learn. So it's no surprise the discussion and debate about English subject educology also zeroing in on the quality of teaching in the classrooms. There are now many loud voices with differing opinions talking about teacher quality in the ELT world. And in many countries, teacher training has become established routine work.

The need to improve teacher quality and enhance the teaching profession is very urgent for China with regard to its vast area and large population. The challenge of improving English teachers' quality in China involves the following aspects:

Teacher preparation: Many new English teachers do not feel ready for the challenges of today's classrooms.

Teacher retention: English teachers are often left to "sink" or "swim," not receiving the nurturing they deserve and support they need.

Mastery of professional knowledge: English teachers in many areas lack opportunities to receive in-service training, resulting in an out-of-date, stereotyped knowledge system.

Teacher recruitment: English education faces the challenge of attracting a greater quantity of people to the teaching profession while also enhancing teacher quality.

Of course, as Parrot (1993) points out, whether someone can become a good foreign language teacher does not solely depend on his/her command of the language. There are a variety of elements that contribute to the qualities of a good teacher. These elements can be categorized into such groups as ethic devotion, professional qualities and personal styles.

With all these factors taken into consideration, the task of teacher training in China becomes more arduous.

1.2.6 Assessment in English subject educology

Assessment has a direct influence on the entire process of the development of education. When we are trying to inspect and study subject educology, it is necessary for us to study and explore the assessment system. For many people, assessment is solely associated with testing. Many EFL teachers would immediately think of tests when speaking of assessment methods.

However, testing is only one of the various means of assessment, which is a broader term. It is conclusion/judgment based on information collected about the learners' current situation, while testing is a way to collect information through formal and standardized form. In this book, both the formal and informal ways to gather information will be discussed. And the influence of social reforms and industrial social ideology over the assessment in subject educology will be touched upon. This influence, along with globalization, is having great effects on English subject assessment. Only after we know the social ideology behind educational assessment and the social function that appears after its effects are left on the assessment system, can we have deeper considerations for the problems and contradictions that exist in the current assessment system of English education. In the 21st century, social and cultural reforms not only bring about changes in the assessment functions of English educology, but also surface the disadvantages in the traditional English testing system. There has been an urgent call to construct a new, open and balanced English assessment system in China.

Above listed are the major issues within the framework of English subject educology. Besides these, language educology necessarily involves such topics as cultural awareness in language acquisition/learning. We will also dwell on cultural issues in detail in Chapter 6.

1.3 The importance of English subject educology

Most people would agree that we are moving into the "computer future," a future where everything will be different because of the presence of computers and other new technologies. In many walks of life, the dominance of computer is already visible and becoming necessary. Under the new socio-economical situation, it is important to develop new thinking in the field of ELT. The traditional methodology for studying innovation in education may have been adequate at a time when only small changes were possible. But we need a different methodology altogether when we envisage radical changes in education.

Generally speaking, there are two sides of English subject educology: one side facing towards society, the other facing the individual. The fundamental importance for learning English subject educology includes at least the following aspects:

To enable us to systematically master the general laws of English education;

To enable us to solve the problems which are difficulties for English education at special levels;

To explore and promote the theory of English curriculum and teaching;

To enable us to identify the difficult nature of English subject education.

In the following parts of Chapter 1, we will deal with more aspects concerning English educology: the relationship between education and language educology; main schools of language learning/acquisition theories; related practices in real language teaching domain and innovations.

2. The study of education and its relation to language educology

Among various disciplines, the study of education (educational science, educational theory) is one of the closest to language educology. Yet, it is probably the least recognized and the most neglected (Stern, 1983: 420). Language teaching in its most widespread forms occurs in educational settings: schools, universities, adult classes, and so on. Usually it forms part of a curriculum of studies and is meant to make an educational contribution to this curriculum. Concepts of education are applied as a matter of course in language teaching just as much as in other subjects of the curriculum. The language teacher almost inevitably operates with some notion of what teaching involves and how language teaching fits into the educational enterprises of which it customarily forms a part.

As a professional field of study, education draws on a number of other studies, such as philosophy, psychology, or sociology, as source disciplines. To be specific, education as a discipline is commonly divided into such sub-disciplines: (1) philosophy of education, (2) history of education, (3) educational psychology, (4) educational sociology, and so on (Stern, 1983: 425). In the following discussion, several sub-disciplines will be illustrated to show the importance of education to language educology as a whole.

2.1 Educational philosophy

Educational philosophy has bearing on any and every aspect of the study and practice of education, and language educology is no exception.

Language educology has operated, more or less consciously, with the notion of a defined curriculum (syllabus, program, or method) and has, in recent years, attempted to distinguish between the ends—purposes of language teaching (goals, aims, or objectives) and means of language teaching to achieve these purposes. It is therefore valuable to recognize that the ends/means model has been put into discussion by educational philosophers. In recent years the relationship between language teachers and language learners, implicit in this model, has also been seriously called into question. Educational philosophy can thus help in clarifying unstated assumptions. In similar ways, it can throw light on such key concepts as are often used far too lightly as discovery learning, individualization, interest, motivation, teaching, skill, and evaluation.

Moreover, the act of foreign language learning, moving from first language to second language, is an expression of ethnic value judgments. Even the desired degree of bilingual competence to be achieved by the student is ultimately a value question. The teacher's treatment of the language learners and of the learning process also indicates philosophical values. Are learners participants in the teaching-learning process, or are they passive recipients of pre-arranged mechanical activities?

These indications are sufficient to suggest the merit of a philosophical perspective for language pedagogy.

2.2 History of education

The importance of a historical approach to language teaching theory has already made itself clear. What is necessary to add in the present context is a reminder that the history of language education forms part of the history of education which provides the wider context, and in most respects the history of language teaching can be better understood in the framework of educational history. Language educology as part of educational history can be illustrated by an example.

In the second half of the nineteenth century modern languages took their place besides other “modern” subjects such as history and the natural sciences. Similarly, throughout the first half of the twentieth century languages were thought of as belonging to the curriculum of secondary education because the curriculum conventions dictated that primary education was vernacular schooling in which foreign languages had no place. It was only during the last decades of years that the primary curriculum has become sufficiently flexible to tolerate or welcome second language learning. Language teaching has also in many respects been subject to the same influences of educational thought that have affected other curriculum subjects and indeed the entire curriculum: psychology, testing, educational research, and educational reform movements. By recognizing these broad trends influencing education the language educational theorists can appreciate better common educational assumptions (Stern, 1983: 442-444).

2.3 Educational psychology

Since educational psychology covers every aspect of education from a psychological angle, it is central to educational theory. Take behaviorist theory as an example. The behaviorist theory of language learning was initiated by behavioral psychologist Skinner, who applied Watson and Raynor’s theory of conditioning to the way humans acquire language. Based on their experiments, Watson and Raynor formulated an S-R (stimulus-response) theory of psychology. They claimed that emotional reactions are learned in much the same way as other skills. Skinner further suggested language is also a form of behavior. It can be learned the same way as animals are trained to respond to stimuli. This theory of learning is referred to as behaviorism, marked by Skinner’s *Verbal Behavior*. Since the advent of Skinner’s theory, it has been adopted for some time by the language teaching profession, particularly in the United States of America. One influential result is the oral-aural (audio-lingual) method, which involves endless drilling patterns of listening and repeating. The core idea of this method is that language is learned by constant repetition and reinforcement of the teacher to form habits in language learners. Mistakes were not tolerated and were immediately corrected, and correct utterances were immediately praised. Today, this method is still widely used and practiced in the world at large.

2.4 Educational sociology

As a branch of sociology, educational sociology places education as an activity and institution into a social context. It recognizes schools and other educational institutions as agencies within a society. Schools may be viewed as part of a society, reflecting the existing social structure. Writings in educational sociology have demonstrated how in many societies the composition of school populations inevitably reflects the divisions in society, and to what extent school systems are openly divided according to the major social strata in that society. Languages have played their part in this class division of education. Until recently, learning foreign languages was regarded as a mark of an “elitist” education; and in some school settings languages are taught not so much for their intrinsic merit but mainly because they give social prestige to the learner (Stern, 1987: 445-447).

Educational sociology also recognizes that schools have been created as agencies of social change through which the society may deliberately strive to modify its internal social structure. Education has been used in some societies as a means of breaking down class barriers, and thus creating equality of opportunity and increasing social mobility. Languages have sometimes been introduced into schools and colleges as a move towards more democratic education.

Besides these macro-sociological factors, education also offers opportunities for “micro-sociological” studies. In the past the teacher’s role as the unquestioned director of all activities at all times and a class following the teacher’s directions in a uniform way were accepted as the right and normal pattern of teacher-student relations. Today teachers are frequently encouraged to cultivate a more fluid and more flexible classroom organization and not to view themselves exclusively in the role of class instructor.

For language educology, as a result, education itself can be regarded as a multidisciplinary source discipline. By treating it as such, educational assumptions in language teaching can be brought to light, and language teaching can be viewed more clearly in relation to other educational activities. In the field of educology research, teaching and learning play central roles. This makes it necessary to look at them timely.

3. Language acquisition/learning theories

A great many theories regarding language development in human beings have been proposed so far and are continuously being proposed. Such theories have generally arisen out of related disciplines such as psychology and linguistics. Psychological and linguistic thinking have profoundly influenced one another and the outcome of language acquisition/learning theories.

3.1 Nurture vs. Nature

Until today, language acquisition theories have basically centered around “nurture” and “nature” distinction or on “**empiricism**” and “**nativism**”. The motif of empiricism is that all knowledge comes from experience and practice, ultimately from our interaction with the environment through our reasoning or senses. On the other hand, nativism holds that at least some knowledge is not acquired through interaction with the environment, but is genetically transmitted and innate. In simple words, some theoreticians have based their theories on environmental factors while others believed that it is the innate factors that determine the acquisition of language. However, it should be borne in mind that neither side totally disagrees with the ideas of the other side. What counts is the relatively little or more weight they lay on the environmental or innate factors.

Environmentalist theories of language acquisition generally hold that an organism’s nurture, or experience, is of more significance to development than its nature or inborn contributions. The neo-behaviorist stimulus-response (S-R) learning theory is the case in point. Today in both cognitive science and language teaching theories, cognitive approach is regarded as an offshoot of behaviorism.

The nativist theories, however, maintain that human being is the product of biology and that much of the capacity for language learning in human is “inborn” (innate). It is part of the genetic makeup of human species and is nearly independent of any particular experience which may occur after birth. Thus, the nativists claim that language acquisition is innately determined and that we are born with a built-in device which predisposes us to acquire language and predisposes us to a systematic perception of language around us. Chomsky’s innatist language acquisition theory is the case in point. Although most nativists do not deny the importance of environmental

stimuli, they claim that language acquisition cannot be accounted for on the basis of environmental factors only and there must be some innate guide to achieve this end. The following table is a classification around the nurture/nature distinction¹.

FIGURE 1.1 Classification of language acquisition theories around “Nurture and Nature Distinction”

Nurture/Nature	Theories of language acquisition	Some Resulting F/S Language Teaching/Learning Methods
<p>Theories based on “nurture” (Environmental factors are believed to be more dominant in language acquisition.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bakhtin’s Theory of Polyphony - Bruner’s Discovery Learning Theory - Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development - Skinner’s Verbal Behavior - Piaget’s View of Language Acquisition - The Competition Model - Cognitive Theory: Language Acquisition View - The Discourse Theory - The Speech Act Theory - The Acculturation Model - The Accommodation Theory - The Interactionist View of Language Acquisition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audiolingual Method - Community Language Learning - Communicative Approach - Task-based Language Teaching
<p>Theories based on “nature” (Innate factors are believed to be more dominant in language acquisition.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Neuro-functional Theory of Language Acquisition - The Universal Grammar Theory - Fodor’s Modular Approach - The Monitor Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Winitz’s Comprehension Approach - The Natural Approach

The next section lists the most important ones of language acquisition theories resulting from the two opposing views mentioned above.

3.2 Theories of language acquisition

As mentioned, language acquisition theories have been influenced especially by linguistic and psychological schools of thought. Nine different views of language acquisition will be discussed here.

¹ Adapted from Rod Ellis (2004), retrieved online Nov. 23, 2004. <http://maxpages.com>.

3.2.1 Bruner's discovery learning theory

Discovery learning is “an approach to instruction through which students interact with their environment—by exploring and manipulating objects, wrestling with questions and controversies, or performing experiments” (Ormrod, 1995: 442). The basic idea is that students are more likely to remember concepts they discover on their own in the process of inquiring and exploring. To Bruner, the main purpose of learning a course is not to remember textbook knowledge, but to involve oneself in the process of setting up the knowledge system of this course. Students should be active and, initiative inquirers of knowledge. Discovery learning takes place most notably in problem solving situations where the learner draws on his/her own experience and prior knowledge to discover the truths that are to be learned. Bruner wrote “Emphasis on discovery in learning has precisely the effect on the learner of leading him to be a constructionist, to organize what he is encountering in a manner not only designed to discover regularity and relatedness, but also to avoid the kind of information drift that fails to keep account of the uses to which information might have to be put” (Bruner, 1961).

3.2.2 Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and zone of proximal development

Lev Vygotsky is most often associated with the social constructivist theory. He emphasizes the influences of cultural and social contexts in learning and supports a discovery model of learning. The main theme of his theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. According to Vygotsky (1978: 57), “Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level—first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). ... All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals”. Another important aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD): a level of development attained when children engage in social behavior. In a society, parents, teachers and peers etc. can function as the mediation and thus play a very important role in the students' cognitive development. Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. The range of skill that can be developed with adult guidance or peer

collaboration exceeds what can be attained alone.

Vygotsky places an emphasis on the role of “shared language” in the development of thought and language, which “shared” refers to social interaction and can be best elucidated through the notion of ZPD. According to him, two developmental levels determine the learning process: egocentricity and interaction. This can be illustrated by looking at what children do on their own and what they can do while working with others. They mostly choose to remain silent or speak less on their own when they are alone. However, they prefer to speak to other children when they play games with them. The difference between these two types of development forms is “Zone of Proximal Development”. In other words, this zone refers to the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in cooperation with more capable friends of the child. In language learning and problem solving, the most important thing that children do is to develop concepts by talking to adults and then solve the problems they face on their own.

Vygotsky contends that language is the key to all development and words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the growth of cognition as a whole. Within this framework, child language development can be viewed as the result of social interaction.

3.2.3 Skinner’s verbal behavior

Behavioristic view of language acquisition claims that language development is the process of habit formation, and the result of a set of habits. This view has normally been influenced by the general theory of learning described by the psychologist John B. Watson in 1923, and termed behaviorism. Behaviorism believes knowledge is the product of interaction with the environment through stimulus-response (S-R) conditioning.

Stimulus(S)-response(R) learning works as follows. An event in the environment (the unconditioned stimulus, or US) brings out an unconditioned response (UR) from an organism capable of learning. That response is then followed by another event (reinforcement) appealing to the organism. That is, the organism’s response is positively reinforced (PRE). If the sequence $US \longrightarrow UR \longrightarrow PRE$ recurs a sufficient number of times, the organism will learn how to associate its response to the stimulus with the reinforcement. This will

consequently cause the organism to give the same response when it confronts with the same stimulus. In this way, the response becomes a conditioned response (CR).

The most risky part of the behaviorist view is perhaps the idea that all learning, whether verbal (language) or non-verbal (general learning) takes place by means of the same underlying process, that is via forming habits. In 1957, the psychologist B. F. Skinner produced a behaviorist account of language acquisition in which he maintains that language development is the result of a set of habits.

When language acquisition is taken into consideration, the theory claims that both L1 and L2 acquirers receive linguistic input from speakers in their environment, and positive reinforcement for their correct repetitions and imitations. As mentioned above, when language learners' responses are reinforced positively, they acquire the language relatively easily.

These claims are strictly criticized in Chomsky's "A Review of B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior". Chomsky (1959) asserts that there is neither empirical evidence nor any known argument to support any specific claim about the relative importance of feedback from the environment. Therefore, it would be unwise to claim that the sequence US → UR → PRE and imitation can account for the process of language acquisition. What is more, the theory overlooks the speaker (internal) factors in this process.

The behaviorists see errors as first language habits interfering with the acquisition of second language habits. If there are similarities between the two languages, the language learners will acquire the target structures easily. If there are differences, acquisition will be more difficult. This approach is known as the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH). According to the hypothesis, the differences between languages can be used to reveal and predict all errors and the data obtained can be used in foreign/second language teaching for promoting a better acquisition environment.

However, the mother tongue interference cannot entirely explain difficulties that an L2 learner may face. It is true that there might be some influences resulting from L1, but research (Ellis, 1985) has shown that not all errors predicted by CAH are actually made.

Skinner's view of language acquisition is a popular example of the nurturist ideas. Behaviorism has been generally accepted by the influential Bloomfieldian structuralist school of linguistics and produced some well-known applications in the field of foreign/second language teaching and learning—for instance, the Audiolingual

Method. The theory sees the language learning as a process of accumulation with no built-in knowledge inside the learner.

3.2.4 Piaget's view of language acquisition

Piaget¹ was a biologist and a psychologist, but his ideas have been influential in the field of L1 and L2 acquisition studies. His theory of development in children has striking implications as regards language acquisition. Piaget views language acquisition as a case of general human learning. According to him, the course of intellectual development is as follows:

- The sensory-motor stage from ages 0 to 2 (understanding the environment)
- The preoperational stage from ages 2 to 7 (understanding the symbols)
- The concrete operational stage from ages 7 to 11 (mental tasks and language use)
- The formal operational stage from the age 11 onwards (dealing with abstraction)

Piaget observes, for instance, that the pre-linguistic stage (birth to one year) is a determining period in the development of sensory-motor intelligence, when children are forming a sense of their physical identity in relation to the environment. Piaget, unlike Vygotsky, believes that egocentric speech on its own serves no function in language development.

3.2.5 The cognitive language acquisition view

1) Ausubel's meaningful learning theory

David Ausubel is a psychologist who advanced a theory which contrasted meaningful learning from rote learning. In his view, to learn meaningfully, students must relate new knowledge (concepts and propositions) to what they already know. He proposed the notion of an "advance organizer" as a way to help students link their ideas with new materials or concepts. An advance organizer helps to organize new material by outlining, arranging and sequencing the main idea of the new material based on what the learner already knows. Advance organizers use familiar terms and concepts to link what the students already know to the new information that will be presented in the lesson, which aids in the process of transforming

¹ Amazon.com: *Fifty Modern Thinkers on Education: From Piaget to the Present Day* (Fifty Key Thinkers) (Routledge Key Guides) by Joy Palmer & David E. Cooper.

knowledge and creatively applying it in new situations. This process helps to embed the new information into long term memory. Advance organizers can be verbal phrases (e.g. the paragraph you are about to read is about Albert Einstein), a definition, a graphic, etc. In any case, the advance organizer is designed to provide, what cognitive psychologists call, the “mental scaffolding”, to learn new information. The following FIGURE (FIGURE 1.2) summarizes Ausubel’s Model of Learning.

When proposing meaningful learning, Ausubel criticized the popular Audio-lingual method for its theory based on reinforcement and conditioning; he stated that adults learning a second language could profit from certain grammatical explanations. Whether adults do profit from such explanations depends on (1) the suitability and efficiency of the explanation, (2) the teacher, (3) the context, and (4) other pedagogical variables.

FIGURE 1.2 Ausubel’s Model of Learning

Phase One: Advance Organizer	Phase Two: Presentation of Learning Task or Material	Phase Three: Strengthening Cognitive Organization
Activities: Clarify aim of the lesson Present the organizer Relate organizer to students’ knowledge	Activities: Make the organization of the new material explicit. Make logical order of learning material explicit. Present material and engage students in meaningful learning activities.	Activities: Relate new information to advance organizer. Promote active reception learning.

2) Cognitive theory

Cognitive theory is based on the work of a number of psychologists. Piaget’s work, which dwells on the idea that students can learn things when they are developmentally ready to do so since learning follows development, can be regarded as a starting point of the cognitivist ideas. Cognitive psychologists emphasize the importance of meaning, knowing and understanding. According to them, “meaning” plays an important role in human learning. Learning is a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts; and it is thought to involve internal representations that guide performance. In the case of language acquisition, these representations are based on language system and involve procedures for selecting appropriate vocabulary, grammatical rules, and pragmatic conventions governing language use.

Cognitive psychologists see second language acquisition as the constructing process of knowledge systems that can eventually be called automatically for speaking and understanding. Language learning, in this sense, has some Gestalt characteristics in that language learning is a holistic process and not analyzable as stimulus-response associations. Language learners pay attention to any aspect of the language that they are attempting to understand and produce. Then, gradually, they become able to use certain parts of their knowledge through experience and practice.

In general, the cognitivists claim that language acquisition can be automatically attained.

3.2.6 The discourse theory

The Discourse Theory results from a theory of language use. The theory emphasizes that language development be viewed within the framework of how learners discover the meaning capacity of language by taking part in communication. Brown's description of communicative competence (1987), for instance, reflects the principles of the Discourse Theory. Communicative competence includes knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, knowledge of rules of speaking, knowledge of how to use and respond to different types of speech acts and social conventions, and knowledge of how to use language appropriately.

According to discourse theorists, language acquisition will successfully take place when language learners "know" how and when to use the language in various settings and when they have successfully "cognized" various forms of competence such as grammatical competence (e.g. lexis, morphology, syntax and phonology) and pragmatic competence (e.g. speech acts). A language learner needs to "know" conversational strategies to acquire the language.

The early stage of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the best-known example of such a theory. In the communicative classes, students are expected to learn by doing and expected to acquire the language through the presentation-practice-and-production principle.

The Discourse Theory has a number of drawbacks. It overemphasizes the role of external factors in the process of language acquisition and gives little importance to internal learner strategies (i.e. innate processes). The Discourse Theory is similar to the behaviorist view of language acquisition in that environmental factors

and input (or positive stimulus) are at the very center in attempting to explicate the acquisition process. The Discourse Theory is of course more sophisticated than the Skinner's views in accounting for the complex structure of communication. Yet it overstates the role of "knowledge of competence and functions" in acquiring a language, and hence fails to notice universal principles that guide language acquisition.

3.2.7 The speech act theory

That uses of language not only can, but even normally do have the character of actions was a fact largely neglected by those engaged in the study of language before the 20th century. Where the action-character of linguistic phenomena was acknowledged, it was normally regarded as a peripheral matter, relating to derivative or non-standard aspects of language which could afford to be ignored. With the rise of pragmatics, the 1960s saw the development of the Speech Act Theory.

This theory was originated by Austin (1962) and developed further by Searle (1969). It holds that saying something is a way of doing something. In speech act theory, two kinds of meaning are seen in utterances. The first is the propositional meaning and the second is the illocutionary meaning. The former refers to the basic literal meaning of the utterance conveyed by the particular words or structures. The latter refers to the "effect" the spoken or written text has on the listener or reader. For instance: Getting a cup of tea is an act. Asking someone else to get you one is also an act.

When we speak, our words do not have meaning in and of themselves. They are very much affected by the situation, the speaker and the listener. Thus words alone do not have a simple fixed meaning. This theory distinguishes three types of acts:

- *Locutionary act*: saying something with a certain meaning in traditional sense.
- *Illocutionary act*: having a certain "force", e.g. informing, ordering, warning, undertaking.
- *Perlocutionary act*: bringing about or achieving something, e.g. convincing, persuading, deterring.

Searle (1969) identifies five illocutionary/perlocutionary points:

1. *Assertives*: statements that may be judged true or false because they aim to describe a state of affairs in the world.
2. *Directives*: statements that attempt to make the other person's actions fit the propositional content.
3. *Commissives*: statements which commit the speaker to a

course of action as described by the propositional content.

4. *Expressives*: statements that express the “sincerity condition of the speech act”.
5. *Declaratives*: statements that attempt to change the world by “representing it as having been changed”.

It is, of course, normal for someone to use these utterances in his native language. The problem is how propositions and implicatures are acquired in first and second language. Does a formal instruction environment help the learners acquire them?

3.2.8 The universal grammar theory

Among theories of language acquisition, Universal Grammar (UG) has also gained wide acceptance and popularity. However, UG is more of an L1 acquisition theory rather than L2. It attempts to clarify the relatively quick acquisition of L1s on the basis of “minimum exposure” to external input. The “logical problem” of language acquisition, according to UG proponents, is that language learning would be impossible without “universal language-specific knowledge”. The main reason behind this argument is the input data:

Language input is the evidence out of which the learner constructs knowledge of language—what goes into the brain. Such evidence can be either positive or negative. ... The positive evidence of the position of words in a few sentences the learner hears is sufficient to show (him) the rules of (a language). (Cook, 1991)

This view supports the idea that the external input per se may not account for language acquisition. Similarly, the Chomskyan view holds that the input is poor and deficient in two ways. First, the input is claimed to be “degenerate” because it is damaged by performance features such as slips, hesitations or false starts. Accordingly, it is suggested that the input is not an adequate base for language learning. Second, the input is devoid of grammar corrections. This means that the input does not normally contain “negative evidence,” the knowledge from which the learner could exercise what is “not” possible in a given language.

As for L2 acquisition, however, the above question is not usually asked largely because of the frequent failure of L2 learners, who happen to be generally cognitively mature adults, in attaining native-like proficiency. But why can't adults who have already acquired an L1, acquire an L2 thoroughly? Don't they have any help from UG? Or if they do, how much of UG is accessible in SLA? These and similar questions have divided researchers into four basic camps with respect

to their approach to the problem (Cook, 1991):

Direct access—L2 acquisition is just like L1 acquisition. Language acquisition device (LAD) is involved.

Indirect access—L2 acquisition utilizes LAD via L1 mechanism.

Partial access—Only that part of UG which has been used in L1 acquisition is used in L2 acquisition.

No access—L2 learners use their general learning capacity rather than LAD.

Proponents of UG believe that both children and adults utilize similar universal principles when acquiring a language; and LAD is still involved in the acquisition process. Advocates of UG approach working on second-language learning argue that there is no reason to assume that language faculty atrophies with age. Most second-language researchers who adopt the UG perspective assume that the principles and parameters of UG are still accessible to the adult learners (McLaughlin, 1987: 96).

Fodor's view has some parallels with the UG Theory. Jerry Fodor (1975) studied the relationship between language and mind and his view that language is a modular process has important implications for a theory of language acquisition. The term modular is used to indicate that the brain is seen to be organized with many modules of cells for a particular ability (for instance, the visual module). These modules operate in isolation from other modules that they are not directly connected with. Modules are domain specific. Basically, Fodor's arguments are similar to that of Chomsky or the proponents of UG Theory in that the external input per se may not account for language acquisition and that language acquisition is genetically predetermined.

As for the pitfalls with Universal Grammar, it can be said that UG's particular aim is to account for how language works. Yet UG proponents had to deal with acquisition to account for the language itself. "Acquisition part" is thus of secondary importance. A second drawback is that Chomsky studied only the core grammar of the English language (syntax) and investigated a number of linguistic universals, neglecting the peripheral grammar, that is, language specific rules (i.e. rules of specific languages which cannot be generalized). Thirdly, the primary function of language is communication, but it is discarded. The final and the most significant problem is a methodological one. Due to the fact that Chomsky is concerned only with describing and explaining "competence", there can be little likelihood of SLA researchers carrying out empirical research.

3.2.9 The monitor model

Krashen's Monitor Model is another example of the nativist theories. The model forms the basis of the Natural Approach, which is a comprehension-based approach to foreign and second language teaching. The model includes five hypotheses¹.

1) The acquisition-learning hypothesis

Krashen (1985), in his theory of second language acquisition (SLA) suggests that adults have two different ways of developing competence in second languages: acquisition and learning. "There are two independent ways of developing ability in second languages. 'Acquisition' is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language, ... and 'learning'..., is a conscious process that results in 'knowing about' the rules of language" (Krashen, 1985: 1).

Krashen believes that the result of learning, learned competence (LC) functions as a monitor or editor. That is, while "acquired competence" is responsible for our fluent production of sentences, LC makes correction on these sentences either before or after their production. This kind of conscious grammar correction, "monitoring", occurs most typically in a grammar exam where the learner has enough time to focus on form and to make use of his conscious knowledge of grammar rules (LC) as an aid to acquired competence. The way to develop learned competence is fairly easy: analyzing the grammar rules consciously and practicing them through exercises. But what Acquisition/Learning Distinction Hypothesis predicts is that learning the grammar rules of a foreign/second language does not result in subconscious acquisition.

2) The natural order hypothesis

According to this hypothesis, the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predicted progression. Certain grammatical structures or morphemes are acquired before others in first language acquisition and there is a similar natural order in SLA. The implication of natural order is not that second or foreign language teaching materials must be arranged in accordance with this sequence but that acquisition is subconscious and free from conscious intervention.

¹ The explanations of the hypotheses below are based on an article entitled "A Promising Approach to Second Language Acquisition" (Kiyamazarslan, 2000: 72-82).

3) The input hypothesis

This hypothesis relates to acquisition, not to learning. Krashen claims that people acquire language best by understanding input that is a little beyond their present level of competence. Consequently, Krashen believes that “comprehensible input” (that is, $i+1$) should be provided. The “input” should be relevant and “not grammatically sequenced”. The foreign/second language teacher should always send meaningful messages, which are roughly tuned, and “must” create opportunities for students to access “ $i+1$ ” structures to understand and express meaning. For instance, the teacher can lay more emphasis on listening and reading comprehension activities.

4) The monitor hypothesis

As mentioned before, adult second language learners have two means for internalizing the target language. The first is “acquisition” which is a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language. The second means is a conscious learning process in which learners attend to form, figure out rules and are generally aware of their own process. The “monitor” is an aspect of this second process. It edits and makes alterations or corrections as they are consciously perceived. Krashen believes that “fluency” in second language performance is due to “what we have acquired”, not “what we have learned”: Adults should do as much acquiring as possible for the purpose of achieving communicative fluency. Therefore, the monitor should have only a minor role in the process of gaining communicative competence. Similarly, Krashen suggests three conditions for its use: (1) there must be enough time; (2) the focus must be on form and not on meaning; (3) the learner must know the rule. Students may monitor during written tasks (e.g. homework assignments) and preplanned speech, or to some extent during speech. Learned knowledge enables students to read and listen more so that they acquire more.

5) The affective filter hypothesis

The learner’s emotional state, according to Krashen, is just like an adjustable filter which freely passes or hinders input necessary to acquisition. In other words, input must be achieved in low-anxiety contexts since acquirers with a low affective filter receive more input and interact with confidence. The filter is “affective” because there are some factors which regulate its strength. These factors are self-confidence, motivation and anxiety state. The pedagogical goal

in a foreign/second language class should thus not only include comprehensible input but also create an atmosphere that fosters a low affective filter.

Krashen's theories have met criticisms from some linguists and methodologists. McLaughlin (1987: 56) argues that his models fail at every juncture by claiming that none of the hypotheses is clear in their predictions. For example, he notes that the acquisition-learning distinction is not properly defined and that the distinction between these two processes cannot be tested empirically. Although it is true that some parts of the theory need more clarification, it would be harsh to suggest that the Model is pseudo-scientific.

3.3 Summary

One observation of the acquisition theories is that none of the above-mentioned theories is complete and most of them need further and ongoing completion. Each theory, however, is important for their implications and provides invaluable information as to how a language is acquired and how language teaching should take place. Furthermore, theories guiding language learning and teaching are always evolving. Look at the views on intelligences:

Traditionally, intelligence is defined operationally as the ability to answer test items of intelligence, including exclusively linguistic competence and mathematical-logical reasoning. The inference from the test scores to some underlying ability is supported by statistical techniques that compare responses of subjects; the notion on the general faculty of intelligence is: it does not change much with age or with training or experience in that it is an inborn attribute or faculty of the individual.

Multiple intelligences theory pluralizes the traditional concept. According to Gardner (1993: 15), instead of a single dimension called intellect, on which individuals can be rank-ordered, there are vast differences among individuals in their intellectual strengths and weaknesses as well as cognitive styles; human cognitive competence is better described in terms of a set of abilities, talents, or mental skills, which he names "intelligences". For more details we will discuss in Chapter 8.

Of course, the most important implication of language acquisition theories is the fact that applied linguists, methodologists and language teachers should view the acquisition of a language as both

a matter of nurture and an instance of nature. In addition, only when we distinguish between a general theory of learning and language learning can we ameliorate the conditions of L2 education.

Language teachers must apply and adapt the policies of others in the classroom creatively. If they are to adapt language models proposed by others (applied linguists) for classroom practice, it becomes more important “how” they will adopt them. How, for instance, should they utilize the findings of SLA studies conducted on syntax or natural order and use them for particular classroom settings? How should grammar points be handled? Or should there be a balance between grammar lessons and acquisition lessons just as proposed by the proponents of the Monitor Model? How should vocabulary teaching be like and how should a syllabus be designed? How will the results of language planning proposed by the government be implemented?

In the next section, some English language teaching models are presented.

4. A brief survey of English teaching models

With the guidance of linguistic and language teaching/learning theories, various English teaching models have come into play on the stage of ELT. The following is a brief survey; more details will be dealt with in Chapter 2.

4.1 Grammar-translation method

This approach was historically used in teaching Greek and Latin and generalized to teaching modern languages. Classes are taught in the students’ mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. Elaborate explanations of grammar are always provided. Grammar instruction provides the rules for putting words together; instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words. Reading of difficult texts is started early in the course of study. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue, and vice versa. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

4.2 The reading approach

This approach is selected for practical and academic reasons and for specific uses of the language in graduate or scientific studies. The approach is for people who do not travel abroad, for whom reading is the one usable skill in a foreign language. The priority in studying the target language is first, reading ability and second, current and/or historical knowledge of the country where the target language is spoken. Only the grammar necessary for reading comprehension and fluency is taught. Minimal attention is paid to pronunciation or gaining conversational skills in the target language. From the beginning, a great amount of reading is done in L2, both in and out of class. The vocabulary of the early reading passages and texts is strictly controlled for difficulty. Vocabulary is expanded as quickly as possible, since the acquisition of vocabulary is considered more important than grammatical skill. Translation reappears in this approach as a respectable classroom procedure related to comprehension of the written text.

4.3 The direct approach

This approach was developed initially as a reaction to the grammar-translation approach in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language in instruction. Lessons begin with a dialogue using a modern conversational style in the target language. Material is first presented orally with actions or pictures. The mother tongue is NEVER, NEVER used. There is no translation. The preferred type of exercise is a series of questions in the target language based on the dialogue or an anecdotal narrative. Questions are answered in the target language. Grammar is taught inductively—rules are generalized from the practice and experience with the target language. Verbs are used first and systematically conjugated only much later after some oral mastery of the target language. Advanced students read literature for comprehension and pleasure. Literary texts are not analyzed grammatically. The culture associated with the target language is also taught inductively. Culture is considered an important aspect of learning the language.

4.4 The audio-lingual method

This method is based on the principles of behavior psychology. Based on the principle that language learning is habit formation, the method fosters dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases and over-learning. Structures are sequenced and taught one at a time. Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills. Little or no grammatical explanations are provided; grammar is taught inductively. Skills are sequenced: Listening, speaking, reading and writing are developed in order. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context. Teaching points are determined by contrastive analysis between L1 and L2. There is abundant use of language laboratories, tapes and visual aids. Great importance is given to precise native-like pronunciation. Use of the mother tongue by the teacher is permitted, but discouraged among and by the students. Successful responses are reinforced; great care is taken to prevent learner errors.

4.5 Community language learning

This methodology takes its principles from the “Counseling Learning Approach” developed by Charles Curran. It was created especially for adult learners who might fear to appear foolish; so the teacher becomes a language counselor, understanding and leading them to overcome their fears. It follows Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis and the Cognitive Theory where the human mind is active.

4.6 The silent way

The silent way originated in the early 1970s. The three basic tenets of the approach are that learning is facilitated if the learner discovers rather than remembers or repeats; that learning is aided by physical objects and that problem-solving is central to learning. The use of the word “silent” is also significant, as the Silent Way is based on the premise that the teacher should be as silent as possible in the classroom in order to encourage the learner to produce as much language as possible.

4.7 Functional-notional approach

Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics exerted much impact on language teaching and learning. Notions and functions are thus attached with more and more importance. Notions are meaning elements that may be expressed through nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives or adverbs, while functions pertain to the role language plays in its use like greeting, apologizing. The use of particular notions depends on three major factors: the functions, the elements in the situation, and the topic being discussed.

Finocchiaro (1983: 65-66) has placed the functional categories under five headings: personal (e.g. clarifying one's ideas, expressing one's thoughts), interpersonal (e.g. apologizing, extending and accepting invitations), directive (e.g. warning someone), referential (e.g. defining something, identifying items or people), and imaginative (e.g. creating rhymes, poetry, stories or plays).

4.8 Total physical response

James (1979) defines the Total Physical Response (TPR) method as one that combines information and skills through the use of the kinesthetic sensory system. This combination of skills allows the student to assimilate information and skills at a rapid rate. As a result, this success leads to a high degree of motivation. The basic tenets are:

- Understanding the spoken language before developing the skills of speaking.
- Imperatives are the main structures to transfer or communicate information.
- The student is not forced to speak, but is allowed an individual readiness period and allowed to spontaneously begin to speak when the student feels comfortable and confident in understanding and producing the utterances.

4.9 Communicative language teaching

The approach that can be broadly labeled as communicative language teaching emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as the emphasis switched from the mechanical practice of language patterns associated with the Audio-lingual method to activities that engaged the learner in more meaningful and authentic language use. Twenty years on, its

influence has been so big that virtually few English teaching practices in classrooms are not claimed to be “communicative”.

Above briefly mentioned are nine teaching methods/approaches, which are just part of the English teaching models, but they are of importance in the development of English language teaching. In the next chapter, we will have a more extended look at and more detailed illustration on more English teaching methods.

Questions for further discussion:

1. What are the major focuses of English subject educology?
2. How has modern technology contributed to the studies of language and language teaching theories?
3. Which factor plays a more important role in language acquisition/learning, nature or nurture? Can you list some language teaching/learning methods based on nature and nurture theories?
4. What is ZPD? What effects does it have on English learning and teaching?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of UG in explaining language acquisition?
6. Can you list some English teaching methods/approaches? Which one(s) do you prefer and why?

References

- Austin, J. L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, H. D. 1987. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Bruner, J. S. 1961. The Act of Discovery. *Harvard Educational Review*. 31 (Spring): 21-32
- Chomsky, N. 1959. A Review of B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior. *Language*. Vol. 35.
- Cook, V. 1991. *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. Arnold.
- Ellis, R. 1985. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
ERIC: <http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal>, retrieved March 25, 2006.
- Finocchiaro, M. & Brumfit, C. 1983. *The Functional-Notional Approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Fodor, J. A. 1975. *The Language of Thought*. Thomas Cromwell.
- Gardner, H. 1993. *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. Basic Books.
- James, J. A. 1979. *Learning Another Language Through Actions*. Accuprint.
- Krashen, S. 1985. *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. Longman.
- Ormrod, J. 1995. *Educational Psychology: Principles and Applications*. Prentice-Hall.
- McLaughlin, B. 1987. *Theories of Second-Language Learning*. Edward Arnold.
- Parrot, M. 1993. *Tasks for Language Teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. 1969. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stern, H. H. 1983. *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. 1978. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.
- 陶本一. 2001. 《学科教育学》. 人民教育出版社.