

國立清華大學 101 學年度碩士班考試入學試題

系所班組別：外國語文學系(所)乙組 (語言認知與教學組)

考試科目 (代碼)：英文閱讀寫作(3503) 共五頁，第一頁 *請在【答案卷、卡】作答

Directions: The following passage is taken from a short article published in the journal of *Applied Linguistics*. Please (1) read the passage, (2) briefly summarize it, and (3) write an original essay in response to what you read. In the essay, you can, for example, criticize the ideas in part or in general, further develop aspects of what the author says, apply the ideas to English teaching in Taiwan or to your own experience as English learner and/or teacher, or possibly combine these approaches. These are only suggestions; choose your own topic.

Ideology in Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching

By Alan Waters

What can be termed ‘applied linguistics for language teaching’ (ALLT) has been characterised as ‘a *mediating* process which explores ways in which the concerns of linguistics as a discipline can be *relevantly* related to those of the language subject’ (Widdowson 2003: 13—my emphasis). When ALLT operates as such, it can be highly beneficial. However, as Cook and Seidlhofer (1995: 8) indicate, ‘[t]his is the ideal’, and it is argued in what follows that, unfortunately, much of present-day ALLT lacks the relevance necessary for carrying out its mediating role in an effective manner. This is seen to occur because a good deal of its discourse promotes or proscribes language teaching ideas on the basis of ideological belief rather than pedagogical value.

The debate about ‘authenticity’ vs. ‘artificiality’ in language teaching is a representative example of this tendency. From the 1970s onwards, the view gained ground in ALLT that learners should experience not only artificially constructed texts, but also naturally-occurring ones. It was argued that this would increase their motivation, because, e.g. they would see the immediate relevance of what they were studying, be more confident in coping with real-life language use by developing strategies for dealing with its complexity, learn language as it is actually spoken and written, and so on (see, e.g. Wilkins 1976: 79). All of these reasons can be seen as having had pedagogical plausibility, and, importantly, were regarded by some (see, e.g. Widdowson 1979: 165) as grounds for *supplementing* rather than abandoning ‘artificial’ texts, in order to extend the range of learning opportunities available to learners.

However, from the 1980s onwards, the status of ‘authenticity’ was elevated to that of a ‘moral imperative’ (Clarke 1989: 73). A typical expression of this attitude is the view that the findings of corpus-based descriptions of spoken English, such as

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those provided by the CANCODE project, should, of necessity, be incorporated into EFL teaching materials. Thus, as Carter and McCarthy (1996) put it:

We know from our knowledge of our first language that in most textbook discourse we are getting something which is concocted for us, and may therefore rightly resent being disempowered by teachers or materials writers who, on apparently laudable ideological grounds, appear to know better. Information or knowledge about language should never be held back; the task is to make it available, without artificial restrictions, in ways which answer most learners' needs. (p. 369)

From this perspective, the use or otherwise of 'real' language in the classroom is seen in politicised terms, as a struggle between ideologically driven language-teaching practitioners and 'disempowered' learners. But in actual fact, of course, there might be very good pedagogical grounds why language knowledge should be 'held back', e.g. when it is too confusing or daunting for the learner to cope with, and such a policy may also be viewed as *empowering* the learner, by increasing the potential for learning. It is also not unreasonable, from a pedagogic perspective, for a teacher to be regarded by learners as indeed to 'know better' in such matters. Ironically enough, it is therefore actually Carter and McCarthy's own point of view which is ideological.

From a pedagogical angle, choice of teaching methodology is at root not so much (or should not be) a matter of political rights or wrongs, but, rather, an attempt to determine, at any given point in the learning process, what is likely to best enhance the learners' opportunities for learning (cf. Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 158–160). This may involve, *inter alia*, the use of 'authentic' language, but, equally, it may well not. Thus, as Richards (2006) puts it:

what is important in writing materials for EFL learners is not necessarily native speaker usage, but rather what will provide the means of successful communication both within and outside the classroom. This means providing learners with a repertoire of well selected vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar, as well as a stock of communication strategies. . . . how native-speakers ask for and give directions is largely irrelevant. . . . my goal is to give them the resources to have successful experiences using English for simple classroom activities. Whether or not they employ native speaker-like language to do so is irrelevant. (p. 22)

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In other words, rather than because of ideological bias on the part of ‘materials writers’, lack of ‘real English’ in EFL textbooks can be seen to relate to the pedagogic advantages which can accrue, in terms of many aspects of classroom language learning, from the use of non-authentic material (cf. Waters 2009 (in press); Widdowson 2003: Ch. 9).

This is not to deny, of course, that there are also occasions when the use of ‘authentic’ language can have an important pedagogic function. Nor is it to dispute the value of the role which ALLT played in earlier days in helping to make the option of exploiting not only artificial but also authentic texts an established pedagogical principle. The issue, rather, is the way in which, in much of the current ALLT discourse, inappropriate or impracticable teaching ideas, such as the wholesale use of ‘real language’, are being advocated for ideological reasons, and alternative perspectives, rooted in an awareness of everyday pedagogical practice, are viewed with suspicion.

I have tried to show elsewhere (see Waters 2007a, b, 2008) that the primary driving force behind this trend has been the adoption, either directly or indirectly, in nearly all the main critiques by ALLT of language teaching pedagogy in recent years, of a ‘critical theory’ (CT) perspective (see, e.g. Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1994; Canagarajah 1999; Holliday 2005; Edge 2006). From this point of view, asymmetry in language teaching structures is seen as resulting from the oppressive exercise of power. As a corollary, it is regarded as necessary to put in place alternative policies and procedures which will result in a more balanced distribution of power. Opposition to these innovations by language-teaching practitioners is viewed as political naivety, a form of ‘false consciousness’ (Holliday 2007).

Thus, in terms of the issue just examined, the overweening concern in much of ALLT for maximizing ‘authenticity’ in language teaching can be seen as a CT-motivated attempt to restrict what is regarded as the unhealthy exercise of power by the textbook writer, by minimizing the possibility of prejudgement about how the learner might wish to view and use language data. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same underlying attitude can be seen to manifest itself in relation to the overselling in modern-day ALLT of many other academic ideas, for example, the anti-textbook stance (Kumaravadivelu 2006), the learner-centred approach and task-based learning (Nunan 1999), the proscription of cultural generalizations (Kubota 1999), the use of non-metropolitan language models as a basis for syllabus design (Matsuda 2006), and

properly acknowledging the centrality to language teaching pedagogy of language *learning* and the language *learner* role—since they are seen as liable to the exercise of hegemony via teaching and teachers—attempts instead to construct teaching and the teacher role as largely redundant, by, for example, giving pride of place to language *use* and the language *user* role, as in the excessive advocacy of authenticity (cf. Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 14; Ellis 2003: 251–4). In other words, in overall terms, the CT perspective can be viewed as aimed at suborning much or even all of what is at the heart of the pedagogical enterprise, since its everyday *modus operandi* are seen to conflict with the CT ‘Weltanschauung’.

As a result, on the one hand, aspects of pedagogy such as fostering learner autonomy, which, though of importance, are, as Spratt *et al.* (2002) have shown, secondary to developing the motivation that stems from success in more basic aspects of learning, tend to be over-represented in terms of ALLT research and theorising, because they conform to the priority, from the CT perspective, of ‘liberating’ the learner from the teacher; and on the other, areas of pedagogy which are arguably more primary, such as the need to provide the level of classroom ‘structure’ that will imbue learners with the confidence to ‘stick their necks out’ (Stevick 1982: 7), are given a good deal less attention, because they conflict with the CT view of how interpersonal relations should be ordered.

Why, however, despite these deficiencies, has the CT perspective nevertheless come to exercise such a strong influence on the discourse of ALLT? The answer would seem to be because, as Pinker (1998) argues with respect to a similar phenomenon within the social sciences in general, CT ‘not only has become an intellectual orthodoxy but has acquired a moral authority’ (p. 45).

To take the second of these aspects first. As already noted, CT is concerned with championing what it sees as issues of social injustice. To challenge its views is therefore to be seen to oppose the moral values it espouses (cf. Widdowson 1998). Thus, as has been shown, restricting the use of authentic language is to be seen to ‘disempower’ learners; similarly, to criticise the concept of ‘learner-centredness’ is to

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run the risk of being stigmatised as authoritarian; to formulate cultural generalisations courts the danger of being accused of racism; to advocate the use of ‘standard English’ as a pedagogic model opens the door to the charge of native-speakerism; and so on. As a result, because of the discomfort associated with such *ad hominem* labelling, there has been a considerable lack of willingness to challenge the CT-based ‘line’, regardless of the consequences for pedagogy.

Such a situation also contributes to the former aspect, the attainment of ‘intellectual orthodoxy’. Because of its perceived moral stature, CT, as it itself is wont to argue with respect to the habits of thought and practices it criticises (see, e.g. Fairclough 2001: 27), can be seen to have attained ideological status, i.e. to be regarded by many in academe as ‘common sense’, so customary and deeply ingrained that it is no longer noticed, but simply unconsciously taken for granted. As a result, it has become, ironically enough, a (reverse) form of ‘false consciousness’, i.e. an oppressive but largely unquestioned orthodoxy, a form of intellectual hegemony in its own right.

In short, for the reasons I have tried to explain, the overall tenor of a good deal of the ALLT discourse in recent years can be seen as boiling down to not so much an attempt to mediate between linguistics and language teaching in an even-handed way, but, rather, the imposition of an ideologically biased view of how language teaching ought to be constituted, regardless of pedagogical relevance.

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(References deleted for space considerations)

Article taken from

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