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The Application of Arbitrariness in Semiotics to PBL Teaching

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Abstract - The greatest fruit left by Saussure and Peirce is the arbitrariness of language signs through the comparison between their theories. Through this comparison, we found how the arbitrariness can settle out the problems in language teaching and instruct the linguistic research. Especially we can get the method how to apply the arbitrariness in PBL teaching.

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I. Introduction

Problem-Based Learning has been one of the popular pedagogical strategies those years. It can be defined as that in a problem-based learning (PBL) model, students engage complex, challenging problems and collaboratively work toward their resolution. PBL can be used effectively in all disciplines, we will begin with a problem and participants will work in teams to experience first and what this instructional approach entails.

Arbitrariness can explain some language understanding difficulties for learners e.g. the relationship among spelling, sounds and meaning. In this paper we will move to the main focus of this program writing effective problem.

F.D. Saussure and C. S. Peirce are two important founders of the theories of signs. They founded contemporary semiotic science. Saussure's research on linguistic theories indicates that language is the collection of signs. In other words, his research fruit is that language is of signs with arbitrariness. Peirce studied linguistics in terms of semiotics. Their theories have rather more differences than similarities. To sum up, they get the same conclusion from different studying approach. Arbitrariness can explain especially the relationships among sounds, spellings and meanings in language study, which can help designing the lead-in questions for the teacher.

II. The Backgrounds for the Two Different Views on Signs in Semiotics

Saussure believed that language is a system of signs. Saussure proposed the semiotic inquiries according to his definition during the first half of the twentieth century. defined the sign as physical entity or the image and concept, e.g. sounds, letters, gestures, idea etc.

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In Course in General Linguistics Saussure Physical entity is called as the signifier, image or concept and the signified by Saussure. So it seems for him that sign is everything. The relation between the two was called signification by Saussure. Saussure considered the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. They are the signs that human beings and societies have established at will even including onomatopoeic words. So it can help the students to analyze the errors in language application. E.g. many foreign language learners forget the arbitrariness between sounds and spellings, forgetting the IPA different from the spelling of a word.

Peirce created the typology of signs. He maintains that much more attention to apply to typology of signs should be paid. He defined the signs as iconic referent or objects based on the Saussurian observation.

Why do they have the different definitions on signs? It is because of their different life experiences that led to their different thinking. Saussure was born in Geneva in 1857. He attended science classes for a year at the University of Geneva. In 1876, he turned to language studies at the University of Leipzig. As a student he published his important work on the vowel system of Proto-Indo-European. Saussure taught at the university in Paris from 1881 to 1891. He became a professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Grammar at the University of Geneva. Comparative grammar, so to speak, brought him new methodology to study Semiotics. His value of signs and syntagmatic or paradigmatic methods on signs developed Semiotics. After his death, his students sorted out his theories into the seminal work Course in General Linguistics. The book reveals Saussure's unprecedented approach to language that became the basis for establishing both semiotics and linguistics as autonomous scientific disciplines. So he is named as a founding father of the discipline. His study on language leads to the production of Semiotics. Sounds, spellings, meanings, structures and rules are signs.

Charles Sanders Peirce was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1839. He was educated at Harvard University, and lectured on logic and philosophy at John Hopkins and Harvard University. He conducted experiments and determined the density and shape of the earth. So he expanded the system of logic created by George Bolo, a British mathematician. Peirce is best

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known for his philosophical system---his later pragmatism. So his research on signs was done from the perspectives of philosophy and pragmatism. His study on language is from the beginning of semiotics. Part of signs is arbitrary.

III. The Differences Between the Two Theories in Semiotics

Their different definitions on signs decide their different theoretical orientations on signs. Saussure's semiotic theory is simpler, clearer and more clarified. He believed that language is a system of signs which are absolute. The sign is the union of a form called the signifier and the idea called signified namely object. Peirce believed that the signs' arbitrariness is relative. The sign is the central fact of language, Saussure says that the nature of the sign or the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. Saussure termed the signifier as something physical----sounds, letters, gestures, etc and signified the image or concept to which the signifier refers. He called the relationship between the two terms signification.

It is regretted that Saussure gave up some theoretical research on signs. Peirce's classification of signs is the greatest contribution for semiotics. He believed that arbitrariness of signs should be analyzed from the different degrees. Peirce called the signifier a representation itself. Peirce termed the referent the object, suggesting that it entailed a tiredness form of knowing. He termed the meaning that one gets from a sign the interpret ant, suggesting that entailed a tiredness form of knowing, whereby the sign-user evaluates or responds to what the sign means socially, contextually, personally act. Type of represent amen Relation of the Signs to its referent Type of interpret ant the sign evokes.

Firstness	qualisign	iconic	rheme
Secondness	sinsign	indexical	dicisign
Thirdness	legisign	symbolic	argument

Comparison with Saussure, Peirce's classification of signs is more complicated. His way is so fundamental to .Semiotic method.

Saussure says the sound image is the signifier and the concept the signified. A sign is the combination of signifier and a signified. The sign has two characteristics of the arbitrariness and the linear. As a structuralism, Saussure focuses on a synchronic analysis of language as a system or structure. So his theories on signs are one-sided. A structuralism looks at the units of a system and the rules of logic that are applied to the system without regard to any specific content. The combination of signs is governed by the rule.

Saussure sought to explain how all elements of a language are taken as components of a larger system of language in use. This led to a formal discipline which he called sociology. But he didn't answer the question if the basic unit of phoneme is regarded as the signs in semiotics. Peirce's interest in logical reasoning led him to investigate different categories of signs and the manner by which we extract meaning from them.

IV. Arbitraryness Applied in English Teaching

There are Teaching English methods through videos, student- centred, and encouraging student. They have different advantages. For example: Teaching English through videos may make students boost their language skills, listening and speaking. Using videos in the classroom can facilitate the process of learning a foreign language. Student central may make students give the rein to their imagination. Students bring to any activity a spirit of wonder, great curiously and a to explore, experiment, and manipulate in a playful and original fashion. Encourage students may make students find self-confident to study English, it is extremely important that as a teacher in a class, you can help to rekindle that spark, and so on. The Modern English Teaching Methods are worthy of emulation, because they are fit for learning English in Modern world. PBL is related to student-cantered teaching. Arbitrariness is the teaching philosophy to interpret the logic problem in English classes. For English learners the usual problems are language logic .They often ask why? Overlooking the arbitrariness recognition, they often lack self-consciousness for their language errors.

Designing the problems is the final destination in application of PBL. The problem should arouse the students' interest and interact with the students. Every procedure including teaching objects, teaching contents, teaching methods, teaching targets, teaching environments and teaching evaluations should design the relative questions with innovative and forward-looking. The settlement of the problems can enhance the students' skills and abilities, improving the teaching effects and leading the students to have a correct recognition.

V. Conclusion

To sum up, Saussure and Peirce worked to better understand the triadic relationship between physical signs, the objects to which they refer and the human interpreter. Saussure, a Swiss-French linguist, represents the European tradition and Charles Sanders Peirce represents the American pragmatic philosophy in modern Semiotic theory. Arbitrariness of language signs is their common theoretical fruit in semiotics. This idea mainly explains the relation among sounds, forms and meanings, which penetrates into the application of PBL in English teaching.

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1. Marcel Danesi. Sign, Thought, Culture. CSP, 1998.
2. Zhang Shaojie. The Study of Language Arbitrariness. Shanghai : Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. 2004.

Notes :

i. Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the founders of structural linguistics, described as "father of modern linguistics" in the history of linguistics, born in Switzerland in 1857, he has many contributions in the fields of linguistics, general social sciences, semiotics and structuralism, the language is a system of arbitrary signs.

ii. CS.Peirce is a famous American palmist, philosopher, scientist and logiest.

iii. *Course in General Linguistics* written by de Saussure, Ferdinand in 1974, generally is regarded as textbook.

iv. Triadic relationship refers to the triangle relation in semiotics such as sign, thought and culture.

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