

THE NECESSITY TO BE ECLECTIC

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So many ways!

Nowadays the teacher-to-be is often bewildered if not discouraged by the array of methodologies. Not only is there an array; there also is a call to hop on the bandwagon of one methodology and then follow it blindly. As this happens, we notice that the pendulum swings from one extreme to the other in language learning. First it was the grammar translation method, which was followed by the direct method. Then came the audiolingual approach, after which transformational - generative grammar appeared. Now it seems that we are in communicative methodology, which is also called the notional-functional approach. This has also brought with it humanistic concerns.

The purpose of this article

Both teacher trainer and trainee must understand what is happening. It is the writer's purpose in this article to explain the reasons for so many trends; to show that new approaches appear to challenge previous ones; to give the basic ideas of some of the methodologies from audiolingual to communicative and to see what the humanistic touch is like. In a word, the teacher trainee must be eclectic in order to know what the trends are and to choose what is best and most useful for his students. Thereby, he/she will be able to take a stand in the ebb and flow of the various tides of methodology.

Terminology

Before continuing any further it is necessary to add a word about terminology. There seems to be no difference between the terms "method" and "approach." The terms are used interchangeably. One very often hears and reads, the "direct method," the "grammar translation method," and the "audiolingual approach" or "method." Both of the terms can be included in the word "methodology" used as a countable or noncountable noun. The use of these three terms in current articles includes the teaching and learning of the basic skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Most of the methodologies embrace these basic skills and add cultural and linguistic orientations. Others also consider the aims of instruction, and a few include student needs, psychology, and the need for communication. Practically no methodology refers to humanistic activities.

Why so many trends?

In order to explain why so many trends have developed, Anne C. Newton (Celce-Murcia and McIntosh 1979:17) indicates that there are two sources suggested by the history of language teaching, one of which is that the nature of mind is a changing concept. Not only does this determine learning theory, but it also affects the social sciences, especially psychology and linguistics. The second source are the practical concerns of language teaching which are dependent on the changing needs of the language learner and on the changing sociopolitical and economic conditions, which determine the motives and purposes for language study at some particular time. All of this we must recognize in order to understand the changing currents of thought in language teaching.

Audiolingualism

From the audiolingual approach we have inherited the practice of repetition. There is always a need for the repetition of a

particular item from the grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation of the target language. Of course, there was an objection to the over-use of this practice, which would often bore teacher and student to death.

A theoretical idea inherited from the audiolingual approach, based on the assumptions of behavioristic psychology, was that all learning, including language acquisition, is based on habit formation through responses to outside stimuli. Although Chomsky taught us that language is a creative process, it is obvious that much of what our students learn is by habit formation. When the future of the intention auxiliary "going to" is taught, it is interesting to see how readily the pronunciation/gana/ is picked up. The same can be said of expressions like "Oh, come on" as an objection or surprise, or any of the other communicative responses.

Other valuable parts of audiolingualism were the following slogans:

1. Teach the language, not facts about the language.
2. A language is what native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say.
3. Languages are different.
4. Language and culture cannot be separated.
5. Learn through mimicry and memorization ("mini-mem") and through analogy.
6. Phonetic and intonation markings are important for the student.
7. Use choral and individual repetition.

Transformational-generative grammar

One of the unique contributions of transformational-generative grammar was the difference between deep and surface structures. In no language are surface forms sufficient to represent directly the meaning of all sentences. Furthermore, one meaning is not always representable by one surface form. Notice the following examples:

A. The river is flowing.

B. Her hair is flowing.

A and B show the "lack of invariance between sound patterns and structural descriptions" (Cairns 1976: 149). In A, flowing is called a verb by the language comprehension system in the brain. It is called an adjective in B. Syntactic units and phonetic ones are not always unique at the surface level. Insights like these can give additional dimensions to our understanding and explication of grammar.

Challenge

The author of transformational-generative grammar, Chomsky, challenged the behavioristic theories of language acquisition implicit in the audiolingual approach, as we mentioned earlier. This brought forth his contribution that language learning is a creative process as well as a rationalistic and cognitive activity. It is creative in that any human being can say anything that has never been said before. Obviously, a poet is creative because he can put words together in special rhyme patterns or use sound effects or think of new metaphors and similies to use. But what is not very obvious is that linguistic creativity is an everyday occurrence because it can express an infinite variety of thoughts, intentions, feelings, wishes, reactions, surprises, etc. (Cairns 1976).

Besides creativity, there is cognition. Language is a cognitive process in that certain mental operations must intervene in order to encode an idea into a sentence. These operations must refer to the speaker's internalized grammar. While as yet there is no easy formula that synthesizes all of the encoding operations, it can be said that the phonetic output of a speaker is determined by certain segments and sequences permitted by the language (Cairns: 115). Furthermore, the kind of speech errors of fluent speakers are thus limited. Another aspect of encoding is that there are certain types of decisions made by the speaker during sentence production and that these decisions occur at specific points of the sentence (Cairns: 146). These points are pauses indicating lexical and grammatical operations that make meaning clear. When we consider Chomsky's challenge, we see that what was thought earlier about language in the audiolingual framework lacked the depth that Chomsky gave it. This challenge gave rise to cognitive-code learning, which suggests that practice in thinking in the language is more important than just repetitive drill because it adds enjoyment to language learning (Newton/Celce-Murcia, McIntosh: 21).

Communicative Methodology

What is one of the newest approaches in language learning is communicative methodology. In part, this arose from the break-away from manipulative exercises, also found in audiolingualism. The idea of manipulation was considered good because it was habit-forming, but habit-forming exercises can become tedious in the classroom, and the students realized that they were being taught to become flexible in handling different grammatical patterns. This was not conducive to real language use in which the student uses the language to communicate his ideas, feelings, requests, agreements and disagreements. Furthermore, the student did not learn to use such connective phrases and responses as, "Oh, I don't know," "I know how you feel," "Really?" "You do?" "You are?" "I'm sorry I --" "That's great," etc. These forms are necessary

in conversation. Notional and/or functional syllabi prepared the way for a new communicative methodology. For the first time, students began to spend most of the class time working in pairs and groups. The textbook provides contexts, clues and starters, and pairs of students begin a conversation based on their own experience. Naturally, their structures and pronunciation are not perfect, but they do communicate. It is up to the teacher as a resource person to provide the needed structure and pronunciation drills and helpful hints and practical rules that the students need. The writer's classroom experience in communicative methodology is that the students learn to speak much faster than they did with the audiolingual method.

The functional textbook provides practice in writing notes, letters and application forms. It has cultural explanations. The functions which the students need such as leave-taking, greetings, introductions, requests, apologizing, agreeing and disagreeing, etc. are foremost. The vocabulary and grammar needed to express these functions come next. Reading selections, as they would appear in newspapers, magazines and textbooks, are used with exercises for their comprehension. Cassettes and workbooks which can be used in the classroom or at home are also provided.

The experience of the writer has shown that the students enjoy their work and their classmates much more than they did during the audiolingual days. However, audiolingual drills such as choral and individual repetition and pattern practice all come in handy when needed as a supplement to the regular communicative activities. Teachers and teacher trainees should acquaint themselves with this methodology if they want to add the dimension that has always been needed.

Some teachers who have worked with this method have complained that their students cannot learn to write well and cannot pass advanced grammar examinations. This may well be, but it indicates that more research is needed in correlation between the communi-

cative and writing skills. One positive step in this direction is that students have been recently given additional practice in workbooks which reinforce the grammar and the vocabulary of the functions presented through various types of written exercises. Undoubtedly, there are different problems that come up which will take time to solve.

The Humanistic Touch

What can any methodology or approach be without the humanistic touch? We have so far discussed how one approach can be an offshoot of a previous one; how one thinker can challenge an established pedagogical system and thus add new dimensions previously unthought of. We have seen how a teacher can broaden teaching horizon by various means which an innovative theory may suggest. Teachers also have looked for and are finding ways of heightening their foreign language programs by humanizing them, by bringing out the best in their students. These are ways that help students to be happy with themselves as they are. This motivates the students to communicate in the target language because they can see the human side of one another as well as of the teacher. All this can be made real through humanistic activities which promote caring and sharing and good rapport in the foreign language class. These activities help dissipate feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and fear that often develop in the learner. In other words, a certain blending takes place: what students feel, think and know, with what they are learning (Moskowitz 1978: 2).

What are some of these activities? Gertrude Moskowitz discusses 100 activities according to the following themes: "relating to others, discovering myself, my strengths, my self-image, expressing my feelings, my memories, sharing myself, my values, the arts and me, me and my fantasies." Moskowitz divides all activities according to student levels and size of groups and tells what the linguistic purpose of the activity is as well as its humanistic one. The following is one activity:

Names People Play

Humanistic purpose: to enable students to develop greater sensitivity into how classmates feel about their names and nicknames.

Linguistic purpose: to practice name-giving structures.

For all levels.

Size of small groups: 3 to 6 depending on time available.

Tell students they will discuss a topic about which they have different feelings: think about how you feel about your first names and your nicknames. Tell your group your first name and nickname and how you feel about each name. Do you like it or dislike it? Why? Then tell what name you want to be called now. The teacher starts out by telling the class what his/her first name and nicknames are. After the small groups have discussed the topic, a few volunteers are asked to share their feelings about their names, nicknames and what they want to be called. In the second phase of the activity the students are told to select any first name they want for themselves, but they cannot keep their present name. At the end the students are asked what they learned about themselves or others regarding names and nicknames.

Another activity can be combined with music and drawing. Five sheets of butcher or wrapping paper are placed on the classroom wall. Five participants are asked to come to draw whatever comes to their minds while the music is playing. They are given several crayons to draw with. When the music stops, the participants are asked to move on to the next sheet and continue the drawing in whatever way they wish. This is repeated until each participant has a chance to draw on all of the sheets. Then the class admires and comments on all the drawings. The last step is done in groups of three or four students. The students select two or three of the pictures and invent stories around them.

It is stimulating to hear the comments about the influence of music on drawing and how different moods affected the drawings. One author says, "The main thing is to establish an atmosphere favorable to the expression of self, where light, music and color all play a part. In a climate of trust and well-being, unsuspected potential will undoubtedly come to light. Learning the foreign language is no longer an aim in itself, but a means of finding out more about oneself and others around us" (Péchou 1981).

Conclusion

To conclude, then, what we have been trying to do is give some important reasons for being eclectic: using what we can from old and new methodologies and theories and adding a new dimension - the humanistic touch.

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