From Unity to Diversity: Twenty-five Years of Language-Teaching Methodology

BY DIANE LARSEN-FREEMAN

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My charge from the editor of the *English Teaching Forum* for this special anniversary issue is to describe methodological developments in our field over the past 25 years. In order to put the developments in perspective, it would be helpful to step back in time, to remind ourselves of how things were 25 years ago.

It is 1962. We have been invited to observe a beginning EFL class. Since the class has already begun, we take a seat at the rear of the classroom, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. The teacher is a young man. He is speaking in English to a class of approximately 40 15-year-old students. Let's listen to what he is saying.

"All right, class. I am going to repeat the dialogue. Please listen carefully. Two friends named Peggy and Sue are at a restaurant. They are discussing what to order. Peggy speaks first."

The teacher then reads both Peggy's and Sue's lines of the dialogue. He makes the meaning of the lines clear through the use of mime and pictures. Following this second reading of the dialogue, the teacher asks his students to take the part of Peggy, while he takes Sue's. The teacher reads Peggy's lines and the students try their best to imitate his model. The teacher and class then switch roles so that the students have an opportunity to practice the other part. After a few repetitions, the teacher has one-half of the class say Peggy's lines and the other say Sue's. They perform the dialogue with minimal prompting from him. They trade roles. After the teacher is satisfied that the class has learned the dialogue, he leads the class in a number of drills. A single-slot substitution drill is the first. The teacher recites a line from the dialogue and then gives the students a cue word or phrase. The students repeat the line from the dialogue, substituting the cue into the line in its proper place. The first cue he gives is a subject pronoun. The students know that they are to substitute this cue into the subject position in the sentence. The teacher gives them a different subject pronoun, and the drill proceeds. The students recognize that sometimes they will have to change the present-tense verb morphology so that subject-verb agreement is achieved.

The substitution drill is followed by a transformation drill, a question-and-answer drill, and a chain drill. The pace is brisk; the teacher slows down only when an error has been committed. When a pronunciation error is made, the teacher offers another word that is minimally different from the one the students are struggling with so that the students can hear the difference between the familiar sound and the one that is causing them difficulty.

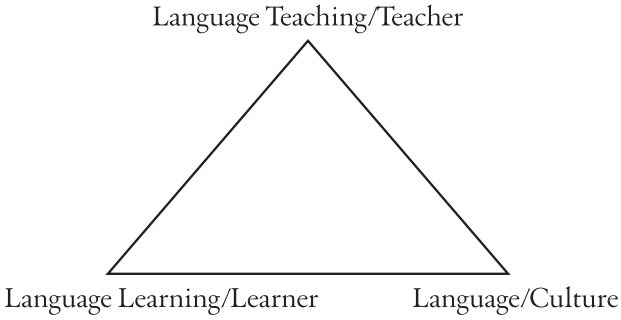
When correct drill responses are given by the class, the teacher says "good" and smiles approvingly. The lesson concludes with the teacher reviewing the lines of the dialogue with which the lesson began. The dialogue is performed flawlessly. The teacher smiles, "Very good. Class dismissed."

If we were to compare this lesson with one presented today, what would we find? What is striking is that such a comparison could not be easily made. There is such methodological diversity in 1987 that it would be impossible to identify a typical class. There is no single acceptable

way to go about teaching language today. Indeed, the existing approaches to language teaching differ in fundamental ways: There is little or no accord on syllabus type, on materials used, on the order of skill presentation, on the value of explicit error correction, or even on such a basic issue as the role of the students' native language.

This is not to say that there is no agreement in the field about what constitutes good teaching practice. Indeed, in a 1987 classroom we might expect to find little or no meaningless repetition, meaning made clear through a variety of techniques, more student-to-student interaction, and language being presented in all its communicative richness. But before we proceed with a discussion of what is acceptable practice today, it would be worthwhile tracing the historical antecedents of modern methodology.

I have found it helpful to think of methodology being depicted as a triangle, with each angle of the triangle representing a basic area of the field. The first angle might be termed language learning/language learner. Questions addressed from this perspective include *what is the nature of the language acquisition/learning process, who is doing the learning,* and *what are the factors that influence the learner?* The second angle has to do with the subject matter we teach. *What is the nature of language/culture* is the question dealt with in this angle. The third angle comprises both language teaching as a process and the role of the language teacher as an agent in the process. It is defined in part by answers to the questions posed in the other two angles. Each of these perspectives is indispensable to viewing methodology as a whole.



It would be useful at this point to review developments during these past 25 years, considering each of these angles in turn.

Language Learning/Language Learner

The prevailing view of the language-learning process in 1962 was that learning was achieved through habit formation. The native language was seen to comprise habits that a second-language learner must overcome. As we saw in the language lesson we observed, this was to be accomplished by forging new habits through repetition, pattern drills, and accompanying positive reinforcement by the teacher. Errors were to be avoided if at all possible. A way to anticipate errors was to conduct a contrastive analysis, comparing and contrasting the students' native language with the target language. Through this means, potential trouble spots could be identified. If an error was committed, quick correction was desirable in order to prevent the establishment of bad habits. Overlearning leading to automaticity was the goal.

Challenging this characterization of the learning process was Noam Chomsky (1959). Chomsky argued that language acquisition could not take place through habit formation because language was far too complicated to be learned in such a manner, especially given the brief time available. There must be, Chomsky reasoned, some innate capacity that humans possessed which predisposed them to look for basic patterns in language. Furthermore, people could create and comprehend novel utterances—utterances they could not possibly have encountered in the language that was spoken to them. This observation was supported by evidence from children learning English as a native language. Overgeneralization errors such as **eated* and **sleeped* were common in children's speech. Such errors suggested that children were not repeating what was said to them, but rather were attempting to induce the rules for the past tense from the language to which they were exposed. Thus, through a process of detecting patterns in the input language, forming hypotheses based on these about how the language worked, testing these hypotheses and revising them in light of contradictory evidence, little by little the grammar of the native language would be acquired.

What is especially significant for us was that learners acquiring English as a second or foreign language were found to be committing the same sort of overgeneralization errors as the children. Furthermore, the second-language learners did not commit the errors randomly but in a systematic way, indicating that they may have been following a more or less natural progression in their acquisition of English. Corder (1967) even suggested that learners might naturally adhere to a learner-generated or "built-in" syllabus. The language the learners spoke was termed an interlanguage (Selinker 1972), since it was intermediate between the native language and target language. By the very term *interlanguage* we can see that it was considered to be a language in its own right, subject to the same constraints as any other natural language. Moreover, any point along the interlanguage continuum was held to be fully describable by grammatical rules.

One cannot fail to note that viewing language acquisition as a process of rule formation had tremendous implications for the role of the learners. Rather than being seen as passive imitators of carefully controlled language input, learners were seen to be active agents involved in a process of "creative construction." Errors were not something to be avoided, but rather were regarded as welcome signs that learners were actively testing hypotheses. Rather than seeing the native language as a source of interference, the native language was a source of hypotheses about how the target language functioned. Thus, language learning was seen to be a natural, cognitive process with learners ultimately responsible for their own learning.

With this shift of focus to the active role of the learner, another serious question motivated much research: the differential success question. Why was it, second-language acquisition researchers asked, that while all children with normal faculties were able to achieve native-speaker status, rarely (if ever) were second-language learners able to attain the same level of achievement? During the years that followed, many factors were hypothesized to enhance or inhibit the second language acquisition capability of learners: social, motivational, affective, aptitude, personality, experiential, instructional, biological, and cognitive (see, for example, Schumann 1978). It has also been suggested that successful language learners employ more effective learning strategies than less successful learners (Rubin 1975) and that more success in language learning might be achieved if teachers engaged in learner training as well as language training (Wenden 1985).

From this recent suggestion, we see that in 1987 learners are still seen to be the bearers of responsibility for how much learning takes place. What has changed somewhat since Chomsky first proposed it, however, is the view that language learning is solely a process of rule formation. While still assigning to the learner an active role of sifting through incoming data and testing hypotheses which eventually lead to the restructuring of the learner's interlanguage, the view of what the learner tests hypotheses about has shifted somewhat. Working within the framework of Universal Grammar proposed by Chomsky's (1981) Government-Binding Theory, second-language researchers (e.g., White 1985) have been exploring the idea that grammar acquisition involves setting or fixing the parameters of principles of the Universal Grammar in a manner consistent with the data of a particular language.

Other second-language researchers such as Schmidt (1983) feel that the role of imitation has been seriously overlooked in recent years. While not denying that language acquisition takes place at least in part through rule formation, Schmidt also believes a great deal of acquisition of language is brought about by learners having memorized sentences and phrases (e.g., *How are you? I beg your pardon. You know what I mean?*). The successful employment of these memorized formulae contributes greatly to learner fluency, Schmidt feels.

Finally, researchers like Hatch (1983), while again not denying that grammatical competence is achieved through linguistic hypothesis testing, nevertheless believe that nonlinguistic processes may be critical to the learner's success in this endeavor. Hatch specifically discusses the value of native-speaker/nonnative-speaker interaction in which the native speaker adjusts the level of speech to accommodate the nonnative speaker's comprehension. These foreigner-talk adjustments, Hatch believes, "help promote communication, help establish an affective bond and can serve as either an explicit or implicit teaching mode" (1983:183).

We will return to our consideration of learning and the learner when we discuss the impact of these views on language pedagogy. But before we do, let us turn to the second major angle of our triangle—that dealing with the nature of the language and culture we teach.

Language/Culture

Syllabus design

Influenced by structural linguistics, in 1962 language was seen as consisting of hierarchically organized strata, each dealing with a different linguistic structure: phonemes, morphemes, and syntactic patterns. It was these aspects of language, of course, that were drilled in the lesson we observed. Syllabi for a language course were organized around linguistic structures, carefully graded in a sequence from simple to complex. If one were studying in a beginning-level English course, therefore, one would likely work on sentence patterns with the BE verb early on (*She is a teacher.*), followed a few lessons later by yes-no questions (*Is she a teacher?*), followed by short answers (*Yes, she is.*), etc.

Despite the profound effect of the Chomskyan revolution in other areas, it did little to alter the way language was presented for pedagogical purposes. Like the structuralists before them, the transformational grammarians focused upon sentence-level syntax. It was thus not until the late 1960s that sociolinguist Hymes (1966) introduced the distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence. Whereas linguistic competence is understood as the unconscious knowledge of language structure of the ideal speaker-listener, communicative competence is the knowledge of how to use language appropri-

ate to a given social situation. When the goal of language instruction shifted to developing students' communicative competence, teachers were asked not to focus on the grammatical rules of *usage* that enable speakers to compose correct sentences so much as on the *use* of language to accomplish some kind of communicative purpose (Widdowson 1978:3).

This new focus had important implications for syllabus design, and Wilkins' (1976) advocacy of an analytical notional functional syllabus over a synthetic structural one was one manifestation of this shift in viewing language. Adopting a notional-functional syllabus meant building a course around the uses or functions to which language is put. For example, one might work on requesting information in one lesson, apologizing in another, and expressing gratitude in a third. Since it was not obviously the case that certain functions would be simpler than others, grading according to functional complexity did not make sense. Wilkins proposed instead that the functions be recycled, that is, re-introduced several times. Earlier cycles might contain relatively unmarked forms of the functions expressed in linguistically simple ways. Successive cycles would introduce more linguistically complicated and more marked (e.g., very formal) forms. Thus, the first time students were taught how to introduce one person to another, they might just learn to say "This is." Sometime later, in a subsequent lesson, they might learn "I'd like you to meet _____." In yet another, they would learn "Allow me to introduce you to _____."

More recently, applied linguists Krashen and Terrell (1983) advised basing courses on topics (e.g., family, clothing, weather) and situations (e.g., a job interview, a visit to the doctor, a shopping trip). In presenting the language, structural and functional diversity would be perfectly acceptable, with importance given to the teacher's getting across a comprehensible message. Krashen and Terrell's focus was thus on the meaning or semantic dimension of language.

The structural, the notional-functional, and the semantic-based syllabi nicely illustrate the fact that language consists of three interacting dimensions: form, function, and meaning. Any course that takes having students achieve communicative competence as its goal must include all three (Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia, in preparation). Thus, if a teacher were using a structural syllabus and the unit to be presented was on the passive voice, the teacher must teach not only how to form the passive, but also what it means (it has a "grammatical meaning" of putting the focus on the theme rather than on the agent) and what its function is, i.e., when it should be used (see Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1983). The same would be true if one were using a notional-functional syllabus. If a teacher were teaching the function of apologizing, for example, and wanted students to end up with more than some memorized formulae for apologizing, such as they might get from a phrase book, the teacher would have to work with the students on the grammatical form and meaning of the apologies. Wilkins, of course, recognized this when he wrote

> The grammar is the means through which linguistic creativity is ultimately achieved and an inadequate knowledge of the grammar would lead to a serious limitation on the capacity for communication. A notional syllabus, no less than a grammatical syllabus, must seek to ensure that the grammatical system is properly assimilated by the learners. (1976:66)

Unfortunately, in our enthusiasm to embrace the notion of communicative competence, I fear we may have emphasized the functions too much over the forms and thus have sacrificed accuracy to fluency (Eskey 1983). Both, in my opinion, are an integral part of communicative competence.

In addition to the three types already mentioned, many other syllabus types exist these days, of course. One particularly interesting approach is the *procedural syllabus* (Prabhu and Carrol 1980), which does not take language as its basis at all. Instead, students learn language through the performance of certain tasks and activities. Prabhu and Carrol's students have already studied English following a structural syllabus. Instructors using a procedural syllabus, therefore, are concerned with the activation of their students' already learned grammar.

Another syllabus, one that has had impact on the teaching of ESL in the United States, is *competency-based* (Grognet and Crandall 1982). This type of syllabus has been developed to teach survival skills to refugees who are newly arrived immigrants to the United States. The behavioral outcomes of competency-based instruction are specific survival skills: e.g., students will be able to identify food items, read food labels, make food purchases, and verify that they have received the correct change.

One final language-related development that we should not fail to mention is the expanded view of language to include discourse or the structure that exists beyond the sentence level. While acknowledging the importance of student mastery of sentence-level syntax, it is now commonly recognized that explicit teaching will need to be directed to

the structure of language at the suprasentential or discourse level (Larsen-Freeman 1980). Thus, students will have to learn to produce oral and written texts that are both coherent and cohesive.

English for special purposes

So far we have discussed general communicative competence as being a desirable goal to strive for in a language course. Another major trend having to do with language during these past 25 years is the teaching of English for Special Purposes (ESP). Although all language use has a purpose, teachers of ESP teach only the English requisite for a particular purpose, be it an occupation (e.g., English for business or for airline pilots) or a domain (e.g., English for Science and Technology or English for Academic Purposes). Thus, curriculum designers of ESP courses conduct rigorous needs analyses—analyzing the situation in which students will likely find themselves and carefully selecting the English necessary for students to meet the language demands of these restricted domains.

Content-based approaches

Closely aligned to the ESP movement, at least in terms of their theoretical justification, are the content-based approaches (Mohan 1986) that are currently popular in Canada and the United States. Advocates of both ESP and content-based approaches see language as a means of achieving something else and not as an end in itself (Widdowson 1983:108–109). In content-based approaches, the learning of language is integrally linked with the learning of some other subject matter. The best-known example is that of bilingual education/immersion education, in which monolingual children at the elementary and secondary levels receive the majority of their instruction in the target language (Swain 1981). Although various models exist in this approach, some containing explicit instruction in the target language, the assumption is that both the subject matter and the language can be learned together when the students' focus is on acquiring subject-matter information.

Other models that share this assumption are those providing "sheltered English" and those that follow the adjunct model. Sheltered English classes are employed to teach English and subject content using specially modified curricula and materials (Curtain 1986). Students attend these only during a transitional period until they have acquired sufficient English to participate fully in regular courses. The adjunct model calls for ESL students to attend content courses that are linked with language courses through a coordinated syllabus (Snow and Brinton 1984). ESL teachers and students attend authentic lectures in an introductory psychology course, for instance, and later the teachers assist the students with comprehending the lecture and doing the homework assignments. Assignments made in the ESL components are based on the content course; in addition, the development of study skills is emphasized.

One final model should be mentioned in the discussion of content-based approaches to English-language acquisition. This is the "Writing across the Curriculum" approach developed in response to the 1975 Bullock Report's recommendation that there be a policy to teach language across the curriculum in British schools. By receiving writing assignments in each of their content-area subjects, students learn to write, in addition to learning the content.

Culture

The second angle of our triangle embraces both language and culture. Many language teachers acknowledge the need to integrate the two; yet I think it is fair to say that there really is no well-articulated theory of culture that has informed our field during the last 25 years, and hence that the means of teaching culture to language students have not been well developed. It is true that many texts contain cultural information in the form of cultural capsules, i.e., short notes describing the differences between the native and target cultures. But knowing a culture involves so much more than the transmission of information these cultural notes allow. Indeed, developing in one's students an understanding of the attitudes, values, beliefs—the "world view" (Fantini, personal communication)—of a particular target culture is at least as important as imparting factual knowledge such as what foods one can/cannot order in a restaurant, in which denominations the currency comes, etc. I do not mean to belittle the value of such cultural information, but all too often the other aspects of culture are ignored. They are sometimes addressed through studying the literature of the target culture. But, of course, this does not guarantee that students will arrive at a comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date understanding of the target culture.

Having just cited the need for a coherent theory of culture and an expanded repertoire of techniques for the teaching of culture, I would be remiss if I did not mention another language-related trend with methodological implications that takes quite an opposite view from this with regard to the teaching of culture. I am speaking, of course, of the English-as-an-international-language perspective (see, for example, Strevens 1978). Many applied linguists who hold this perspective value the pluralism that exists in

the English-speaking world (Indian English, Singaporean English, Nigerian English, etc.) and feel that one can be bilingual without being bicultural, that one can and should learn English for utilitarian purposes without adopting the dominant target culture.

Language Teaching/Teacher

This article began with our visit to a class in which the Audio-lingual Method (ALM) was being used. Surely it is the case that in many classrooms in the world today, the ALM is still being practiced. However, it is also true that the ALM fell into disfavor in many circles in the 1960s. This was due in part to the refutation of the habit-formation theory of language acquisition and in part to the fact that both teachers and students often found the required repetition boring and unmotivating. Finally, there was the widespread observation that patterns mastered in the classroom were not always transferred outside when "real communication" was involved.

In the past 25 years, no single method of language teaching has assumed the dominance of the ALM, although we have witnessed the birth and maturing of at least five innovative methods during this period. It would be worth our while to consider each of these now, even though space will not permit us to do anything more than to introduce them. (For further details, see Larsen-Freeman 1986.)

Silent way

The emphasis on human cognition inspired by the Chomskyan revolution led to a new general approach to language teaching termed *cognitive code*. As we saw earlier, rather than simply being responsive to stimuli in the environment, learners were seen to be much more actively involved in their own learning. Although Caleb Gattegno's Silent Way (1972) did not evolve directly from the cognitive-code approach, its principles are consistent with it. For example, one of the basic tenets of the Silent Way is "the subordination of teaching to learning." This principle is in accord with the active role ascribed to the learner in the cognitive-code approach. Another shared principle is that errors are inevitable and are signs to the teacher that the iearner is exploring new areas of the language. Learning is thus seen to be gradual, involving imperfect performance at the beginning. Another distinguishing feature of the Silent Way is that the teacher helps students to develop a way to learn on their own. By giving students only what they absolutely need, by assisting them to develop their own "inner criteria," and by remaining silent much of the time, the teacher tries to help students to become self-reliant and increasingly independent of the teacher.

Suggestopedia

Georgi Lozanov, the originator of Suggestopedia, believes, as does Gattegno, that language learning can be made more efficient than what usually occurs. Lozanov (1978) feels that the inefficiency is due to the psychological barriers learners establish—their fear of failure is one of them. Teachers can help learners to surmount these barriers and to fully tap their mental powers, by desuggesting the learners' self-imposed limitations. This can be done through the teacher's direct and indirect positive suggestion in an environment that is relaxing and therefore conducive to learning. When learners trust in the authority of the teacher, Lozanov asserts, they will reach a state of infantilization—adopting a childlike role. If they feel secure, learners can be more spontaneous and less inhibited.

Counseling-learning/ community language learning

Another methodologist who advises that we should see learners as "whole persons," not just cognitive beings, is Charles Curran (1976). Through his research, Curran discovered that adult learners, in particular, are often threatened in learning situations. They feel threatened by the fact that learning requires them to change. In Curran's Counseling Learning/Community Language Learning method, teachers understand and accept their students' fears and concerns. In addition, teachers try to provide a secure learning environment in which a sense of community is fostered. In such an atmosphere, students can be nondefensive and their positive energies can be channeled towards the language-learning task. Another essential element in learning, Curran believes, is for students to take some initiative for their own learning and to make some investment in what they will learn. Therefore, in Community Language Learning students decide what it is they want to be able to say in the target language. Another way of putting this is to say the syllabus is learner-generated.

Comprehension approach

Advocates of the Comprehension Approach (Winitz 1981) also acknowledge that learner insecurities have an adverse effect on language acquisition. As a consequence, practitioners of this approach do not put students on the spot by having them speak in the target language. Instead, students spend the hours at the beginning of instruction listening to the teacher speak the target language, much as children learn their native language by attending to the language spoken to them. The teacher insures that the language he or she uses is comprehensible to the students, just as parents modify the speech they use with their chil-

dren. A child does not speak until ready to do so; so students choose when to begin to use the target language. Like a child, their initial speech exhibits much imperfection at first. Only later, when students are comfortable speaking the language, is their speech "fine-tuned." Two of the best-known methods associated with this approach are the Total Physical Response (Asher 1982) and the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell1983).

Communicative approach

Adherents of the Communicative Approach (e.g., Johnson and Morrow 1981) assert that students' motivation will be enhanced if they feel that they are working on communicative skills, i.e., practicing some function within a social context, not just accumulating knowledge of vocabulary and sentence-level structures. By interacting with their teacher and fellow students, students receive practice in activating this knowledge in negotiating meaning. Class activities are often characterized by information gaps, i.e., the speaker knows something the listener doesn't. The speaker must choose the appropriate form through which to convey this information. The speaker receives feedback from the listener on what the listener has understood. After considering this feedback, the speaker can revise the form of the message if such revision is necessary. In essence, then, students learn how to communicate by communicating.

Principled eclecticism

Each of these five methods has its practitioners; however, as I said before, none of the methods has dominated language-teaching practice to the same extent as the ALM once did. Moreover, it is rare that one of these methods is practiced exclusively. It is not uncommon for teachers today to practice a principled eclecticism, combining techniques and principles from various methods in a carefully reasoned manner. Thus, as we continue with our discussion of language-teaching methodology, it would behoove us to broaden our perspective beyond individual methods and to consider instead the general similarities and differences in methodology today. It will be convenient to do so by examining the goals, processes, assessment procedures, roles, and subject-matter emphases in turn (Larsen-Freeman 1987). What will be evident is how modern-day methodology is informed by the views of learning and language we discussed earlier. Indeed, we currently have no theory of language teaching independent of these. It is these two angles of our triangle that support the third angle of language teaching. Any theory of language teaching, therefore, would presumably focus upon the link between learning and language (Donald Freeman, personal communication).

Goal

It appears that the goal of many language teachers today is to prepare their students to communicate in English. It is assumed that all students can learn to do this, although some will perform more successfully than others for any number of the reasons we listed under our discussion of the learner. A second goal shared by many teachers is to teach their students how to learn. Some teachers have been working with their students on developing their strategic competence (Canale and Swain 1980), the communication strategies learners use when they are less than proficient in English. Other teachers have been helping their students develop a full repertoire of learning strategies that will enable their students to derive maximum benefit from instruction and to continue to learn on their own after the period of formal instruction has ended.

Process

Learning is seen to be a natural, gradual process, through which students progress at their own rates. At first it is expected that students will speak or write imperfect English. Through a combination of sensitive error-correction strategies (such as the teacher repeating correctly a student's faulty utterance) and continued practice, the learners' interlanguage will increasingly conform to the target language. This does not occur in a smoothly linear fashion, however; the learning curve is full of peaks and valleys.

The necessary practice is thought to be most successful when students are engaged in the meaningful exchange of information, rather than repeating a teacher's model. Learners are thus encouraged to be creative and communicative with the language, often doing so in small-group activities, in which they can practice communication and learn from one another. Grammar is often taught inductively, sometimes without explicit grammar rules ever being introduced. With the exception of those teachers who subscribe to the Comprehension Approach, most teachers today work as they did in the past, integrating the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening from the beginning of instruction. What has changed in the last 25 years, however, is our understanding of these four skills and therefore how we teach them. No longer regarded as passive skills, listening and reading are thought to require listeners and readers to actively construct meaning from oral or written input. We now believe that readers/listeners selectively attend to the input. They don't see or hear every word. Instead they draw inferences from what they do see or hear. Only when their inferences are not borne out by subsequent input is comprehension impeded and are readers forced to reread or are listeners forced to seek clarification.

Another thing we have become aware of in the last 25 years is that just because students can speak and hear does not mean that they know how to communicate orally or listen effectively. Furthermore, when we deliberately attempt to teach these skills, we find that students' performance can be improved.

As far as teaching the literacy skills is concerned, we now recognize that asking students to answer comprehension questions on a paragraph they have just read is not teaching reading any more than asking students to write on a topic is teaching writing. In both cases the teacher is called upon to evaluate what the student has produced, but the teacher has had no access to the process the student went through to arrive at the product.

In investigating the processes of reading and writing, researchers have gained some important insights. It is now thought that reading does not involve the simple decoding of the printed word, but rather that meaning is created by readers in their interaction with the text (Widdowson 1979). What this means is that during the reading process, readers construct the meaning of a text through an interaction between their background knowledge and what is actually present in the text. Certain cues in the text will activate certain background knowledge or "schemata" of readers (Rumelhart 1980). The schemata can relate to the topic of the text or to its organization (e.g., a narrative or a description). It is the teacher's responsibility, then, to work on the development of appropriate schemata within their students and on their students' activation of them during the reading process. Happily, the development and activation of schemata are apparently trainable, with enhanced reading comprehension the result (Carrell1985).

Investigation of the writing process has determined that composing is not a linear process of first, think; second, plan; and third, write—as it has been described—but rather is a recursive one. Writers begin to write, they stop, go back, reread what they have written, and usually even revise it before they resume writing. As such, writing is not thought so much to be a process through which one reports one's thoughts; rather, it is a way writers explore and clarify their thoughts and even discover new ideas (Taylor 1981; Zamel 1982). Since writing is thus seen to be a tool for learning, composing is not an activity to be postponed until a high level of English proficiency is achieved. Instead, even students with a low level of English proficiency can be encouraged to compose. Students and teachers do not expect that what students first put down on paper is a final product, but rather that what they first commit to paper represents a draft of their initial ideas. The students then receive feedback on the content, not the form, of their ideas from the teacher and even from each other. In this fashion, the student writers progress in their exploration of new ideas (Raimes 1983a). One specific technique connected to the process approach to writing is personal journal-keeping, in which students engage in a written exchange with their teachers. Procedures vary depending on the teacher and the purpose of the activity, but typically students write on a topic of interest in journals and then submit them to the teacher on a regular basis. The teachers then do not evaluate or correct the journal entries but rather

> respond to the content, relating it to their own experience, asking questions for clarification and expansion, encouraging the students to consider the subject from other perspectives, and suggesting other possible entries on the same topic. (Lucas and Jurich 1986:6)

Assessment procedures

It is thought that assessment of what is being learned is most meaningful when it is conducted on an informal, continual basis. In this way, teachers get a more accurate picture of what their students can do than they might from formal tests, which cause debilitating anxiety in some students. Then, too, the teacher needs the information that informal, ongoing assessment gives to know whether or not lesson, and therefore course, objectives are being achieved. Indeed, when formal evaluation measures are used, they should be designed to be consistent with objectives and therefore what has been taught. It is foolhardy to expect, for instance, that traditional multiple-choice grammar tests will provide a valid assessment of students' communication skills. Evaluation measures consistent with a communicative approach to teaching will measure how students use English, not what they know about it.

In standardized test development, therefore, there has been a move from exclusive reliance on discrete-point multiple-choice grammar tests that were popular when the ALM reigned, to more integrative tests such as dictation, composition, and oral interview. Beyond this, test makers have been working to construct tests that are pragmatic (Oller 1979) and communicative (Carroll1980) in order to be compatible with the current view of the nature of language.

Roles

The general pattern in modern-day methodology is for the teaching to be learner-centered. By this, I mean that it is the teacher who serves as a guide in the learning process, but it is the learners who assume some responsibility for

the direction of the learning and who bear ultimate responsibility for how much learning takes place. This is not to say that there is no a priori structure to the lessons, or that teachers have abdicated their responsibility as partners in the teaching/learning process. On the contrary, teachers still fulfill the traditional roles of presenters of language, evaluators of student performance, and classroom managers. What is different, though, is that teachers initiate activities from which students can learn and then they *step aside* to assist as needed. Thus, there is a minimizing of teacher talk and a maximizing of student practice. Learners are also encouraged to learn from each other, often through pairs, or in some cases small-group work. Learners help to direct the learning process by offering solicited feedback to the teacher on the success of the various activities employed.

Language teaching today is humanistic. There are many definitions of this term, but in this context I mean that teachers are cognizant of the need to take their students' affective needs into consideration. It is recognized that students' feelings and attitudes can promote or deter language learning. As a result, teachers attempt to create the kind of environment in which the possibility of negative affect arising is minimized. They also try to promote positive affect. One of the ways this is accomplished is for learners to feel that their learning is purposeful and that their needs are being addressed. Whenever possible, teachers should also take into account the fact that students have different cognitive styles. The use of varied activities is one way to insure that various learner needs are being met.

Subject matter

The language that is presented to the students should be meaningful and contextualized; students should not be asked to just manipulate linguistic forms. Furthermore, the language that is presented by the teacher should be authentic, or at least realistic, eliminating the distraction of contrived language in textbooks.

Students should learn to use English accurately; however, they should also be able to use the language appropriate to a given social context. Students need practice in activating their knowledge of vocabulary, structures, and language functions. They should also receive practice in negotiating meaning.

The language syllabi that are employed are sometimes built around language structures, sometimes functions, sometimes topics and situations. Sometimes the syllabus is set in advance; other times it evolves as the course proceeds either on the basis of the teacher's judgment about what to work on next or on the basis of a learner-generated sequence. Sometimes the syllabus is more task-oriented than it is language-oriented.

The information about the target culture that is taught mostly relates to facts concerning the everyday lifestyle of English speakers. By comparison, cultural attitudes and values usually receive little attention.

Points of view regarding the use of the students' native language during class exhibit the full range of possibilities: some teachers forbid its use, some call upon it to occasionally facilitate understanding, and some use it as the usual vehicle to make meaning clear. At the very least, teachers find a knowledge of their students' native language helpful in knowing what they can build upon in introducing English and in anticipating the challenges their students are likely to face.

In discussing methodologies in our field over a 25-year period, I have been unable to treat any of the developments in depth; some, such as computer-assisted instruction (CAI), I have had to ignore completely due to space constraints. CAI will no doubt play an increasingly important role in methodology as the equipment decreases in cost and therefore becomes more accessible and as the available software matures to a point where computers' full interactive potential can be exploited.

I have also not dealt with interactive video or English-language teaching via television, both of which hold a great deal of promise and which could irrevocably alter teaching methodology.

Conclusion

I began our discussion by observing that there is more diversity in the language-teaching field today than there was 25 years ago. However, unity may be apparent only in hindsight. Perhaps in the golden anniversary issue of the *English Teaching Forum*, what is being practiced during this silver-anniversary year will seem more unified than what is taking place in the field in the year 2012. Of course, it might also be the case that we are in the midst of a paradigm shift (Raimes 1983b), during which our field is in a state of confusion and that by 2012 unity will be restored. Nevertheless, the diversity that exists today should not, I believe, be seen to be troubling. If having so many alternatives is confusing, it is also empowering—for while there is a certain security in knowing that one is teaching the *one right* way, there is also a stifling, imprisoning quality about it.

The science of language teaching has not reached the point of being able to consistently demonstrate the superiority of one methodology over another for all teachers and

all students and all settings… and perhaps it never will. For teaching is a combination of science and art. Science helps us to be informed in contributing to our understanding of learning and of language, but it is the artistic aspect of teaching that requires us to uniquely interpret and apply the scientific information in making the choices for any given situation among the methodological options that exist (Brown 1980). Thus, teaching is a matter of making informed choices (Stevick 1982; Larsen-Freeman 1983b).

Teachers' choices are like those of artists who have full palettes of paint from which they can choose a little of this color and some of another. Artists' choices are not random; they are driven by what artists are trying to achieve and they are assessed by the artists every step of the way to assure that the choices being made are congruent with their purpose. Art teachers can help art students become aware of the options they have by, for example, having them study art history to review the choices others have made. They can also help by working with their students to perfect their technique. But it is incumbent upon the artists themselves to create their unique blend that is their own special contribution to others.

And so it is with teaching. Only those who are intimately acquainted with the situation, with the students, and with themselves can make the choices they are uniquely suited to make. It is, after all, only the teachers who will be there assess the outcome of the choices they make. It is only the teachers who are there to make sure that they know why they are doing what they are doing.

Whereas once teachers could be *trained* in the one way of language teaching, now they must be *educated* to choose among the options that exist (Larsen-Freeman 1983a). While having no one correct way to teach English may be confusing, even frustrating, it also allows teachers the freedom to be creative and to continue to grow and develop in their profession. As we grow, we do so with the motivation that we can increasingly make better choices, informed by our experience as well as by science. The choices we make become better where they provide our students with improved access to English and to aspects of themselves they would otherwise be denied.

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