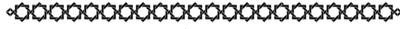# Teaching Methodology in Secondary Education: Unity versus Diversity.

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ملخص

تتعرَض هذه المقالة إلى تعاقب طرائق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في التعليم الثانوي بالجزائر وبصفة أخص في التعليم التكنولوجي حيث تثير نقطتين أساسيتين: أولاهما عدم استجابة الطريقة الأحادية لطموحات المتعلمين المنوعة, وثانيهما التعارض الواضح بين الطريقة الحالية المتمثلة في التركيز على الجانب الوظيفي للغة و اختبارات اللغة الإنجليزية في البكالوريا التي تضع معرفة القواعد همّها الأساسي. و تختم هذه الدراسة بتقديم اقتراحات لطريقة بديلة, تنتقي من مختلف الطرق الأخرى جميع العناصر التي تفيد العملية التعليمية

Abstract

This article describes the succession of English teaching methodology in Algerian secondary education; and more specifically in technology streams. It also raises two main concerns: the inadequacy of the-one-method techniques to meet learners' needs in schooling, and the compatibility of communicative language teaching with 'section two' in the Baccalaureate examination "Language Study" (ONEC 2001-2007).

This study concludes with some suggestions for an alternative 'constrained eclectic way'.

Introduction

Foreign language teaching methodology has adopted the principle of unity in its development. The succession of methods and approaches has often taken place as a reaction to the inadequacy or the failure of the preceding ones to meet learners' needs (Richard and Rogers 1991; Rolf, 1986; Yule 2000). The result, foreign language teachers and learners especially in formal education have been deprived the right of choosing amongst the techniques of the methods they see as the mostly efficient for learning.

1 The Development of English Teaching Methodology in the Algerian School

Since 1962, four major approaches have been adopted to teaching English in secondary education. These are the grammar translation method, the aural-oral method, the structural approach, and last but not least, communicative language teaching. (Ministry of Education 1973a, 1992b, 1995c, 1997d and 2004).

1.1 The Grammar Translation Method

Shortly after the independence, the focus of teaching English was laid on the recognition of written isolated words and on the prescription of grammar rules by means of translation. The aims of that teaching were clearly stated in the translation we suggest for Richard (1960) cited in Hayene (1989):

We have to go straightforward to the goal and present to the pupil in a clear simple and direct way the most used and useful words…those of every day life…Each lesson represents the illustration of a grammatical point. The rules, as it must be, are taught in French using many examples that include the recently acquired words. (p. 75).

This method had been used until the late 1960's in the Ministry of Education , and extended to the late 1970's in the schools of the Ministry of Religious Affairs with Arabic language as a means of translation.

1.2 The Aural Oral Method

In the 1970's, the Ministry of Education initiated a new method as a way to improve English teaching in the country. The focus was then no longer on the written aspect of language nor was it on translation. Despite the fact that its name was not clearly stated (Hayane 1989), the techniques employed into practice gave the impression that it was the aural-oral method stemmed out of the behaviouristic psychology, which put forward the following principles:

Language is a habit. Language teaching in the early stages is habit teaching. We encourage our pupils to form correct behaviour patterns, and this can only be learned by constant practice. It is very difficult to correct wrong habits…What are (pupils) going to learn first? They can only IMITATE the model the teacher has given to them, so it is essential for the teacher to give them clear and simple models. (pp. 185 & 195).

1.3 The Structural Approach

During the mid-seventies, and as a reaction to the aural oral method, which limited English teaching to habit formation and reduced learners to

simple imitators, another approach based on the findings of mentalistic psychology had been embraced. The emphasis of teaching English, as the Ministry of Education (1973) defined it, had shifted to achieving linguistic competence through the knowledge of language rules: "Grammar describes, it does not prescribe. It is the record of how a language is used. In language teaching, however, usage must come before analysis. It is more important for the teacher to give several examples then to state the rule…A structurally graded course presents the grammar in a pedagogical sequence". (p.11).

As a result, lessons had to follow, as suggested in (table 01), a fixed progression of language forms and tenses regardless of what pupils will use language for:

Table 01: The Mid-Seventies Secondary Education English Syllabus

Number	Key Structures
01	Word Order in Simple ,Compound and Complex Sentences
02	Continuous and Present Simple Present Tenses.
03	Simple Past Tense
04	Simple and Continuous Present Perfect Tenses
05	Simple Past and present Perfect Tenses Compared
06	Articles; Some and Any.
07	Continuous Past Tense; Used to; Would.
08	Comparatives and Superlatives; as…. as; Not so...as Expressions of Quantity
09	Prepositions of Time and Place
10	Passive Voice
11	Simple Future Tense; Going to; Present Continuous with Future Meaning.
12	Continuous Future Tense; Simple and Continuous Future Perfect.
13	Simple and Continuous Past Perfect Tenses.
14	Indirect Speech in Statements Questions and Imperatives.
15	Conditional Sentences (If + Present, Past and Past Perfect)
16	Must ;Have to ;Need ;Should and Ought to
17	Have and Have Got.
18	Can; May; Be able to; Manage to.
19	Gerund
20	Prepositions after Verbs and Adjectives.

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 1973:63-64.

1.4 Communicative Language Teaching

During the 1980's the needs have again been redefined and the ultimate objective of teaching English has shifted to enabling learners to use it for communicative purposes.(Kisserly 1988-89).Since then, as Menasseri, (1988) signalled, language functions have been given prominence over

language forms and the teaching syllabi have been designed accordingly (see tables 02, 03 and 04):

So far, the teaching of English in Algerian schools has been done through structurally graded syllabi (which has) proved to be deficient in some respects. The result of such language learning has been an obvious inability of our pre-university pupils to make sensible use of the linguistic knowledge they have acquired. Their level of fluency and creativity had not matched our expectations (that is why) we have designed a syllabus based on some common functions of English, which may be required for and relevant to a wide of communication situations. (p.4).

Table 02: The First Year Syllabus

Source	Unit	Function	Topic
New lines	01	Describing People	Four Friends
	02	Describing People's Regular Activities	Rachid's Day
	06	Instructing	How to Make a Piece of Equipment
My New Book of English	03	Describing a Place	The British Isles
	04	Narrating	Djeha's Stories
	05	Planning Future Activities	A Tunnel Under the Sea
	07	Describing a Process	How Nescafe is Manufactured

Ministry of Education, 1998-99.

Table 03: 2 'AS' Technology Streams' Syllabus.

Source	Units	Function	Text
Midlines	04	Describing Job Requirements	Journalism/Interpreting
New lines	13	Questioning	Job Interviewing
Midlines	07	Narrating	Talking about one's life
Midlines	08	Comparing/Contrasting	The Solar System
Midlines	09	Description Instructing Warning Prohibiting	A Scout's Life
Midlines	14	Giving Advice	Giving Advice to a Young person
New skills	08	Making Predictions	Water Resources

Ministry of Education 1999:6 & 7.

Table 04: 2 'AS' Technical Streams' Syllabus

Source	Units	Functions	Texts
NEW Skills	01	Describing Shapes/Dimensions	Fire extinguisher
	03	Description and use of an object	Computers/TV Sets
	05	Describing Amount and quantity Comparing and Contrasting	Oil Producers Pie Charts

06	Describing a Process	Car making process
07	Instructing and Giving Advice	Electrical Hazards Accidents at Work
08	Making Predictions	Water Resources

Department of Secondary Education: 1995:9.

2. The Compatibility of Communicative Language Teaching with Section Two, Mastery of Language, in the BAC Exam

The suitability of a method to a given syllabus is determined by the extent to which that method can meet the objectives meant to be achieved by that syllabus (Mackey 1986). Regarding secondary education syllabuses, which are built on functions and on themes, there is no question that communicative language teaching is the most suitable method. However the question rises, as Mackey described, when we use CLT for objectives that can be better attained by other methods:

How does the method meet the objectives of the syllabus? Does it concentrate on the same skills as the syllabus prescribes? If the syllabus emphasizes a speaking knowledge of the language, a reading method may not be the most suitable. On the other hand, if the syllabus is limited to a reading objective, the reading section of an all-skill method may, under certain conditions, be the most appropriate method available. The degree of suitability can be determined only to the extent that the syllabus is specific. (p.324).

'Mastery of Language' in the 'BAC' paper that had been in use from 1995 to 2000 was constituted from two stereotyped activities; transformations from the passive to the active voice or vice versa and reporting (ONEC, 1995-2000). For that, dealing with this section did not require teachers or syllabus designers to focus on teaching pupils grammar rules. However since the syllabus changes that have been initiated in 2001 (ONEC, 2000), this section has been enriched with a large number of activities that not only do they call for the knowledge of language functions but for language rules as an end in themselves as well

Therefore, for technology pupils, the problem is not posed when we use communicative language teaching for communicative purposes. The question rises when we impose this method on teachers and on pupils to learn parts of the syllabus that do not require the emphasis on communication.

Comparing the Development of Language Teaching Methodology to the Development of Sciences.

If we compare the development of foreign language teaching methodology to the way sciences have evolved, we can see that methods have developed on the basis of discontinuity and disagreement with what has proceeded. Conversely, in sciences, as Mackey indicated (1986), there has always been a reference to what the previous achievements

When a new method does take hold, it is at the expense of both the good and the bad in the older methods, indifferently overthrown…while sciences have advanced by approximations in which each new stage results from an improvement, not a rejection, of what has gone before. (However), language teaching methods have adopted the pendulum of fashion from one extreme to the other. (p 5).

This has given the impression that the more traditional a method is, the less efficient it will be for teaching. In fact, this is not always the case. Each method no matter how traditional it is contains some positive elements that can contribute to the teaching and learning process. Moreover, most of those traditional methods, whether we approve this or not, are still being implemented in our school. For example, in professional and in technical schools, behaviouristic techniques are still dominant in practical education: a major part of learning in the workshops results from observation imitation and practice. In addition, our pupils are used to learning their first language grammar in prescriptive and descriptive ways (El Akki, Ben Kerid and Hassani, 1999) and they usually use that strategy as a model for learning foreign language grammar.

A Call for a "Constrained Eclectic Way"

The emphasis on the one-method technique, as it has been recommended in our secondary education (Ministry of Education 1970, 1973, 1995 2004) has prevented pupils from taking advantage of the positive elements of the other methods. On the other hand, combining techniques from different approaches may, as seen by Ur (1987), lead to unexpected consequences if not implemented as a result of a careful study and analysis: « It is not uncommon for teachers today to practice a principled eclecticism, combining techniques and principles from various methods in a carefully reasoned manner ». However, as Ur added, there are two questions that teachers need to answer before they decide what elements will better suit their choice: « How do I choose? Or, how far may I be eclectic? » (p.7).

Consequently, eclecticism should not be implemented just for the sake of supporting diversity or because teachers take sides with some approaches and stand against others. Eclecticism should, firstly and most

importantly, respond to three main conditions: the suitability of the method to the syllabus, the objectives set by the educational departments as well as defining the nature of learners' needs. This 'constrained' eclecticism has been advocated by Girard (1986) when he wrote:

I have always advocated for the language teacher an eclectic attitude towards linguistic theories, considering it as his sacred right and duty to borrow from one theory or an other, according to the help it can give him to make his pupils understand… (a teacher can implement) a degree of flexibility and adaptability that will allow (him) to select among a variety of approaches, methods and techniques those elements that best fitted to the needs of a given class at a given time. Such decision will not be taken on the spur of the moment in a haphazard way but as a conclusion of a serious analysis of the situation and out of the available techniques and devices. (p.11).

Eclecticism in Engineering Specialities.

Our suggestion for an 'eclectic way' for technology streams should include four main points: the stated objectives set by the Ministry of Education (1995), science and technology pupils' needs (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998), pupils' level in English (Richards and Rodgers 1991) and the requirements of the Examiner's Guide (ONEC 2000).This 'Constrained Eclectic Way' draws elements from six teaching methods: community language learning, communicative language teaching, the reading method, descriptive and prescriptive grammar and behaviourism.

Community Language Learning

Teaching English in technology streams is affected at two stages of orientation; the first when good pupils at English are sent to general education and the second stage when pupils in technical education join managing and technical streams. Consequently, most of the pupils with poor results in English are orientated to technology streams (Orientation Centre of El-oued 2004 Dept of Technical Education 1999). This process leads them to perceive learning English as an experience that needs to be avoided for the frustration and the anxiety it may cause them: « in defensive learning, the learner sees the learning experience as a threat and a danger to be protected against» (Nation 1985:18).Their previous experience in learning English leads them to lose their confidence in themselves and evaluate their work in English out of success. Mitchell (1986) described this point when he wrote:

Teen students with learning difficulties and / or low levels of motivation…Although very different from one another, they were all joined by two common bonds: they were anxious and perceived

themselves as failures in the educational system… (if we want to help them) the first priority is to put (them) at their case. This could be done by presenting them with practical tasks and activities that (a) absorbed them and (b) removed the fear that they would be called upon to do things that were beyond them. (p.39).

In the same way, Silverman (1990) signaled the impact of negative past experiences on learners: « Many students do poorly in school because they are hesitant and fearful. Students with poor self concepts may give up hope and expect mediocrity or worse as inevitable » (p.456).

To overcome the difficulties which encounter technology pupils, we see that the first part of the solution lies in humanistic and more precisely in the techniques of community language learning. Our choice of CLL is based on two assumptions. The first is psychological: these pupils need to regain their self-confidence in a non-threatening environment. The second is constructivist: cooperative and collaborative learning in the workshop 'TPs' can be taken as a model for learning English in the 'TDs'. As a result, these pupils can gradually acquire a certain level of communicative competence with the close support of teachers.

The Reading Method

The emphasis on the reading skill in technology streams does not belittle the importance of the other skills, but this responds to three key elements; the objectives set by the Ministry of Education, pupils' needs (Abdulghani 1993) and the characteristics of scientific texts themselves (Dudley-Evans and Waters 1998).

The Ministry of Education has stressed the importance of reading in technical education for pupils' present and future needs. For that, reading texts are supposed to bear, to a large extent, the imprint of science and technology and of business and economy. In Higher Education, most of these pupils join technology or economy departments (Ministry of Higher Education 2002, 2003,2004) where English is taught in close relation to their topics of speciality. Consequently, reading, as Abdulghani (1993) denoted, is the most important skill needed by these pupils to deal with the information in scientific texts:" Perhaps the most important ability that a non English speaking student of science needs is reading. Such ability is a crucial tool that aids the learning process, as without it, the student cannot deal with the enormous bulk of literature he has to read during his study of English" (p.42).

The other point that stresses the importance of reading in technology streams is the characteristics of technical texts themselves. Technical texts differ from general English texts because of the' great bulk' of

knowledge they include. That is why; teachers in technical education should train their pupils on the most effective techniques that enable them, as Dudley –Evans and St John signaled (2000), to extract information accurately:

One of the most important contributions to the approach to reading in an ESP course was the shift from Text As a Linguistic Object (TALO) to Text As a Vehicle of Information (TAVI) (John and Davis 1983).John and Davis encapsulated the key principles, that, for ESP learners, extracting information accurately; that is understanding the macro structure comes before language study, and the application of the information in the text is of paramount importance. (p.96).

TEACHING GRAMMAR as an END in ITSELF

The reintroduction of teaching grammar rules is based on three main factors. One: effective communication is the result of both appropriateness and correctness (Larsen-Freeman 1987).Two: we should consider pupils' learning styles in learning their first language grammar (Zhenhui 2001).Three: third year pupils are tested on accuracy in the BAC exam and not on fluency (See BAC English Papers, Mastery of Language 2001-2007).

Since the introduction of communicative language teaching in secondary education, language functions have been given more prominence over language forms. This is because the blame for pupils' inability to communicate efficiently in English was laid on structural based syllabi (Kisserly 1988-89).However; the overemphasis on language functions without the support of grammar rules has also proved to cause communication deficiencies. For that, it is both use and usage, as seen by Larsen-Freeman (1987) which enable learners to conduct an effective piece of communication :"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 integral parts of communicative competence. (p. 4).

Additionally, in our school pupils have always been learning their first language grammar either prescriptively or descriptively, and this has made its impact on the way they learn foreign language grammar. The point is when we had adopted the communicative approach; we did not go through a transitional stage where the shift from structural to functional syllabi could have taken place gradually and smoothly.

Moreover, Section Two in the new BAC exam paper has re-emphasised the knowledge of language rules at the expense the

knowledge of language itself. Since the need for achievement is one of the key factors to motivation, secondary school pupils' interest has also shift from focussing on functions to grammar rules.

In our call for more focus on teaching rules, we do not aim to neglect fluency but we need to know that effective communication is built around both fluency and accuracy.

Teaching of Pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation in secondary education stems out of its importance as a main factor of teaching English communicatively (Ben Aziza et al 1999).This is because speaking accurately and appropriately does not always ensure that our speech is understood if we do not ,as by Von Shon (1987) put it, speak intelligibly :

The primary purpose of language is to communicate facts, ideas, feelings, questions, warnings, etc. And increasingly the purpose of English is to communicate on the international level. Frequently communication is in writing but more often it is in speech…If speech is unintelligible, the act of communication has failed; the person who was to have received the message fails to respond or responds inappropriately. (p.23).

The importance of pronunciation was behind its reintroduction in the new syllabus (2001) for third year pupils. This section is presented under the title 'Oral in Writing' (ONEC 2000:22-24).In 'CLT', there is a tendency to teach it through meaningful experience, but activities in the BAC exam require pupils to know it at word level. Consequently, the most appropriate way to teach it is through behaviouristic techniques of imitation, repetition and practice.

Conclusion

If we trace the development of English teaching methodology in the Algerian school, we see that when a new method is adopted, the preceding one is fully ignored regardless of the positive elements it contains. The shift to the aural-oral method resulted in the ban of translation and the prescription of rules. When the structural approach had been introduced, conditioning pupils' behaviour through the imitation of models was regarded as a primitive way of teaching, and lastly, language usage has, as remarked, lost in the concentration on language use Larsen-Freeman (1987).

In a word, the solution for the deficiency of English language teaching methodology in the Algerian school lies in the shift form unity to diversity. This is because unlike the one-method techniques, which

responds to the demands of one category of learners, eclecticism attempts to meet the needs of a larger spectrum of foreign language learners

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