METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS
a prerequisite for effective teaching

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Who will go with Fergus now,
And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
And dance upon the level shore?
Young man, lift up your russet brow,
And lift your tender eyelids, maid
And brood on hopes and fears no more.

Yeats

Introduction

Conversation teachers use a whole host of teaching materials such as textbooks, tapes and videos in attempts to teach their students how to communicate in a second language. Most often these materials are selected by the teachers themselves but there are also times when the teacher is forced to use materials that were selected by the institution wherein (s)he is employed. In either case, questions like, 'Who is this book written for? Why are the dialogs long or short? How should this exercise be utilized in order to get the students to talk?' etc., spring to the mind of the teacher. One of the authors of this paper remembers a frightening teaching experience he had when asked to teach an English conversation class to a group of first-year college students in Japan using the text, Live Action English. Upon opening it, he was shocked to discover a series of units arranged around topics like Candle, Dog, Hungry Bugs and Bloody Knee. Worst of all, each topic appeared on one page with a picture and 10 to 15 sentences-all written in the

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imperative! In short, a whole textbook of commands! Where was the 'sacred' dialog, the structured drills and repetitions, the cassette tape and teacher's book? Surely, this had to be some kind of joke!

It was not until he read the foreword, talked with several other teachers who had used it, did a little research on his own and actually used the book himself, that he discovered that Live Action English is actually based upon a sound theory buttressed with support from findings in psychology and SLA research which manifests itself in a teaching technique known as Total Physical Response. It was exciting to see that researchers could empirically derive data from something as simple as the imperative and fashion it into an effective pedagogical form, complete with a plethora of jargon and terminology to describe certain phenomena in the field of SLA. From the totality of that experience (fear, understanding, acceptance) there came the realization that all teaching materials, used on a daily basis by all of us in the language teaching profession, must similarly be founded upon other provocative ideas, theories and/or philosophies of language learning and teaching.

The authors of this paper contend that all language teachers must be aware of the pedagogical base of the materials (textbook, tapes etc.) they utilize in the classroom. This is an essential prerequisite for getting the most from one's teaching tools and imparting to the students the skills they need in order to communicate effectively in another language. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to state that, without such knowledge and understanding, teachers are far less effective, and are not giving their students all there is to give.

In order to be able to ascertain pedagogical bases, the teacher must have a knowledge of what has been tried before, what is being used currently and the basic direction in which methodology and pedagogy are heading in the future. Given this then, the aim of this paper is to first provide the reader with a brief historical survey of language teaching

practices and principles over the last fifty years. In short, an attempt will be made to show why and how we have arrived at the current language teaching/learning situation that we now find ourselves in. Both good points and shortcomings will be discussed. This will be followed by a section dealing with the need for textbook analysis, which the present authors contend is absolutely essential before a teacher enters a classroom for the first time with new teaching material. The final segment of this paper will expound upon the idea of 'principled eclecticism', which basically is a call for teachers to keep their minds open to new teaching ideas and not become locked into a 'one technique' style. At the outset let us state that we are not attempting to judge whether one method or approach is 'right' or 'wrong' as we firmly believe that any of the popular methodological approaches currently used to teach a second/foreign language is 'correct' providing the teacher is aware of what that methodology entails and is open to adaptations according to the needs of the teaching situation (s)he finds himself/herself involved in.

I

Our discussion will commence with the period following 1940. (Space considerations do not allow for discussion of earlier methodological ideas, with the exception of Bloomfield. Readers interested in pre-1940 language learning/teaching theory are directed to the writings of Stern as well as Richards & Rodgers, which are listed in the bibliography). This period ushered in a whole new way of looking at the way in which languages were taught and came about largely as the result of the needs of military personnel who needed to quickly obtain conversational proficiency in a number of languages because of WWII.

Because conversational proficiency had not been the objective of language programs prior to that time, textbooks did not exist for many languages — specifically American Indian languages. The Yale linguist Leonard Bloomfield had already been involved in deriving teaching

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techniques for the learning of such language and he and his colleagues used the so-called 'informant method' which utilized a native speaker of the target language-the informant-who acted as the main source of vocabulary, phrases and sentences for imitation. This 'informant' method was quickly adapted into the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) with the help of linguistic scholars and a language training program was initiated. Students in these courses studied six days a week for ten hours each day. There was an extensive drill period each week coupled with twenty to thirty hours of private study.

Although the ASTP program lasted a mere two years it achieved impressive results among its students and created manuals with such titles as Spoken Chinese and Spoken Burmese by the mid-forties. (See Stern, 1983 and Richards & Rodgers, 1986). More importantly, however, it showed that language training did not have to be done in the conventional school-type language course way. It could be taught to larger populations of ordinary learners through intensive training with an 'oral' emphasis. The ASTP's 'methodology', like the "Direct Method', was based upon extensive contact with the target language. As Richards and Rodgers (1986:45) note, "It was a program innovative mainly in terms of the procedures used and the intensity of teaching rather than in terms of its underlying theory." However, the success of the ASTP programs unquestionably led to the general public's recognition of the state of the second/foreign language teaching profession up until that time.

As a result of the ASTP programs, the Aural-Oral or Structural Approach developed by Fries and his colleagues, behaviorist psychology, structural linguistics and contrastive analysis, the so-called "Audio-lingual Method" came into existence. This method made the audacious claim that it had transferred language teaching into a science that allowed learners to achieve mastery of foreign languages effectively and efficiently. In reality, however, it only made use of the common sense

idea that 'practice makes perfect'. It was widely adapted in North American colleges and universities as a 'god send' approach in the late fifties and had its heyday until the late sixties when it started to encounter criticism that led it to fall into disfavor, although it should be noted that Audiolingualism and materials based upon its principles are still widely used today. Now, let us examine the factors that led to the development and acceptance of Audiolingualism as well as those that led to its decline.

From the influence of behaviorism in linguistics and subsequent rethinking of the way languages should be taught, Leonard Bloomfield had emerged as a pioneer in the field of linguistics and cannot be ignored even today. Through his seminal work "language" (1933), Bloomfield dismissed traditional grammar and reading-oriented language instruction and instead argued for the establishment of linguistics as an empirically based descriptive science in which the role of the linguist was to discover regularities and structures in language. He endorsed a purely inductive 'structuralist' prescription for language learning in which imitation, memorization, mechanical drill and the practice of sentence patterns as unrelated items were to be used, preferably taught by a native speaker. From this structuralist approach, five basic tenants emerged:

1. Language is speech, not writing.
2. A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say.
3. Languages are different.
4. A language is a set of habits.
5. Teach the language, not about the language.

<div align="right">(Stern,1983:157)</div>

These basic views about language made up the linguistic side of the concept of how languages should be taught at that time. In addition, behavioristic learning theory gave this linguistic／teaching prescription

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the theoretical base it needed.

Behavioristic views of learning made up the learning theory associated with the Audiolingual Method. More specifically, Skinner's (1957) book "Verbal Behavior" was thought to have given language teachers the theoretical basis with which they could best teach language. Behaviorism, with its emphasis on conditioning, provided the basis on which human beings learned languages by focusing on 'habits' as they related to language transfer. A 'good' habit could result through imitation (i.e. a learner copies/practices the stimulus behavior sufficiently enough for it to become 'automatic') or through reinforcement (i.e. the response of the learner is rewarded or punished depending on whether it is appropriate or otherwise, until only appropriate responses are given).

'Errors' are considered undesirable in that they constitute non-learning and should therefore, be avoided. The theory of 'transfer' was also involved in the advent of the Audiolingual Method. Transfer basically refers to the interaction (both positive and negative) between the L1 and the L2. In theory, the elements of the L1 that do not match with those of the L2 ostensibly lead the learner to make errors,i.e. negative transfer. Those situations wherein the L1 and L2 are similar, on the other hand, would result in positive transfer-a situation thought to guarantee fast, easy learning.

With the advent of structuralism in linguistics and the analysis of languages that logically followed from the linguistic and behavioristic learning theories of the early fifties and sixties, linguists became firmly entrenched in the notion that differences between the L1 and L2 were primarily seen as 'interference' to successful second language learning, while L1 and L2 similarities were thought of as an aid in acquisition of the second language. As a result, contrastive analysis studies were carried out between a wide corpus of language. In 1957, Lado hypothesized that the key to degrees of difficulty in learning a second language was to be found in the comparison between the native and foreign languages.

He believed that contrastive analysis would alleviate difficulties in second language learning. In short, contrastive analysis theory is made up of two forms: a weak one, which could be used as a diagnostic tool for identifying errors that are the result of interference, and a strong version, that went as far as to suggest that all errors can be predicted by revealing differences between L1 and L2. As a result, by the late fifties, contrastive analysis with its dependence upon behavioristic views of learning psychology, became the mechanism for curriculum development, preparation and development of teaching materials, diagnosis of learning problems and testing. All of this had culminated into the Audiolingual Method.

On the pedagological level, Audiolingualism encompassed the theoretical corpus provided by behaviorism in psychology (stimulus-response-reinforcement), structuralism in linguistics and contrastive analysis. All of these were incorporated into a methodology that was hailed as the ultimate alternative to grammar-based methods and the answer to the inherent weakness of classroom instruction. Audiolingual methodologists emphasized the teaching of oral skills (listening and speaking) before reading and writing and admonished the over-teaching of grammer rules or direct translation of the native language into the language being learned. In the learning environment (classroom), mimicry and outright 'overlearning' (Finnocchiaro, 1984) of the target language were seen as the means to the end of good 'habit' formation through the oral reproduction of dialogs that are purported to represent real communication. Another integral feature of Audiolingual instruction involves the manipulation and mastery of patterned drills based upon the structures and vocabulary found in the dialogs to the eventual use of a calculated and controlled conversation. Audiolingualism involved the liberal use of the new technology of the times: tape recorders, language laboratories, radio, television, and film strip. This was especially true in cases where a native speaker was not available. The optimal situation for language

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learning under this method is best described by Brooks:

> "... learning an L2 should establish in the learner a completely separate or 'co-ordinate' language system without reference to the mother tongue so as to recreate the conditions of a bilingual person who had learnt his two languages in the manner of native language acquisition in early childhood."

<div align="right">(Quoted from Stern, 1983:30)</div>

Criticism of the Audiolingual Method came basically from two directions: its theoretical foundation was considered unsound from a learning theory perspective and users of the method found that practical results were, more often than not, far short of expectations. In short, it was not helping students to communicate outside of the classroom and the drills were repetitive and boring.

Noam Chomsky's blazing attack (1959) on Skinner's "Verbal Behavior" greatly changed the underlying theory of language learning in North America. His rejection of structural linguistics (upon which Audiolingualism was based) and behaviorist psychology learning theory (also the basis of Audiolingualism) caused a reappraisal of the Audiolingual Method. His theory of transformational grammar proposed that language learning is derived from innate aspects of the mind and from how humans process experience through language. Chomsky (1966:153) states, "Language is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistic behavior characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy."

Chomsky also took issue with the behavioristic view of language learning which contended that it was the same as other types of learning. He argued that it was not subject to the same laws of stimulus-response and reinforcement. He argued convincingly that sentences are not learned by repetition but rather are generated from one's underlying linguistic competence.

Other criticisms also came into the picture as the much vaunted theory of Contrastive Analysis proved to be capable only as a predictive tool and even in that area, it left much to be desired. In short, the question of whether or not 'difference' between language led to language leaning difficulties was called into question. By the same token, research findings suggest that 'similarity' between the learner's first language does not necessarily guarantee easy acquisition of the second one. Clearly, something was amiss.

In one fell swoop the memorization and pattern drilling of Audiolingualism was questioned. Such practices might lead to 'language-like' learning in class but fell far short as far as actual competence was concerned in real-life situations outside of the classroom. The lack of an alternative to Audiolingualism led to a period of experimentation, adaptation, innovation and perhaps most importantly, confusion (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). It is our contention that this confusion continues even to this very day. The so-called panacea of language teaching was, in many respects, dead.

II

As noted above, the dethronement of Audiolingualism from its supreme position of being 'the only way' to teach/learn a second language led to a period of experiment. New approaches and methods came into existence in attempts to cope with the utter vacuum left by the demise of Audiolingualism from its vaunted status. Among the most well-known and best-documented of these are Communicative Language Teaching, which came about because of changes in the British teaching tradition with respect to second/foreign languages; Total Physical Response, developed by James Asher, which is related to the tenants of 'trace theory' which holds that more intensive memory connections can be established by combining verbal exercises with motor activity; Caleb Gattegno's The Silent Way, which is based on the premise that the teacher should not speak much at all in order to encourage the learner

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to produce as much target language as possible. This method represents a 'problem-solving' approach to language learning; Community Language Learning, which is a language teaching theory based upon the 'client-centered' ideas of Rogerian Psychology; The Natural Approach, devised by Krashen and Terrell, who see communication as the primal function of language. This approach focuses on the teaching of communicative skills and is labelled a 'communicative approach' by its creators; Suggestopedia, developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist-educator Georgi Lazanov, utilizes learning ideas from Suggestology. It possesses an almost 'mystic air' and is noted for its conspicuous use of music in the classroom. Of course, there are also many other approaches to the teaching of second/foreign language but most of these are, more often than not, adaptations of one or more of the above methods.

A main factor in both the decline of Audiolingualism and the proliferation of 'new' approaches to SLA practices was the role played by cognitive psychology in its challenge to behaviorist learning theory. Cognitive learning theory views learning, not as a passive activity, but rather as an active process that involves organizing information, making comparisons and forming new associations. These are guided by past and present experiences and are very much related to the 'world-knowledge' that every person carries within his/her very existence as a thinking organism that communicates with other thinking organisms and struggles to put the things in life into some kind of organized framework.

A central distinguishing feature of cognitive theory lies in its contention that 'insight' plays an important role in all learning. How many times has one approached a certain problem (say in mathematics) from various angles before a solution could be reached, only to later say "Aha. How easy! Why couldn't I have seen that in the first place?"

According to the findings of cognitive research, the 'Aha!' experience is not caused by mere conditioning but is a much more complex process, involving a great deal of active, cognitive activity. Insight also

incorporates the idea of an 'awareness' which comes after making several incorrect attempts before success occurs. Cognitive learning advocates have argued convincingly that these elements are also involved in language learning as well. Surely, language learning (and use) is not a passive activity. With the belief that insight and awareness are necessary ingredients in learning, structural linguistics, behavioristic (Audiolingual) learning ideas about 'error' (i.e. that complete correctness is the goal and that any 'mistake' is a sign of non-learning) also came under fire. Indeed, the theory of Interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) looks at second language learning as a period of 'hypothesis testing' wherein attempts are made by the learner to 'test-out' different structures/forms in order to achieve communicative goals. Therefore, the reasons for, and explanations of, 'error' came under close scrutiny. For example, does a performance 'error' really indicate that a learner does not have a certain structure internalized or could it be the result of other factors such as fatigue, hypothesis-testing experimentation or even a slip of the tongue?

With structural linguistics and Audiolingualism reeling from the onslaught of convincing criticism and behaviorism also coming under fire, a basic swing from the conditioning-reflex (stimulus-response) stance of second-foreign language learning occurred. Theory went full-circle towards a mentalistic stance. Researchers now make reference to the 'black-box' ideas of language representation in the mind/brain of the learner. Chomsky's ideas about first language acquisition (e.g. competence vs performance; universal grammar etc.) became highlighted during the last thirty years and are still debated today.

As time went on, however, it became apparent that, even though behavioristic learning models offered incomplete explanations about language learning, the 'black-box' ideas of the cognitive-mentalist approach, by themselves, also suffered from shortcomings as complete explanatory tools for second language acquisition.

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Also to be taken in account were sociolinguistic (Halliday, Wilkins, Candlin, Widdowson etc.) points and the view that language was used for specific purposes according to the demands of human social interaction. This applies to both first and second language learning and use.

All of these factors spurred the underlying theory of second∕foreign language learning to adopt an 'interactionist' approach. Simply put, due attention had to be paid to ALL of the language learning∕teaching theories-from structural linguistics and, incorporating behavioristic learning theory, to the cognitive-mentalist factors of 'black-box' representations.

From this 'interactionist' realization, as mentioned previously, a plethora of ideas∕methods∕approaches towards how second∕foreign languages could be best taught and learned were spawned. All of these are based upon certain previous ideas with respect to learning theory and practice techniques. Some contain a more structural∕behavioristic base (e. g. Total Physical Response) while others are more cognitive-mentalist in spirit (e.g. The Silent Way). However, it must be remembered that the approaches of today are open to amendment for adaptation which incorporates ideas from the whole spectrum of second ∕foreign language teaching.

Syllabus design became a complex art from which various types of syllabi have emerged. For example, we can talk about grammatical, notional-functional, situational and even communicative syllabuses-all of which have their own place dependant upon who is teaching what to whom.

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From the foregoing it is obvious that the SLA teaching profession is a complex one indeed! Today there exists an extraordinary number of textbooks from which a teacher can choose. Each of these (hopefully!) is based upon the ideas and factors of SLA research that we have briefly

discussed above. It is a major contention of this paper that the SLA teacher must have an understanding and working knowledge of the theories concerned with second∕foreign language teaching and learning. This requires time and serious reading of the literature in that field, not only about the issues actually raised herein but also about countless other factors and ideas which space considerations do not allow us to pursue here. Without such understanding and knowledge, no teacher will be able to formulate his∕her own ideas about how second∕foreign languages should be taught and learned. Indeed, without one's own basic policy∕belief about SLA learning ∕teaching how can one really be an effective teacher? And how can an SLA teacher formulate ideas about learning∕teaching without a knowledge of where the field has been, where it is now and (hopefully) about where it is going in the future?

Each teacher's views∕ideas about SLA teaching and learning will change and adapt as (s)he travels along the road of his ∕her profession IF time and conscious thought go into the formulation of these views and ideas. This will enable the teacher to be more effective and give his∕her students a much greater chance of success. A direct result of this knowledge will be the ability to analyze textbooks quickly and efficiently in order to determine under what theoretical framework they have been written. The authors of this paper absolutely contend that this is a mandatory prerequisite that must be undertaken prior to utilizing any teaching materials with students. As a direct consequence of this idea the present authors would like to offer some basic guidelines for textbook analysis as we firmly believe that this is important in cases where the teacher is deciding his∕her textbooks for a new class and absolutely essential in those cases where textbooks and other teaching materials are determined by the learning institution at which (s)he is employed. In the latter case, the knowledge about method and approach that we have discussed herein is invaluable because it is a hideous fate indeed to be required to use teaching materials that are

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based upon methodology／approach that are completely new and unknown to the teacher. Furthermore, a sound, overall knowledge of SLA method and approach will enable the teacher to be able to adapt those materials of any base to better meet the needs of both the teacher and student.

At this point we would like to offer some basic guidelines for textbook analysis by teachers in the SLA field. It is our contention that these factors (and perhaps others) must be taken into account for material selection:

1) The learning／teaching theory on which the book has been written. Is it based upon behavioristic, mentalist or interactionist ideas?

2) The basic approach or methodology that is being employed. Does it conform to one (or more) of the accepted methods or approaches? If so, which one(s)? If not, how exactly is it trying to teach?

3) What types of activities does it utilize? Dialogs, information-gap etc? How is each chapter laid out? Does it start with dialogs and move on to other activities and is that order absolutely rigid or can it be varied?

4) Can it be adapted to conform to other types of method／approach? If so, how? If not, the teacher must be aware of the basic tenants of the chosen approach.

5) For what level of learner has the book been written? Obviously, one would not employ a text that is too difficult or easy for his／her students and yet, sometimes this happens as the students are of a different level than first assumed or the teaching institution has selected a text that is not appropriate from a level point of view. In such cases, could the level be adapted and how?

6) Is the content interesting and challenging? If not, can it easily

be amended and how?

7) Does it contain tapes to go along with it? If so, try to listen to them or ask someone who has used it to ascertain whether they contain 'natural' sounding examples of language. If they are not natural, can one teach without the tape and how will this affect the effectiveness of the material for the classroom?

8) Are there visual clues such as pictures and diagrams etc? If so, do they 'look' good for helping to promote learning and if not, how can they best be utilized? In short, are non-verbal alternatives of structures, expressions, and/or language items available for communication.

9) Do the materials/textbooks relate to the students' native culture or their own world experience? Or can differences between the native culture and that of the target language culture be utilized in some way to promote motivation and interest?

10) Is paired or group practice encouraged? If not, can the text be adapted to incorporate these practices? (See the writings of Michael Long for an in-depth discussion of the advantages of paired or group work).

11) Does the text allow for an effective way of student evaluation? In short can testing be carried out easily with the text?

Of course, other factors may be applicable to certain other texts dependant upon the student needs. Consequently, we would like to stress that an SLA teacher must be open to experimentation and adaptation. In our opinion, given the complexity of the field that we are in and ever-changing needs of students, the teacher must not be a 'one' method/approach person. Of course, we realize that each of us will have our own preferences as far as method/approach and learning theory are concerned. It is a teacher's prerogative to possess these and,

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as we have previously mentioned, we believe it to be mandatory. However, the reality of our situation also demands that we be able to react when something is not working. If we had students that were not reacting in a positive way to one approach, even if it was the 'one' that we deemed most effective, we would not hesitate to alter that in order to get better learning results from our students. If 'straight' Audiolingualism worked with a group of very motivated learners (much like those in the ASTP programs of the forties) we would not hesitate to utilize this method although we would also investigate the possibility of adapting this method in order to circumvent some of the notable problems that have arisen over the years.

We are also firm believers in the notion that motivation is a cardinal element in successful SLA. If motivation is lacking among our students we teachers must attempt to 'help' our students get motivated. This is related both to our teaching styles, which should be energetic and enthusiastic, and the materials that we use in our classrooms, which should be conducive towards promoting motivation. Obviously, 'boring' textbooks and unenthusiastic teachers will result in poor motivational learning environments.

In essence we are attempting to promote a flexibility on the part of teachers-both from a materials selection perspective and method/approach factors. This 'principled eclecticism' stance represents, in our opinion, the place where SLA learning/ teaching theory stands at this point in time. The SLA teachers of today must be knowledgeable, flexible and creative. They must be able to react to situations quickly and efficiently when method/approach, learning theory and textbook (materials) bog down. In order to accomplish this, the SLA teacher must be armed with knowledge of where our field has been, where it is now and where it will be going in the future. Through a flexible, creative, principled eclectic view we can be better teachers that will be able to give our students access to a wide variety of approaches and

learning theory stances to better insure their success and also help the development of our field through new attempts at the performance of our profession.

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