

СОЦИОЛИНГВИСТИКА, ЭТНОЛИНГВИСТИКА, ПСИХОЛИНГВИСТИКА КАК СОСТАВЛЯЮЩИЕ ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРНЫХ ЗНАНИЙ

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ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGIES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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The present paper focuses on the problem of alternative methodologies in language teaching. It embraces three approaches: Total Physical Response, the Audio-lingual method and the Silent Way. The strengths and weaknesses of each are analyzed. The sphere of implication of the methodologies under study is described. It is proved that the elements of the analyzed methods can be quite effective in reaching specific desired learning outcomes.

Key words: Alternative Methodologies, Language Teaching, Total Physical Response, the Audio-lingual method, the Silent Way.

INTRODUCTION

The field of Language Teaching is constantly developing in order to address the range and level of language proficiency required for participation in today's global community. Now the field of teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language has become a dynamic community itself. Its members, who are language teaching professionals, address the key issues that shape the design and delivery of language teaching. Thus, new approaches are sought and older ones are re-examined. This article argues that language teaching would benefit by not neglecting alternative methodologies though being aware of their limited sphere of implication. Its aim is to consider possible benefits of incorporating their elements into language teaching. The paper focuses on three approaches, once quite popular but then subjected to criticism and set aside: Total Physical Response, the Audio-lingual method and the Silent Way.

The chosen approaches and methods have been described by numerous authors. A number of books have been considered including Scott Thornbury's *How to teach grammar* (2000) where the approaches and methods are basically arranged chronologically; *The EFL Textbook and Ideology* (1992) by Bessie Dendrinos who uses a different way of arranging the approaches and methods to language teaching taking into consideration the educational value systems such as Classical Humanism (Grammar-Translation Method and the Cognitive Approach), Reconstructionism (Audio-Lingual and Communicative Approaches) and Progressivism (Task-Based Approach, the Process and Procedural Syllabus); *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2014) by Richards

and Rodgers that focuses on major trends in twentieth-century language teaching, alternative approaches and methods and current communicative approaches.

The organization of the present paper is as follows. First the general background to each of the alternative methodologies is provided. Then the criticism that they were subjected to is examined and their drawbacks analyzed. Finally the potential of alternative methodologies implication in language teaching is discussed and some benefits highlighted.

The first focus of the article is Total Physical Response (TPR). Originally developed by James Asher, an American professor of psychology, in the 1960s, Total Physical Response (TPR) is based on the theory that the memory is enhanced through association with physical movement. It is closely connected with the theories of mother tongue language acquisition in young children. The assumption is that a second language can be learned in the same way as the first – through the same natural processes. So, TPR tries to mimic these processes by requiring students to respond to commands, which in turn require physical movements. Thus, TPR as an approach to teaching a second language is based, first and foremost, on listening and this is linked to physical actions which are designed to reinforce comprehension of particular basic items. [1].

An example of typical TPR instructions might be "Stand up", "Open the door", "Sit down" and "Give Alex your dictionary". The students follow the instructions by physically performing the activities. Given a supportive classroom environment, it is very likely that with even a fairly limited amount of repetition basic instructions such as these could be assimilated by the learners easily.

The above examples, however, also illustrate some of the potential weaknesses inherent in the approach. Firstly, from a purely practical point of view, the activity might become repetitious for the learners fast enough, although the use of situational role-play could provide a range of contexts for practicing a wider range of lexis. Secondly, it is fairly difficult to give instructions without using imperatives, so the language input is basically restricted to this single form. Thirdly the relevance of some of the language used in TPR activities to real-world learner needs is questionable. Finally, moving from the listening and responding stage to oral production might be workable in a small group of learners but it would appear to be problematic when applied to a class of 30 students [1].

Nevertheless, the advantages of integrating the approach into language teaching are plentiful. First and foremost TPR is essential for kinesthetic learners. Moreover, TPR activities are very motivating and fun, especially for young learners. It is also one of the easiest ways to acquire definite vocabulary items. There are many lists of words that can be learned with TPR. Although it is widely accepted that such lists naturally are limited. The examples of the categories in such lists are parts of the body (eyes, hair, forehead, lips, nose, mouth, etc), numbers (by using pens, for example), colours (blue, red, black, white, pink, etc), general body movements (stand up, sit down, walk, stop, turn left, jump, etc), general verbs you can use with objects (pick up, put down, touch, throw, show me, catch, etc), drinks (water, milk, juice, coffee, tea, etc), fruits/vegetables (apple, banana, plum, grapes, orange, tomato, cucumber, etc), words that have to do with a book (author, chapter, page, title, open, close, etc), prepositions (on, in, under, above, behind, etc), clothing (coat, shirt, shoes, belt, hat, dress, watch, etc).

Also in defense of the approach, it should be emphasized that a course designed around TPR principles would not be expected to follow a TPR syllabus exclusively, and Asher himself suggested that TPR should be used in association with other methods and techniques.

The second part of the paper focuses on Audio-lingualism (1960s) where the emphasis is on learning grammatical and phonological structure, especially for speaking and listening. This approach has its roots in the USA during World War II, when there was a pressing need to train key personnel quickly and effectively in foreign language skills. Therefore American universities were to develop an effective language approach for teaching military personnel. The results of the Army Specialized Training Program are generally regarded to have been very successful, with the caveat that the learners were in small groups and were highly motivated, which undoubtedly contributed to the success of the approach based on oral drilling [6, p. 50].

The approach was theoretically underpinned by structural linguistics, a movement in linguistics that focused on the phonemic, morphological and syntactic systems underlying the grammar of a given language, rather than according to traditional categories of Latin grammar. As such, it was held that learning a language involved mastering the building blocks of the language and learning the rules by which these basic elements are combined from the level of sound to the level of sentence. The audio-lingual approach was also based on the behaviourist theory of learning, which held that language, like other aspects of human activity, is a form of behaviour. Hence it was to be learnt through the formation of correct speech habits [7, p. 27].

In the behaviourist view, language is elicited by a stimulus and that stimulus then triggers a response. Spoken language comes before written language. Dialogues and drill are central to the approach. Accurate pronunciation and control of structure are paramount [2].

Notably the weakness of the approach is transferring learnt patterns to real communication. It does not take into consideration the cognitive views of language learning and communicative accounts of language itself. In addition students are not given adequate information on the structure or rules of the language hence they cannot manipulate them. It is also believed that the approach can be demotivating since students do not have an opportunity to personalize, and therefore retain, language.

Yet any kind of drilling used in the classroom has its basis in the audio-lingual approach. Drills are generally categorized as mechanical, meaningful and communicative. A mechanical drill is one where there is complete control over the student's response, and where comprehension is not required in order to produce a correct response. A meaningful drill is one in which there is still control over the response, but understanding is required in order for the student to produce a correct response. A communicative drill is one in which the type of response is controlled but the student provides his or her own content or information. Richards and Rodgers as well as Dendrinos talk about various kinds of drills: repetition drills, completion drills, substitution drills etc [6, p. 60-62; 4, p. 114-115]

Dialogues are the basic form of instructional materials in the Audio-lingual method that are productively used in the classroom. The dialogue serves three main functions: it

illustrates the target structure, the situation the structure may be used and provides cultural information for language use wherever possible.

The third part of the present article is dedicated to the Silent Way. It was developed in 1970s after the Chomskyan criticism of the behaviourism upon which the audio-lingual method was found. Caleb Gattegno, the founder of the method, devoted his thinking to the importance of problem solving approach in education and. The origin of the Silent Way highlighted the cognitive domain in language learning. The method itself turned to be constructivist and lead the learners to develop their own conceptual models of all the aspects of the language. It is generally believed that the best way of achieving this is to help students to be experimental learners. Thus, The Silent Way is characterized by its focus on problem solving, discovery and creativity. Richards and Rodgers summarized the method into three major features [5, p. 99].

1. Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates.
2. Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects.
3. Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned.

The consensus view is that a good silent way learner is a good problem solver. The teacher's role resides only in giving minimum repetitions and correction, remaining silent most of the times, leaving the learner struggling to solve problems about the language and get a grasp of its mechanism.

The structural patterns of the target language are presented by the teacher and the grammar "rules" of the language are learnt inductively by the learners. Cuisenaire rods (small coloured blocks of varying sizes originally intended for the teaching of mathematics) are often used to illustrate meaning (the physical objects mentioned above). New items are added sparingly by the teacher and learners take these as far as they can in their communication until the need for the next new item becomes apparent. The teacher then provides this new item by modeling it very clearly just once. The learners are then left to use the new item and to incorporate it into their existing stock of language, again taking it as far as they can until the next item is needed and so on [3].

Some critics point out the minimalist role of the teacher as a drawback since the lack of help on the part of the teacher may jeopardize the learning itself. The isolation of the students and the apparent lack of real communication in the Silent Way has also been criticized, with some arguing that it is difficult to take the method beyond the very basics of the language, with only highly motivated learners being able to generate real communication from the rigid structures illustrated by the rods. The fact that, for logistical reasons, it is limited to relatively small groups of learners is also seen as a weakness.

CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, Cuisenaire rods can be used extremely creatively for various purposes from teaching pronunciation to story-telling. Furthermore the Silent Way certainly deals with a problem of excessive teacher talking time which is something to be discouraged in modern Language Teaching. It is also student centered since the indirect role of the teacher highlights the importance and the centrality of the learner who is responsible in

figuring out and testing the hypotheses about how language works. Lastly, a great advantage of Silent Way is its problem-solving feature which also may well prove to be its most enduring legacy as it has led indirectly both to the idea of Task-based Learning and to the widespread use of problem-solving activities in language.

To sum up it is necessary to underline that although the analyzed approaches in their purest form possess many weaknesses, to dismiss them as an outmoded methods is to ignore the reality of current classroom practice. As with other methods and approaches the aspects of the Silent Way, Total Physical Response and the Audio-lingual method can be observed in many lessons in the modern classroom. Hence it is worth reflecting on actual classroom practice and noticing that the elements of the analyzed methods can be quite effective in reaching specific desired learning outcomes. They can be adapted and implemented becoming a valuable source of classroom techniques.

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АЛЬТЕРНАТИВНЫЕ МЕТОДОЛОГИИ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ ЯЗЫКА

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Настоящая статья рассматривает проблему альтернативных методологий в преподавании языка. Она охватывает дискуссионные вопросы трех подходов: Полного Физического Реагирования, аудио-лингвального и невербального. Проанализированы преимущества и недостатки каждого из них. Выявлена сфера применения рассматриваемых методологий. Доказана эффективность интегративного подхода в преподавании с инкорпорированием элементов альтернативных методологий в учебный процесс.

Ключевые слова: альтернативные методологии, преподавание языка, метод Полного Физического Реагирования, аудио-лингвальный метод, невербальные методы.