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***The Theories of Learning and the Approaches  
for the Teaching of Foreign Languages:  
Hidden and Overt Relationships in the  
Argentinian Classroom***

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

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***"Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't."***

**William Shakespeare. Hamlet [II.ii.211]**

## **Dedication**

***To my father and mother that taught me the value of study and hard work.***

***To my wife who taught me love and compassion.***

***To my two sons who have given my life a sense of achievement.***

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Omar Villarreal

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## ABSTRACT

A particular phenomenon has been observed to operate in the field of foreign language teaching. Teachers of English (the subgroup on which this study focused) do not seem to take an interest in the *more general* theories of learning, laying more stress, instead, on *how teachers teach*, rather than on *how students learn*. This fact, it was hypothesized, partly explained the primacy (and the popularity) among practitioners of the methods and approaches to teach English, in detriment of a systematic reflection on the processes of learning.

Nevertheless, the lack of proper information on *how the learner learns* did not seem to conspire against what might roughly be defined as *good classroom practice*, in the same way that knowledge of the theories of learning did not seem to be a determinant factor in securing a better quality of language teaching.

A sample of 100 teachers in the City of Buenos Aires and Greater Buenos Aires (Argentina) was surveyed through a self-administered questionnaire to assert whether practitioners possessed a sound knowledge of not only the methods that they purported to use in their classrooms but also of the theories of learning that underlie them and whether the procedures that they used in their professional practice reflected those particular methods and were in keeping with the theories of learning that they advocated.

The analysis of the data collected in the survey has shown that a considerable number of respondents evidenced unsatisfactory or insufficient knowledge of the contemporary theories of learning and of how these theories influence classroom processes, but that this lack of satisfactory knowledge in the area of learning theories was not an obstacle for the respondents to adequately identify and apply in their classrooms the techniques and strategies that were construed to correspond with the tenets of the particular method they had chosen to use in the courses they taught.

The study also concluded that the lack of solid knowledge about the theories of learning manifested by the classroom teachers surveyed was partly due to the lack of proper information received in the course of their Teacher Education and partly due to their lack of interest in this area as evidenced in their choice of graduate teacher development courses.

Additionally, this study presents a review of the most salient theories of learning of the twentieth century, *Behaviourism* and *Constructivism*, and their relationship to the methods for language teaching that they underpin.

Key words: ELT - English Language Teaching - Methods - Approaches - Theories of Learning – Behaviourism – Operant Conditioning – Constructivism – Cognitive Psychology - Mental Discipline -

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Es dable observar que un fenómeno de naturaleza particular se verifica en el campo de la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras. Los profesores de inglés (subgrupo al que está restringido este trabajo) no parecen demostrar demasiado interés por las teorías del aprendizaje de corte más *general*, priorizando, en cambio, *cómo enseñan los que enseñan*, antes bien que *cómo aprenden los que aprenden*. Este hecho, según entendemos, explica, en parte, la preponderancia (y la popularidad) de la que gozan entre los docentes, los métodos y enfoques para la enseñanza del inglés en detrimento de una reflexión sistemática acerca de los procesos de aprendizaje.

No obstante, la falta de información precisa acerca de *cómo aprenden los alumnos* no parecería conspirar contra lo que, en trazos gruesos, se podría calificar como una *práctica áulica exitosa*, del mismo modo en que el conocimiento de las teorías del aprendizaje no parecería ser un factor determinante a la hora de asegurar una mayor calidad en la enseñanza de la lengua

Se indagó a un universo de 100 profesores de la ciudad de Buenos Aires y del Gran Buenos Aires (Argentina) a través de un cuestionario auto-administrable a fin de determinar si dichos docentes poseían un conocimiento acabado de no solamente los métodos que manifestaban usar en sus aulas, sino también de las teorías del aprendizaje que sustentaban dichos métodos y si los procedimientos que utilizaban en su práctica profesional reflejaban dichos métodos y estaban en consonancia con las teorías del aprendizaje que los docentes propugnaban.

El análisis de los datos recogidos a través del instrumento utilizado evidenció que un número considerable de los encuestados poseía un conocimiento poco satisfactorio o insuficiente acerca de las teorías contemporáneas del aprendizaje y de cómo estas teorías influían lo que sucedía en sus aulas; pero esta falta de conocimiento satisfactorio en el área de las teorías del aprendizaje no constituía un obstáculo para que los encuestados pudieran identificar y aplicar adecuadamente en sus clases las técnicas y estrategias que supuestamente cristalizaban los principios del método por ellos elegido para su práctica profesional.

El estudio puso también de manifiesto que la ausencia de un conocimiento sólido de las teorías del aprendizaje por parte de los docentes encuestados se debía, en parte, a no haber recibido información adecuada sobre el tema en su formación docente y, en parte, a su falta de interés en esta área, como quedo claramente demostrado en su elección de cursos de desarrollo profesional para graduados.

Este estudio analiza, además, las teorías del aprendizaje más destacadas del siglo XX, el Conductismo y el Constructivismo, y su relación con los métodos para la enseñanza de la lengua que ellas fundamentan.

Palabras Clave: ELT – Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa – Métodos – Enfoques- Teorías del Aprendizaje – Conductismo – Condicionamiento Operante – Constructivismo – Psicología Cognitiva – Disciplina Mental.

Il a été observé un phénomène particulier dans le domaine de l'enseignement de la langue étrangère. Les professeurs d'anglais (le sous-groupe sur lequel cette étude est focalisée) ne s'intéressent apparemment pas aux théories les *plus générales* de l'apprentissage, ils mettent l'accent sur le *comment les professeurs enseignent* et non pas le *comment les étudiants apprennent*. Ce fait, selon les hypothèses, expliquait partiellement la primauté (et la popularité) parmi les praticiens des méthodes et approches pour enseigner l'Anglais, au détriment d'une réflexion systématique sur le processus d'apprentissage.

Néanmoins, le manque d'information adéquate sur le *comment apprend l'apprenant* ne semblait pas conspirer contre ce qui pouvait être grossièrement défini comme une bonne pratique de salle de classe, de la même manière que la connaissance des théories de l'apprentissage ne semblait pas être un facteur déterminant pour assurer une meilleure qualité dans l'enseignement du langage.

Un échantillon de 100 professeurs dans la ville de Buenos Aires et la grande banlieue de Buenos Aires (Argentine) a été enquêté par un questionnaire auto-géré afin d'affirmer si les praticiens avaient une connaissance solide, non seulement des méthodes qu'ils utilisaient dans leurs salles de classe mais aussi des théories d'apprentissage sous-jacentes à celles-là ; et si les procédés qu'ils utilisaient dans leur pratique professionnelle reflétaient ces méthodes-là en particulier et en concordance avec les théories qu'ils préconisaient.

L'analyse de l'information rassemblée dans l'enquête montre qu'un nombre considérable des professeurs enquêtés avait une connaissance insuffisante ou insatisfaisante des théories contemporaines de l'apprentissage ainsi que la manière dont ces théories influencent les processus de la salle de classe, mais que ce manque de connaissance satisfaisante dans le domaine des théories de l'apprentissage, à la fois,

n'était point un obstacle pour les professeurs enquêtés afin d'identifier et appliquer convenablement dans leurs salles de classe les techniques et stratégies analysées en concordance avec les principes de la méthode spécifique qu'ils avaient choisie pour être utilisée dans les cours où ils enseignaient.

L'étude achevée démontrait aussi que le manque de connaissance solide des théories de l'apprentissage manifestée par les professeurs enquêtés était causé d'une part, par le manque d'information adéquate reçue lors de leur cours de Formation d'Enseignant et d'autre part, par le manque d'intérêt dans ce domaine, ce qui est mis en évidence dans le choix des cours de perfectionnement pour les professeurs diplômés qu'ils ont suivis. Outre cela, cette étude présente un compte-rendu des théories de l'apprentissage du vingtième siècle les plus saillantes, Behaviourisme et Constructivisme, de même que leur relation avec les méthodes pour l'enseignement des langues qu'elles soutiennent.

Mots clés: ELT - Enseignement de la Langue Anglaise - Méthodes - Approches - Théories de l'Apprentissage - Behaviourisme - Conditionnement Actif - Constructivisme - Psychologie Cognitive - Discipline Mentale -

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## INTRODUCTION

Concepts like *social construction, apprehension and circulation of knowledge, socially relevant learning, information processing, social or group consensus* seem to occupy a prevalent and often exclusive position in the field of teaching and learning today in the same way as only a few years ago most of our teaching endeavours orbited around concepts such as: *the stages of cognitive and affective development, the processes of assimilation and accommodation, schemata, equilibration and disequilibrium*, and as not so further back in time: *automatic processes, stimulus and response and operant conditioning* seemed to have taken the centre of the stage for good.

Beyond the intrinsic value of any (or the combination of some) of these concepts and their pertinence to explain school learning and to serve as a foundation for the different teaching models and approaches in vogue at different times over the last few decades, there is no disputing that these terms are, in their own right, an essential part of the professional repertoire of teachers or, at least, of the jargon of their trade.

However, a particular phenomenon has been observed to operate in the field of teaching foreign languages. Teachers of English (the subgroup on which this dissertation is to focus) do not seem to take an interest in the *more general* theories of learning, laying more stress, instead, on *how teachers teach*, rather than on *how students learn*. This seems to explain the primacy

(and the popularity) among practitioners of the methods and approaches to teach English, in detriment of a systematic reflection on the processes of acquisition and learning.

This might be due to a number of reasons. In many cases, the models, approaches and methodologies as put forward by their originators do not purport, at least directly or overtly, to have a basis on a particular theory of learning and, if they do, teachers seem not to pay much attention to those considerations as they deem them to be “highly theoretical” or “psychological” and with few implications for the “real” classroom.

In many other cases, an understanding of or a reflection on the theories of learning is not properly or sufficiently encouraged by those who have in their hands the responsibility of educating foreign language teachers in colleges and universities in our country.

Nevertheless, and according to the now popular term *general consensus*, the ignorance or lack of proper information on *how the learner learns* does not seem, at first sight, to conspire against what might roughly be defined as *good classroom practice*, in the same way that a knowledge of the theories of learning does not seem to be a determinant factor in securing a better quality of language teaching.

## **Objectives of this work**

The central hypothesis of this work is to demonstrate to what extent the classroom teacher possesses a sound knowledge of not only the models and approaches that he purports to use in his classroom practice but also of their underlying theories of learning and whether the techniques, procedures and strategies that he uses reflect that particular methodology and are in keeping with the particular theory of learning that he advocates.

The basic hypotheses that we have examined in this work are:

1. - Teachers of English have little or no knowledge about the theories of learning underlying the methods, approaches and models for teaching EFL that they use in their classrooms.
2. - Success or failure in their actual teaching practice cannot be attributed to their knowledge or lack of knowledge about the theories of learning.
3. - Teachers of English are highly “eclectic” in their implementation of the methodologies and theories of learning they purport to use in their classrooms.
4. - Teachers of English do not have an interest in the theories of learning that underpin the methodologies they use in their classrooms.

5. - Teachers of English receive little or no information about theories of learning in their formal Teacher Education.

### **Organization of this work**

This work consists of five chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 present a review of the state-of-the-art of the most salient theories of learning of the twentieth century, Behaviourism and Constructivism, and their relationship to the principal methods for language teaching that they underlie.

Chapter 1 contains as a general framework of reference a discussion of the role of Educational Psychology in the field of language teaching and a consideration of the definitions of theory of learning and of method for language teaching.

From this, we pass on to the examination of the Theory of Mental Discipline and Faculty Psychology and the Grammar-Translation Method. This method has been chosen because of its relevance to the study of languages it had in the past and the influence that it still exerts in the present among ELT professionals. A brief reference to the Direct Method and the Oral Approach is also included.

The last section of this chapter is devoted to an analysis of Behaviourism, very particularly, Operant Conditioning or Radical Behaviourism, and of the Audiolingual Method and a reference to the Audiovisual Method.

Chapter 2 starts with a discussion of the main methods of the post-audiolingual era, namely, Cognitive Code Learning and the Humanistic Methods. Then, the different types of Constructivism are scrutinized together with a discussion of the Communicative Approach and a reference to so-called *Communicative Methods*: the Notional - Functional Approach, the Natural Approach, Whole Language and Task based Learning.

This chapter is completed with a report on the state of the teaching of Theories of Learning in Teacher Education courses in Colleges of Education and Universities in the City of Buenos Aires and the Province of Buenos Aires<sup>1</sup>.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the design of the self-administered questionnaire that was delivered to the one hundred in-service teachers that constituted our sample. It also reports the results of the pilot application of the questionnaire.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the data collected in the survey and a preliminary interpretation of the results.

The conclusions and possible implications of this work have been included in Chapter 5.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that our study focuses only on the City of Buenos Aires and Greater Buenos Aires.

An appendix and a list of the works cited in our work have been included at the end of this study.

# CHAPTER 1

## FROM MENTAL DISCIPLINE TO BEHAVIOURISM

### The quest for a scientific method to teach foreign languages

#### Educational Psychology and the Methods for Language Teaching

The interest to establish a link between the methods for teaching foreign languages and what, from the point of view of *Educational Psychology*, we can define as *more general* theories of learning is, it should be said in all justice, not new. For a number of years now, in the relatively short history of Applied Linguistics<sup>2</sup>, this concern has not been completely alien to theoreticians and practitioners alike, but the growth and development of this interest among linguists, applied linguists and, very especially, among classroom teachers<sup>3</sup> has been erratic and slow.

Although references to this question can be found in the specialized bibliography as far back as the end of the sixties, we could say that the urge to find a psychological rationale for what we do in the foreign

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<sup>2</sup> Howatt (2004: 302-303) explains that: "Applied Linguistics as a recognized discipline dates back from the 1940s when leading American linguists like Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949) and Charles Fries (1887-1967) became involved in the application of their theoretical and descriptive work to large-scale teaching enterprises during the Second World War". They also mention that in 1948 Fries "was instrumental in founding *Language Learning* [...] which publicized the new discipline in its subtitle: *a quarterly journal of applied linguistics*"

<sup>3</sup> We are particularly interested in this latter group since the influence of the knowledge of the theories of learning in the classroom will be the main focus of our enquiry.

language classroom has only become more widespread over the last two decades.<sup>4</sup>

Probably Williams and Burden (1997) have set a definite trend in this direction, and although their work can hardly be considered liminal or the awakening of an awareness, it has the added value of dealing, not without due scientific rigour, with concepts of Educational Psychology as applied to the teaching of foreign languages and, as they announce in the title of their book, bringing Psychology to the consideration of the practitioner “at the chalk-face”. Another factor that adds to the relevance of this work and that should not be overlooked is that it has gained considerable acceptance among the ELT specialists in our country and has become staple food in our Teacher Education courses.

According to Williams and Burden (1997):

The literature on language teaching provides comprehensive accounts of different language teaching methodologies and is rich with ideas and techniques for teaching a language. However, what has become increasingly clear to us is the fundamental importance to teachers of an understanding of what is involved in the process of learning and underpin our teaching of the language. Teachers’ own conceptions of what is meant by learning, and what affects learning will influence everything that

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<sup>4</sup> An additional problem is that a number of authors have tried to elucidate, what has come to be known as, the *theories of language learning* that underpin the different methodologies, failing to move into the systematic study of the *general processes of learning* underlying those methods.

they do in the classroom. At the same time, in order to make informed decisions in their day-to-day teaching, teachers need to be consciously aware of what their beliefs about learning and teaching are (pp. 1-2).

Any historical survey of the study of the bond between learning in general and the learning of a foreign language in particular would be incomplete without a mention of the work by Stern (1994), that, even when it has only attained widespread circulation in the academic circles<sup>5</sup> of our country and is little known by the classroom teacher or the trainee teacher, enjoys a well deserved reputation among the ELT specialists abroad.

Stern's decisive contribution to the topic of our enquiry has been that of inserting language teaching where it rightly belongs: within the field of Educational Science<sup>6</sup>. This, which appears to be axiomatic to many, might not be, we daresay, so self evident to the teacher of English. It is probably the years of divorce of Educational Science (or Psychology, for that matter) and language teaching<sup>7</sup> and the wrong conception of the "self-explanatory" nature of language teaching that might induce the language practitioner to consider ELT such a specialized field that can only be

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<sup>5</sup> The reference to *academic circles* (which we will use in other sections of this work, as well) loosely includes a group made up by language specialists, applied linguists, or specialists in Methodology and Pedagogy of Foreign Languages, namely lecturing in the Universities and Colleges of Education in our country.

<sup>6</sup> *Educational Science* or, plainly, *Education* are often used interchangeably in the English language bibliography and as synonymous to what in our country is referred to as *Ciencias de la Educación*.

<sup>7</sup> This may be partly due to the lack of knowledge, disregard and, at times, a certain neglect or disdain of the specialists in Educational Science for language teaching which is in turn reciprocated by the teacher of foreign languages who, most of the times, takes little interest in Educational Science.

understood and explained by the language teacher himself or by the specialist in language teaching methodology. Says Stern (1994):

(The) study of education (educational science, educational theory) is perhaps the closest to language pedagogy. Yet, it is probably the least recognized and the most neglected...Concepts of education are applied as a matter of course in language teaching just as much as in other subjects of the curriculum. The language teacher almost inevitably operates with some notion of what teaching involves and how language teaching fits into the educational enterprises of which it customarily forms a part. It is therefore all the more surprising to note how little thought has been given to the relationship between language teaching and the study of education[...] As a professional field of study, education [...] draws on a number of other studies, such as philosophy, psychology, or sociology, as source disciplines. For language teaching theory, however, education itself can be regarded as a multidisciplinary source discipline. By treating it as such, educational assumptions in language teaching can be brought to light, and language teaching can be viewed more clearly in relation to other educational activities (p. 419).

Two charts<sup>8</sup> that Stern (1994) produced are of particular interest to the topic of this work, in one of them (p.290), he presented an overview of the main psychological theories of the twentieth century (even when his point of departure was *Structuralism* which he situated around 1870) and in the other (p.113), a list of the main language teaching methodologies from

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<sup>8</sup> Both of them have been included as chart 1 and chart 2 in Appendix 1

1880 to 1980. Although he never puts one and the other together, that is, directly relating the language teaching methodologies to the psychological thought prevalent at each particular period in the history of ELT, what is particularly stimulating (because of its novelty) in his discussion of what he terms “a psychological perspective in language teaching” is his definite emphasis on the importance of the theories of learning and the role that he assigns to Educational Psychology as a discipline contributing in its own right to account for some of the intricacies of language learning. Stern remarks:

It is hardly imaginable that one could teach a language without a psychological theory of the language learner and of the language learning process, and so it is not surprising to find in the writings of most language teaching theorists reflections of a psychological nature and, not infrequently, references to contemporary thought in psychology.

(1994: 317)

While we cannot but agree with Stern in that a large number of theorists have written about the theories of learning when they do the exegesis of methods that others have originated<sup>9</sup>, we cannot fail to notice that such definitions are conspicuously missing in the writings of more than one method designer or that sometimes ad-hoc theories are developed to account for the *emotional factors* involved in a certain methodology<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> As is the case with the Audiolingual Method and its well established connection with Behaviourism

<sup>10</sup> Here the case of *Suggestopedia* (or *Desuggestopedia*, as it has come to be called today) and the link with Lozanov's *Suggestology* is quite illustrative.

What is more, the classroom teacher is, more often than not, left wondering (if he wonders at all, as we shall see later when we analyze the results of our survey) about what learning theory he is applying, or he is often oblivious of the fact that one particular methodology belongs (or should belong) to one particular theory of learning.

In their already classic work on the approaches and methods for the teaching of foreign languages, Richards and Rodgers (2005) discuss the theories of the nature of language and theories of language learning within the framework of the different methodologies and emphasize that:

Although specific theories of the nature of language may provide the basis for a particular teaching method, other methods derive primarily from a theory of language learning. A learning theory underlying an approach or method responds to two questions: (a) What are the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning? and (b) What are the conditions that need to be met in order for these learning processes to be activated? Learning theories associated with a method at the level of approach may emphasize either one or both of these dimensions. Process-oriented theories build on learning processes, such as habit formation, induction, inferencing, hypothesis testing and generalization. Condition-oriented theories emphasize the nature of the human and physical context in which language learning takes place (2005: 22).

Even when in this work, we will adopt the model suggested by Richards and Rodgers (2005) to define the concepts of *method*, *approach*, *design and procedure*, we will do so in an attempt to restore some order to an otherwise diffused area of language teaching theory, but to be consistent with the aims of this work, we cannot fail to notice that when Richards and Rodgers (2005) discuss learning theories, they refer to *theories of language learning* and not to the more general theories of learning.

The difference between one and the other lies in the fact that if we focus on a theory of language learning, a method like *The Natural Approach* expounded by Krashen and Terrell (1983) , with its theoretical nucleus expanded by Krashen (1985) , becomes epitome of a theory of language learning, since it offers a more or less organized and cogent theory (albeit disputable if one takes into consideration its feeble empirical basis) about the cognitive processes involved in what Krashen and Terrell (1985) call *acquisition*, which appears to be, to a certain extent, spontaneous, and what they call *learning*, which could be termed to be more systematic and formal, even when there is not a single notice in Krashen and Terrell (1983) or in Krashen (1985) as to what theory of learning the authors adhere to. Referring to the Natural Approach and how it differs from other methods at the level of approach, Richards and Rodgers (2005) say that it:

[...] is an example of a method derived primarily from a learning theory rather than from a particular view of language. Although the Natural Approach is based on a learning theory that specifies both processes and conditions, the learning theory underlying such methods as Counseling-

Learning and the Silent Way addresses primarily the conditions held to be necessary for learning to take place without specifying what the learning processes themselves are presumed to be (p. 23).

### **The concept of method in the teaching of foreign languages**

As we have stated before there is a considerable degree of disarray in the characterization of the concept of *method* in language teaching. Terms like, *method*, *approach*, and *methodology* are frequently used without much care about exactitude and what complicates the issue even further is the fact that they are often used interchangeably. To start clearing the ground, we will first concentrate on the terms, *method* and *methodology* since the latter appears to have gained some kind of, at least, bureaucratic respectability in our medium, as it is the name by which the relevant subject at Colleges of Education in our country has long been identified.

In this respect, Kumaravadivelu (2005) says:

Many of us in the language teaching profession use the term, method, so much and so often that we seldom recognize its problematic nature. For instance, we are hardly aware of the fact that we use the same term, method, to refer to two different elements of language teaching: method as proposed by theorists, and method as practiced by teachers. What the teachers actually do in the classroom is different from what is advocated by the theorists. In fact, classroom-oriented research [...] clearly shows that even teachers who claim to follow a particular method do not actually adhere to the basic principles associated with it.

One way of clearing the confusion created by the indiscriminate use of the term, method, is to make a distinction between method and methodology [...]. I consistently use method to refer to established methods conceptualized and constructed by experts in the field [...]. I use the term, methodology, to refer to what practicing teachers do in the classroom in order to achieve their stated or unstated teaching objectives [...]. In other words a teaching analysis can only be done by analyzing and interpreting authentic classroom data that include the methodological practices of the teacher as revealed through classroom input and interaction, and teacher intention and learner interpretation [...]. A method analysis, on the other hand, can be carried out by merely analyzing and interpreting different constituent features of a method presented in standard textbooks on language teaching methods, using any appropriate analytical framework (pp 83-84).

It is then clear that following Kumaravadivelu (2005), we will reserve the term *methodology* to refer to actual teaching practice. A concept that has some similarities with what Richards and Rodgers (2005) call *procedure* but which, to our understanding, goes beyond that category as what teachers do in the classrooms might not always coincide with the tenets of a specific method, and also because Richards and Rodgers (2005) suggest the term, *procedure*, as a category for academic analysis rather than for the interpretation of what actually happens in the classroom.

To establish the difference between *method* and *approach*, most specialists refer to the work of Edward Anthony (1963) that established three clear-cut categories: *approach*, *method*, and *technique*. Anthony

(1963) defines *approach* (his superordinate) as the set of theories, ideas, principles assumptions and beliefs of a more general and abstract kind about the nature of language, learning, and teaching<sup>11</sup> while he takes account of the application of the approach by the use of the terms, *method* and *technique*. He defines *method* as the blueprint for systematic teaching based upon the assumptions of the approach, and *technique* as the concrete activities designed for classroom use and which actualize the precepts of the approach and put into practice the plan outlined in the method.

According to Celce-Murcia (2001):

An *approach* to language teaching is something that reflects a certain model or research paradigm --a theory, if you like. This term is the broadest of the three.

A *method*, on the other hand, is a set of procedures, i.e. a system that spells out rather precisely how to teach a second or foreign language. It is more specific than an approach but less specific than a technique. Methods are typically compatible with one (or sometimes two) approaches. A *technique* is a classroom device or activity and thus represents the narrowest of the three concepts. Some techniques are widely used and found in many methods (e.g. dictation, imitation and

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<sup>11</sup> It would, therefore, be at this level that we could expect to find a definition of the theories of learning that serve as a foundation for one particular way of teaching foreign languages.

repetition); however, some techniques are specific to or characteristic of a given method (e.g. using Cuisenaire rods...).

The most problematic of Anthony's three terms is method. Methods proliferated in the 1970s. They were typically very specific in terms of the procedures and materials that the teacher, who required special training, was supposed to use. They were almost always originated by one person<sup>12</sup>. This person, in turn, trained practitioners who accepted the method as gospel and helped to spread the word (pp.5-6).

More than forty years after its publication, Anthony (1963) still gathers a large number of followers among academe and is still the basis for the discussion about the nature of ELT methods all over the world, but it has not, in any particular way, settled the debate on the nature of method<sup>13</sup>. Along these lines, Stern (1994) says:

While these definitions were helpful in sorting out the distinction between theoretical assumptions ("approach"), teaching strategies ("methods") and specific classroom activities ("technique"), they did not reflect the broad and ill-defined way in which the term "method" was actually used until recently and is even still used today (p. 464).

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<sup>12</sup> Very often, these "methods", as we have pointed out before, lacked a supporting theory (the Approach level in Anthony's model) and were not much more than a mere prescription of steps, procedures, and techniques which were to be dogmatically followed.

<sup>13</sup> We should not fail to consider: Mackey(1965) which is acknowledged by Richards and Rodgers (2005) as another serious attempt in that direction (although they disregard it basically because it does not address the question of the *theoretical basis or approach*)

As we have stated before, for the purposes of this dissertation we are going to follow Richards and Rodgers (2005) to define *method* and the other three closely allied terms: approach, design and procedure<sup>14</sup>. Richards and Rodgers (2005) take the work of Anthony (1963) as their starting point to propose a new hierarchical organization of terms.

Richards and Rodgers (2005) define *approach* in the same way as Anthony (1963) does: as the most abstract category, the one that engulfs the general theories that inform classroom practice. Within *approach*, Richards and Rodgers (2005) include two subcategories: theory of language and theory of language learning (although in this latter subcategory they very often fail to include a notice about the more general theories of learning that, precisely, underlie the particular theories of language learning that they refer to).

Within *design*, Richards and Rodgers (2005) roughly include what Anthony (1963) called *method* but expand the category to comprise all those elements related to what we might call curriculum organization or curriculum design, such as, the objectives of the “method”, a syllabus model, the types of teaching and learning activities and the roles of teachers and students that are characteristic of the method in question as well as the description and function of the particular teaching materials.

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<sup>14</sup> The most important reason for this choice is perhaps the fact that their work is by far the most influential in our context and the one teacher educators, trainee teachers and practicing teachers are more familiar with. Let us just be reminded that the first edition of their *Approaches and Methods* dates back to 1986 and that their work has been staple food for the Methodology teachers for more that twenty years now and that a number of generations of teachers in our country have been educated following this model.

Richards and Rodgers (2005) use the more comprehensive term, *procedure*, to refer to the techniques, strategies, tactics and other observable classroom behaviours that Anthony (1963) had formerly subsumed under the heading of *technique*.

Finally, it should be pointed out that Richards and Rodgers (2005) keep the term, *method*, as the superordinate of their model. *Method* in Richards and Rodgers (2005) then becomes, as distinct from Anthony (1963), an empty category in itself, a label from which all the other categories (approach, design, and procedure) branch out.

Let us sum up the organizing principles of Richards and Rodgers' model using their own words: "Thus, a method is theoretically related to an approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realized in procedure" (p.20).

The following table (even if it might slightly simplify the issue) could help us to see the similarities and dissimilarities between the two models we have been referring to more clearly:

Table 1 Comparison between Anthony: 1963 and Richards and Rodgers: 2005

Anthony:1963	Richards and Rodgers:2005
	Method
Approach	Approach
Method	Design
Technique	Procedure

With regard to the way in which Richards and Rodgers (2005) address the relationship between method and theory of learning, it should be said that they stress the vital importance of both a theory of language and a theory of language learning (constituents that they allocate within *approach*) but, as has been pointed out before, they fail to produce the qualitative leap of classifying the different methods into, what in Educational Psychology are referred to as, theories of learning.

As an example, let us take the case of Communicative Language Teaching. It is clear that in this method the main objectives are to enable students to communicate effectively with others and that these objectives are in keeping with a theory of language centered on communication in general and on the development of a communicative competence, in particular. It is also self-evident that from the point of view of a theory of learning, Communicative Language Learning is rooted in Constructivism,

but Richards and Rodgers (2005) do not mention Constructivism at all<sup>15</sup>, instead, they take hold of “substitute” or “alternative” concepts such as; the communication principle, the task principle, the meaningfulness principle, a cognitive model of learning, and a skill- learning model of learning, all of which we have inferred to carry a strong constructivist imprint.

They acknowledge that a more precise definition of terms is perhaps necessary:

In contrast to the amount that has been written in Communicative Language Teaching Literature about communicative dimensions of language. Little has been written about learning theory...Elements of an underlying learning theory can be discerned in some CLT practices, however (Richards and Rodgers 2005: 161)<sup>16</sup>.

In the rest of this work, we will use the term, *method*, as a superordinate in the same sense as Richards and Rodgers (2005) do, but will not refer to the *approach*<sup>17</sup> in the full sense that they do, since for them *approach*

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<sup>15</sup> The first edition of their work (1986) does not contain a single mention of the word *Constructivism* and in the second edition (2005) from which we have been quoting, *Constructivism* is mentioned only once as one of the learning theories underlying Whole Language.

<sup>16</sup> It should be said, though, that Richards and Rodgers (2005) frequently use the terms *theory of language* and *theory of language learning* interchangeably and, to our ken, in a slightly careless fashion.

<sup>17</sup> To complicate matters even worse, the terminology used to name the different methods might be misleading as some methods are popularly referred to with the word “approach” attached to it (e.g. Communicative Approach, Natural Approach, Lexical Approach, Oral Approach). We will keep the original names but with the caveat that even when doing so we will be dealing with them as methods and not, as Richards and Rodgers (2005) would have it, as methods theoretically specified at the level of approach.

encompasses both a theory of language and a theory of language learning and we will only concern ourselves with the theories of learning.

### **The concept of theory of learning**

In order to approach the definition of theory of learning, we thought it best to first examine and define its two component elements:

A *theory* can be construed as a consolidated and organized corpus of ideas or as Bigge and Shermis (2004) would have it, “a designed plan for the development of a pattern of ideas accompanied by a planned procedure for carrying it out. Hence, it is a policy proposed and followed as a basis for action” (p.2).

On the other hand, we can define *learning* in the words of Gagné and Medsker (1996):

Learning is a relatively permanent change in human disposition or capability that is not ascribable simply to processes of growth. Learning exhibits itself as a change in behavior, and the inference of learning is made by comparing what behavior was possible before the individual was placed in a learning situation and what behavior can be exhibited after participation in the learning process. The change often is an increased capability for some type of performance. It also may be an altered disposition of attitude, interest or value. The changes must be more than momentary; it must be retained over some period of time (p. 6).

We also thought it pertinent to inscribe the theories of learning in the field where they rightly belong, Educational Psychology. The purposes and contribution of this novel discipline to Education have been discussed by Bartlett et al (2006) who point out that:

Psychology would seem to be fundamental to the study of education and to the development of educational practices. Understanding the very specific mental processes of teaching and learning is relevant to both students of education and to intending teachers...In the context of the contemporary school the educational psychologist usually has the responsibility of dealing with special cases and with definitions of children deemed to have special needs, rather than informing the work of the school as a whole. Many would see this lack of psychological knowledge in teaching and learning institutions as critical. Educational psychology is particularly concerned with questions about what makes learning happen: what are the factors involved in human learning? How do children learn? What kind of environment is most conducive to learning? How can schools promote maximum learning for all their pupils, given all their differences? The psychology of education, then, necessarily has relations and connections with other disciplines including sociology and linguistics, for instance, and may be influential in terms of promoting certain models of teaching and learning and certain kinds of school design (pp. 30-31).

Even at the expense of appearing utterly reductionistic or simplistic, we daresay that the questions that Bartlett et al (2006) attribute to Educational Psychology in general are the same as those that constitute the main

concerns of any theory of learning and that could be summarized into only one: trying to explain *how people learn*.

Defining what constitutes a theory of learning is not an easy task since definitions will by force, in one way or another, tend to reflect the particular way of thinking of the proponent of such a definition. In such a fashion that the answer to the question: what is a theory of learning? provided by an advocate of socio-historical psychology will be definitely tinged by a predominance of the social aspects of learning which are so dear to this school of thought, while a definition provided by a behaviourist will certainly stress the need for observable (and often measurable) changes in behavior which are at the core of that theory.

To further characterize what a theory of learning is, we will use a mathematical model proposed by Dubinsky (2008). Of this model we have retained some taxonomic categories, subsumed others and finally made the necessary adaptations to suit the needs of our own field of enquiry. Following Dubinsky (2008), we can say that a theory of learning should:

#### 1.- Support prediction

A theory should be able to predict that certain consequences or effects will follow the occurrence of certain events or, as is the case with formal education, the fulfilment of certain necessary conditions. These

phenomena, that we have termed *consequences*, will tend to be replicated if the same instructional treatment is applied.

The occurrence of those consequences, that is to say the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding<sup>18</sup>, should be evidenced in observable changes of behaviour.

The typical case of the sequence *stimulus, response, reinforcement* immediately comes to mind to exemplify the predictive value of a theory of learning like, in this case, Skinner's operant conditioning but the point could obviously be stretched further. For example, in the case of a constructivist EFL classroom, a child trying to learn to write in a foreign language in his early stages of schooling can be properly incited to work out his own hypothesis about writing and encouraged to produce pieces of written discourse in keeping with his own presuppositions about "correct" adult writing with the reassurance that whatever the results, his effort will be commended. This will certainly produce a tangible result: a piece of writing, even if it is the case of only one word. If the same pedagogic treatment is applied consistently to the same subject, similar consequences are to be expected: (ideally, with a higher degree of sophistication, though not necessarily at each successive try) the production and sharing with his caretakers and peers of new pieces of writing in a spontaneous, relaxed and confident way, which will ultimately

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<sup>18</sup> It should be clear that when we say *knowledge and understanding*, we do not confine ourselves to the cognitive domain as it could easily be the case of learning (hence, knowing and understanding) procedures and attitudes and that "knowing and understanding" imply the operation of application and are not restricted to *declarative knowledge*.

result in his acquisition of a knowledge of how to write in another language. This constructivist procedure is, no doubt, a far cry from the popular “copying” exercises that a behaviourist mind would, we are sure, recommend to achieve the same purpose.

## 2.- Possess explanatory power

The theory can be used to explain the success or failure of an individual or a group to learn. If we take the case of a group of EFL students of an age ranging from 9 to 10 and we observe that they consistently fail to apply a particular grammatical formula after it has been elicited from them through systematization<sup>19</sup> or it has been given to them by their teacher, we can account for their failure to apply the formula by saying that according to Piaget’s cognitive developmental psychology those students are still in their concrete operations stage and cannot apply formalisms or adult-like abstractions as formal operators (12 years of age and beyond) certainly would.

## 3.- Be applicable to a broad range of phenomena

A theory will be construed as invalid if it can only be used to explain the finite set of phenomena on which it was developed. It will be clearly insufficient for a theoretician to observe a phenomenon or a number of

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<sup>19</sup> We are thinking of a formula such as: [subject + want/wants + me + to-verb + something] (as in, “My mother wants me to cut the grass”). The students must have probably, with the help of the teacher, dissected the pattern into its component elements and put it down in their notebooks.

phenomena and then develop an ad-hoc theory to account for those phenomena observed. A theory should be able to generalize on a wide range of phenomena, other than those used to develop it and those phenomena should preferably be of a different nature, if we are to validate the applicability of the theory.

We can, for example, explain why and how an EFL student is able to complete a cloze procedure task in terms of the Gestalt field theory. The initial observations that led to the formulation of the gestaltic principle of *closure* were based upon the observation of how individuals reacted to incomplete geometrical figures by “closing them” and this principle can be used to explain a phenomenon of a very different kind: how a language user is able to provide whatever language is missing in a paragraph by processing sequences of elements in the language that conform to the natural contextual constraints of that language. We clearly see how a solid theory of learning can be generalized to be applied to sets of phenomena as diverse as the perception of geometrical figures and the realization of pragmatic mappings.

#### 4.- Serve as a tool for analyzing data

We do not ask of a theory of leaning to tell us *how people are to learn* but to be able to explain to us *how people learn*. A theory of learning should not be of a prescriptive nature but rather, of an analytical and descriptive one.

In the case of formal education, a paradoxical one-to-one correspondence can be observed: a theory of learning may well be developed out of the analysis of what happens in the classroom, what helps or does not help students to learn, and, at the same time, since all theories of learning imply a certain set of classroom practices, we should be able to use those theories as tools for the analysis of what happens in the classroom to assess the effectiveness of teaching. The apparent tautology of our previous statement is not such if we are to take into consideration the dynamic nature of the field of learning theory. It is doubtlessly through continuous analysis and reassessment that new theories are born or consolidated ones are refined, but observation without a method of analysis which is precisely afforded us by the theories of learning would not be enough to develop a new theory or refine an existing one. Dubinsky (2008) points out that “A theory [...] should provide a [...] systematic method of analysis. It should tell the researchers what questions to ask of the data and how to interpret the answers.”(p.21)

If we observe an EFL classroom in which the students are given a set of isolated words thematically related, for example, to the semantic field of “clothes”, to translate and memorize with recall of both the lexical item in L1 and the translation into the vernacular being checked at a later date, we might be induced to use the theory of mental discipline as a tool to analyze that particular learning event. If, on another occasion, the case were that of a dialogue being used for rote memorization in the target

language, we might probably feel persuaded to use the tenets of Behaviourism for our analysis.<sup>20</sup> By the same token, the observation of, for instance, the first of the aforementioned learning situations might lead us to conclude that rote memorization of isolated words and their translation is an effective teaching technique because it enhances the students' memory and disciplines them to learn not only English but also other subjects. This finding might be a first step towards our formulation of a "new" theory of learning.<sup>21</sup>

#### 5.- Provide a language for communication about learning

A learning theory, its theoretical principles and the relationship among them, should be organized and explained in such a way as to make it accessible to the scientific community, that is to say, to other researchers and theoreticians and to the classroom teachers who eventually are to adopt it and apply it. As Dubinsky (2008: 11) puts it:

Research and curriculum development must go beyond a single person or team making investigations and obtaining results. The work must be communicated and this is best done if there is a generally accepted common language.

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<sup>20</sup> Especially if after memorization the student is required to react to *cues* provided by the teacher himself or by another learner (each one taking a part in a dialogue involving two interlocutors) in the typical stimulus-response dyad.

<sup>21</sup> Only that in our case this "new" theory already exists and it is precisely the *theory of mental discipline*.

This fact probably explains in part the popularity that Watson's radical Behaviourism enjoyed among language teachers worldwide. The explanation of how the stimulus-response mechanism worked and very particularly the alleged need to avoid all sorts of cognitive mediation seemed plausible enough for the language teacher. He was invited to reflect on the way that he, himself, had "naturally" (i.e. "without grammar") acquired his first language and to extrapolate this to the way his students were expected to acquire the target language, furthermore, he was asked to ponder how people produced utterances in any given language (purportedly, "automatically" and "without thinking") and therefore, promote automatic responses in his students since, he was warned, "thinking might get in the way of automaticity and hinder naturalness"<sup>22</sup>.

To round off our discussion of the nature of the theories of learning and their relevance to the classroom, we will quote Bigge and Shermis (2004) who suggest that:

Everyone who teaches or professes to teach has some sort of theory of learning. However, teachers may be able to describe their theories in explicit terms or they may not -- in which case we usually can deduce from their actions the theories that they are not yet able to verbalize. Thus the important question is not whether a teacher has a theory of learning but, rather, how tenable it is (2004:3)..

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<sup>22</sup> This, it goes without saying, was not the work of the behaviourist psychologists but rather of the method designer that adopted Behaviourism as the foundation for their approaches.

## Methods and Theories: A Quick Tour of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

We will restrict the scope of this work to the methods and theories of learning that originated from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the mid-nineties<sup>23</sup>.

The list of methods and the theories of learning that were deemed to underlie them and that we will present in tabular form below does not, in any possible way, intend to be an exhaustive one since:

1. - the proliferation of methods, especially at some particular historical times (e.g. the seventies) has been considerable;
2. - some methods have enjoyed only ephemeral existence<sup>24</sup>;
3. -there is some degree of discrepancy as to the names of some methods since names tend to be repeated (i.e. the same name is used for more than one method) or the same method (or slight variations of it) comes to be known by different names;

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<sup>23</sup> With the sole exception of the *Grammar and Translation Method* whose existence dates back to the eighteenth century and the *Theory of Mental Discipline* whose roots extend into antiquity.

<sup>24</sup> A clear example is probably the long-forgotten *Sleep Learning* which, to us, was more of a commodity (and a passing fad, in fact) than a serious attempt to teach languages.

4.- the same degree of terminological discrepancy can be observed in the field of learning theory since the same theory might appear in the specialized bibliography by different names. Moreover, some specialists tend to subsume different theories of learning under a more general name<sup>25</sup>, and what constitutes a theory of learning to some educational psychologists is classified under a different heading by others<sup>26</sup>;

5.- there are sometimes gaps (and even insurmountable differences) depending on whether the theorists consulted are British or American (i.e. the names of some American methods<sup>27</sup> and theories of learning<sup>28</sup> are conspicuously absent from the British lists and vice versa);

6.- we have decided to include only those methods and theories of learning that have stood the test of time. The latest contributions to the field have not been included as some of them have not yet crystallized

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<sup>25</sup> This is the case with *Associationism and Connectionism* which are frequently included under the heading of *Behaviourism* (or, at times, *Early Behaviourism*).

<sup>26</sup> For instance, the work of Jean Piaget is treated by some theorists as a theory of learning, whereas, others consider it an epistemology (more precisely, a genetic epistemology) or theory of knowledge.

<sup>27</sup> The *Tapestry Approach* that Scarcella and Oxford propounded at the beginning of the nineties received little (if any) attention outside America. For a more detailed treatment of this method, consult Scarcella & Oxford (1992)

<sup>28</sup> *Apperception* or *Herbartianism* which still today has a considerable number of followers in the United States is hardly mentioned in the British bibliography.

into a solid corpus of knowledge and are still under fire from different corners of the academic world.<sup>29</sup>

A special note should be made about the dates we have quoted in the case of each particular method. It is to be understood that these are merely approximate, as in many cases it is difficult to establish a particular landmark (e.g. the date of publication of a liminal article) at which a method originated, as it is equally difficult to state, with any degree of certainty, when a method has ceased to be used. It is widely known that some methods come into disuse at a certain moment in time only to be “rediscovered” later and be subsequently brought back into the classrooms, as is the case with the use of the Grammar-Translation Method(albeit revamped or “updated”) in the field of English for Specific Purposes.<sup>30</sup>

There is one factor that should not be overlooked in establishing the useful life of a particular method: the role of the international publishing industry. While, on the one hand, the industry is always on the look-out for

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<sup>29</sup> This has been the criterion applied for leaving aside (even when we consider them to be valuable contributions) the *Lexical Approach* as a method for ELT and Howard Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* in our treatment of the theories of learning.

In both cases, the practical applications of the theory as formalized by their originators took quite some time to see the light. In the case of the *Lexical Approach* (Lewis:1993), the companion volume *“Implementing the Lexical Approach. Putting Theory into Practice”* was published only in 1998, and in the case of the *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner;1983) the practical implications: *“Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice”* took a decade to be published (Gardner:1993)

<sup>30</sup> Geography used to play a very important role in the time it took for a method to originate and the time it gained international recognition. Methods tended to consolidate in the central countries considerably earlier than “overseas” (i.e. the peripheral countries). This factor has lost much of strength today under the process of globalization (here a special note should be made of the use of the Web).

innovations and eager to meet the demands of the market<sup>31</sup>; it very often, on the other hand, creates or manipulates that demand with the result that “new” methods are artificially produced<sup>32</sup>

In Table 2 below, we have used the methods for language teaching as the organizing principle to which we have referenced the different theories of learning that we have deemed to serve as a foundation to those methods. In the rest of this chapter as in chapter 2 we have followed a different organizational scheme: we will discuss the main theories of learning (namely, *Behaviourism* and *Constructivism*) and we will ascribe the various methods to each of these theories.

In the relevant sections we have included a very brief description of the particular methods mentioned, not with the pedagogical intention of “explaining” the methods but as a backdrop to our consideration of how one particular method relates to one particular theory of learning (or fails to relate to any). We thought it appropriate to enlarge more generously on those methods that we later included as options in the structured questions of the questionnaire that we administered as part of this work (those methods appear in the greyed areas of the table). The criterion for choosing some particular methods for the questionnaire and disregarding

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<sup>31</sup> In due justice, it should be pointed out that those “demands of the market” do not always call for innovation. The inclusion of Eckersley’s celebrated *Essential English for Foreign Students* series in Longman’s catalogue up to the late nineties is self-explanatory in this sense.

<sup>32</sup> These *laboratory or tailor-made* methods are very often born just as a collection of techniques and activities that are later glorified into a method.

others has been mostly that of familiarity of the teachers with the methods in question, either because they are currently using them or because they have received information about them in their teacher education courses. To validate our choices, we have requested the contribution of three specialists in the field of Applied Linguistics with a long career in teacher education at University<sup>33</sup>.

*Table 2 Methods and Theories of Learning in chronological sequence*

Period	Method	Theory of Learning
From the end of the 18 <sup>th</sup> century up to the present	Grammar-Translation	<b>Theory of Mental Discipline Faculty Psychology</b>
From the beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> twentieth century up to the interwar period	Direct	Its theoretical basis cannot be clearly identified
From the end of the 1920's up to the 1970s	Oral / Situational	<b>Connectionism (Thorndike)  Classical Behaviourism (Watson)</b>
From World War II up to the 1970s	1 - Audio-lingual	<b>Operant Conditioning (Skinner)</b>
From the mid 1950s up to the 1970's	2- Audiovisual	<b>Gestalt Psychology Operant Conditioning (Skinner)</b>

<sup>33</sup> Lucrecia D'Andrea de Mirande MA in Linguistics TESOL, University of Surrey, UK. , Rosa Perea de Otrera MA in Sociolinguistics, University of Buffalo, New York, USA and Sara López, MA in Applied Linguistics, University of Southern Illinois, USA, to whom we are greatly indebted.

From the mid 1960s up to the end of the 1970s	Cognitive Code	<b>Cognitive Psychology</b>
From the beginning of the 1970s up to the beginning of the 1980s	<p><b>The Designer Methods</b></p> <p>1- Community Language Learning</p> <p>2- (De)Suggestopedia</p> <p>3- Silent Way</p> <p>4- Total Physical Response</p>	<p>Counselling Learning (Curran)</p> <p>Suggestology (Lozanov)</p> <p><b>Cognitive Psychology</b></p> <p><b>Behaviourism</b> Trace Psychology</p>
From the beginning of the 1970s up to the present day	<b>The Communicative Methods</b>	<b>Constructivism</b>
From the beginning of the 1980s up to the present day	1- Notional-Functional.	<b>Constructivism.</b>
From the mid 1980s up to the present day	2- Natural	<b>Socio-historical Constructivism</b>
From the mid 1990's up to the present day	3- Whole Language	<b>Socio-historical Constructivism</b>
	4 – Task based Learning	<b>Socio-historical Constructivism</b>

## **The Theory of Mental Discipline and Faculty Psychology**

The Theory of Mental Discipline is rooted both in *Classical Humanism* and in *Faculty Psychology*. The main difference between these two schools of thought is that *Classical Humanism*, which originated in Ancient Greece, is based on the principle that man is a neutral-active “rational animal” and that *Faculty Psychology* is founded on the bad-active principle of human nature. Both *Classical Humanism* and *Faculty Psychology* uphold a *dualistic* conception of man according to which man is a composite of rational mind and biological organism, and coincide in that the purpose of education is the disciplining of the rational mind or *mind substance*.

Bigge and Shermis (2004) explain that:

The central idea in mental discipline is that the mind, envisioned as a non-physical substance, lies dormant until it is exercised. Faculties of the mind such as memory, will, reason, and perseverance are the “muscles of the mind”; like physiological muscles, they are strengthened only through exercise, and subsequent to their adequate exercise, they operate automatically. Thus, learning is a matter of strengthening, or disciplining, the faculties of the mind, which combine to produce intelligent behavior.”

(p. 21)

Bigge and Shermis (2004) credit the German philosopher Christian Wolff with the development of *Faculty Psychology* into a formalized psychological doctrine.<sup>34</sup>

Following the exposition of Wolff's ideas by Robert J. Richards (1980)<sup>35</sup> and by Bigge and Shermis (2004), we can attempt to summarize the principles of Faculty Psychology into the following:

1. - The human mind is unitary but is made up of a number of distinct faculties.<sup>36</sup>
2. - The general faculties of the mind are knowing, feeling and willing.
3. - The knowing faculty is in turn divided into other faculties, such as perception, memory, imagination and pure reason.

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<sup>34</sup> They cite Wolff's *Rational Psychology* as published in 1734, while Richards (1980) cites: *Psychologia Rationalis, methodo scientifica pertractata, qua ea, quae de anima humana indubia experientiae fide innotescunt, per essentiam et naturam animae explicantur*. Francofurti & Lipsiae: officina libraria Rengeriana, published also in 1734. We understand that, in all likelihood, Bigge and Shermis used a translation of Wolff's work, (published at a much later date), whereas Richards worked with the original (which he also translated into English in part).

<sup>35</sup> Richards (1980) elaborates about Wolff's work: "Though not the first one to use the term psychology (psychologia), Christian Wolff did give it currency in the mid-eighteenth century. He was the first one to mark off the discipline of empirical psychology and to distinguish it from rational, theoretical psychology. This distinction and his conception of corresponding methods of conducting psychological enquiry, especially his emphasis on the use of introspection, profoundly influenced the course of psychological science during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries".(p.2)

<sup>36</sup> In this respect, E. Connolly (2007) asserts that Faculty Psychology maintained that "the mind is made up of different faculties each of which are independent of the other and certain subjects trained certain faculties. In a mathematical context for example, geometry trained the faculty of reason." (p 268).

4. - The reasoning faculty enables us to draw distinctions and to form judgments.

5. - The willing faculty (properly exercised and strongly developed) enables us to control the impulses of our human nature which is inherently evil.

6.- If we pursue any type of unpleasant work long enough, that is, if we make ourselves do what we do not want to do, our willing faculty will be strengthened.

This last assertion, as it can easily be inferred, has significant pedagogical implications and has exerted a definite influence in the type of classroom practices prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Marsh (2002) calls our attention to the fact that:

Believing the "mind" to be comprised of various faculties, it was accepted that a mind must be trained to choose between good and evil. Any difficult subject, peppered with drill, memorization, and harsh discipline could create such a mind.

In his article *Hidden Intellectualism*, Graff (2001), recalling his schooldays in the first half of the twentieth century, illustrates:

Schooling certainly did little to encourage or channel my intellectualism...Literature was a mass of set passages to be memorized,

like the prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* and Mark Antony's funeral oration in *Julius Caesar*. Such memory work might have been valuable had there been some larger context of issues or problems to give it point and meaning, but there rarely was.

In retrospect, I see now that my elementary schooling reflected an uneasy postwar compromise between traditional and progressive theories, ...On the one hand, it reflected what was left of the fading nineteenth-century theory of "mental discipline," which held that making school as dull and hard as possible was good for the development of the child's character. To paraphrase Terry Eagleton (1983: 29) in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, making a given subject "unpleasant enough to qualify as a proper academic pursuit is one of the few problems" educational institutions have ever effectively solved. On the other hand, after the war this archaic belief in the virtue of making school hard and dreary was being challenged by progressive theories of "life adjustment" as well as a resurgence of vocational education." (p. 29)

As it was only to be expected, the foreign language teaching scene was also deeply influenced by this conception that the primary function of education was that of developing the students' powers of mind through monotonous drill, harsh mental discipline<sup>37</sup>, and verbatim recitation. This ideal, as we shall see later, was embodied in the Grammar-Translation Method. In this last respect, Richards and Rodgers (2005) state:

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<sup>37</sup> Philips and Walker (1987) wittingly remark: "As an English schoolmaster said, "Once you interest boys in the work, you lose half of its disciplinary profit!"

Its worst excesses were introduced by those who wanted to demonstrate that the study of French or German was no less rigorous than the study of classical languages. This resulted in the type of Grammar-Translation courses remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose” (p. 6).

The mental theorists did not consider the content of study to be as important as the exercise that dealing with content afforded the students. Nevertheless, they disparaged the “practical” subjects and favoured the study of the Classics, Latin, Greek, Philosophy, Mathematics and the liberal arts in general. Bigge and Shermis (2004) remark that:

After the Renaissance, modern languages gradually came into more general use. English, German, and French rose to prominence and assumed the role previously played by Latin and Greek. By the end of the sixteenth century the communicative value of the classical languages was beginning to wane. Supporters of these languages, however, made a determined fight to preserve them. No longer needed for basic communication, Latin and Greek came to be heralded as the best subject matter for mental discipline (p. 27).

The classical humanistic criterion for the selection of subject matter content that prevailed among the mental theorists also had a correlate in the selection of content for foreign language teaching, as it is clearly

demonstrated by the kinds of materials that were favoured by the advocates of the Grammar-Translation Method. Says Dianne Larsen-Freeman (2000):

According to teachers who use the Grammar-Translation Method, a fundamental purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to read literature written in the target language [...] Literary language is considered superior to spoken language and is therefore the language that students study. Culture is viewed as consisting of literature and the fine arts" (pp.15-18).

One last point should be made as regards the pedagogical rationale of mental discipline and Faculty Psychology and this is the question of "transfer of reasoning". Faculty psychology was thought to prepare students to transfer what they had so laboriously learnt to any situation that they might encounter. Having exercised their reasoning, their will and their memory through the learning of, for example, Latin, the students should be able to transfer those abilities to deal with any other kind of subject matter, German, for instance. Resnick (1989) remarks:

Rather than trying to impart volumes of specific knowledge, it is often argued, instruction should cultivate general abilities that will facilitate learning throughout life and in variable settings. The search for teachable general abilities is as old as the history of education...Educational research has long addressed this question under the rubric of *transfer*. In a way, transfer is the holy grail of educators -- something that we are in

search of, that hope pretends lies just beyond the next experiment or reform program [...] Early in this century, with the rise of Associationism as a dominant psychological account of mental functioning, the theory of mental discipline began to lose favour. Exercising the faculties by studying such subjects like mathematics or Latin did not, on empirical investigation, prove to facilitate learning other subjects (p. 9).

### **The Grammar-Translation Method**

The time when the Grammar-Translation Method gained worldwide attention and acceptance as a method for the teaching of foreign languages can be situated around the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century but the time when this method came into generalized disfavour would be rather difficult to determine. Rather, what can be ascertained is that it still draws a large following among those who openly stress the benefits of its alleged intellectual rigour and a silent majority of practitioners who value what they construe as its inherent *practicality for the transmission of the language* and still use it in their classrooms (although they do not always openly admit that they do so).

As it is common ground, the origins of this method can be traced back to the tradition of the teaching of dead languages (particularly, Latin) in which the simple expedient of learning the grammar and translating literary pieces were standard practice. Stern (1994) regards Johann Meindinger's (1783) *Prakstiche Französische Grammatik* as one of the first "textbooks"

that included a brief presentation of a grammatical point followed by intensive translation practice. In his authoritative *A History of English Language Teaching*, Howatt (2004:152) credits Johann Valentin Meindinger with being the “originator” of the Grammar-Translation Method and goes on to say that the first book for the teaching of English was written by Johann Christian Fick following the principles of Meindinger’s method and was published in Germany in 1793 under the title of *Praktische englische Sprachlehre für Deutsche Beiderlei Geschlechts, nach der in Meidingers französis Grammatik Befolgten Methode*<sup>38</sup>.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century a number of similar works enjoyed wide popularity, among them Franz Ahn’s Method (1934) and Ollendorff’s Method (1835)<sup>39</sup>. Richards and Rodgers (2005:5) mention H.S. Ollendorf and Johann Meindinger together with the names of two other influential German authors of the time, Karl Plötz and Johann Seidenstrücker to stress the fact that the Grammar-Translation Method should be directly linked to the Prussian academic tradition, which in W.H.D. Rouse’s words consisted in knowing “everything about something rather than the thing itself”<sup>40</sup>. This explains why the Grammar-Translation

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<sup>38</sup> which can be translated as *A Practical English Course for Germans of both sexes, following the method of Meindinger’s French Grammar*.

<sup>39</sup> Howatt (2004) says that “between them [Ahn and Ollendorff] they dominated the scene for almost half a century”(159).

<sup>40</sup> The quotation has been taken from Richards y Rodgers(2005:5) who quote W,H.D. Rouse as cited in Kelly (1969:53).

Method was first known in the United States as the Prussian Method<sup>41</sup> , although it should also be pointed out that this method has, at different times, also come to be known as the Classical<sup>42</sup>, the Traditional or the Grammatical Method and that Howatt (2004: 151) suggests the name “the grammar-school” method for it:

The grammar-translation method was devised and developed for use in secondary schools[...]its strengths, weaknesses, and excesses reflected the requirements, aspirations and ambitions of the nineteenth-century grammar school in its various guises in different countries (p. 151).

On this seemingly minor question of the name of the method, Howatt (2004) goes on to elaborate (and we could not agree less with him):

The “grammar-translation” label is misleading in some respects. It was coined by its nineteenth-century critics who wanted to draw attention to the two features that they most disliked: the teaching of grammar in isolation from texts and the excessive use of translation both in the teaching of meaning and in practice exercises. Neither of these issues was important to its eighteenth-century originators who [...] were trying to devise a simple approach appropriate for school children. Nothing of the kind was available at the time (p- 151).

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<sup>41</sup> Following Kelly (1969), Richards and Rodgers (2005:5) mention the book by B. Sears published in the United States in 1845 titled *The Ciceronian or the Prussian Method of Teaching the Elements of the Latin Language*.

<sup>42</sup> Following Chastain: 1988, Larsen-Freeman (2000) says: “At one time it was called the Classical Method since it was first used in the teaching of classical languages, Latin and Greek” (p.11).An explanation that seems plausible enough but that is not often found in the literature.

A typical lesson in the Grammar-Translation Method included the presentation of a grammatical rule which could be stated in the target language in the textbook<sup>43</sup> but which the teacher was instructed to explain in the vernacular. Deductive processing of the rule was checked through the translation of a number of isolated (normally short and decontextualized) sentences where the grammatical rule was applied. Vocabulary lists that the teacher translated into the mother tongue often followed. Further practice was afforded in the form of more isolated sentences (or sometimes short passages of continuous prose) for translation into the mother tongue and, in the case of locally produced textbooks, from the mother tongue into the target language<sup>44</sup>. In its purest form this method paid no attention to the macroskills of listening and speaking or the phonological aspects of the language. But with the addition of certain elements (alien to the method), like the written comprehension questions that followed the reading texts (which were sometimes attempted orally after having been answered in the written mode) and in combination with other methods<sup>45</sup>, the Grammar-Translation

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<sup>43</sup> As it is often the case with the use of translation for purposes other than presentation or grammatical practice (ranging from the rudimentary bilingual vocabulary lists to sophisticated case studies for contrastive analysis), the publishing industry has got an incredible weight and in more than one way, this influences the methods that we are offered. The inclusion of the vernacular is uneconomical in the age of transnational publishing (which we could rightly say started with the twentieth century).

<sup>44</sup> In our country, the textbooks produced by *Academias Pitman*, *Academia Toil & Chat* and *Instituto Cambridge de Cultura Inglesa*, among others, offered translation exercises from English into Spanish and vice versa.

<sup>45</sup> In this respect, we cannot fail to mention the textbooks by E.V. Gatenby and C.E. Eckersley published in England in the first half of the twentieth century and in our country the books by Raul Torlasco y Carlos Frías, Josefina Molinelli Wells and Roberto Raufet and Ricardo Frondizi, among a number of others, that combined features of the Direct Method with a strong component of grammar and translation.

Method has managed to keep an unusual number of followers more than a hundred and fifty years after its birth. Brown (2001) explains this phenomenon in the following way:

One can understand why Grammar Translation remains so popular. It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations, and rote exercises. And it is sometimes successful in leading a student toward a reading knowledge of a second language (p.19).

Along the same lines, Richards and Rodgers (2005) point out:

Although the Grammar-Translation Method often creates frustration for students, it makes few demands on teachers. It is still used in situations where understanding literary texts is the primary focus of foreign language study and there is little need for a speaking knowledge of the language. Contemporary texts for the teaching of foreign languages at the college level often reflect Grammar-Translation principles. These texts are frequently the products of people trained in literature rather than in language teaching or applied linguistics (p.7).

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To put it in Stern's (1994) words:"the translation of connected passages from and into the foreign language (*thème* and *version*) is not abandoned; it is treated as an exercise appropriate only for the most advanced learners" (p.42).

We cannot but agree with Brown (2001) and Richards and Rodgers (2005) in that the Grammar-Translation Method makes very few demands on teachers. For one thing, they do not need to be able to speak English themselves and the simplicity of the techniques and procedures the teacher is called upon to use in the Grammar-Translation classroom makes it more than attractive for the unskilled or untrained teacher, hence its present-day popularity among practitioners within that group (as we shall see in the results of the survey we have administered). But a word should be said about the use of this method in our colleges today. We firmly believe that Grammar-Translation has found a niche in the realm of the teaching of English for Specific Purposes. With all its sophistication about the use of authentic texts and the analysis of discorsal features, the teaching of ESP in our Argentinian context still carries with it a heavy Grammar-Translation imprint<sup>46</sup>. This should not blind us to see the efforts of hundreds of teachers in our universities to teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for reading comprehension where even if Spanish is used extensively in classroom interaction<sup>47</sup>, the use of translation is decidedly discouraged.

A last note should be added in favour of what we will call *pragmatic translation*, as first propounded by Oller (1989), in which the learner is required to summarize a text and then produce a translation of it (in such a

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<sup>46</sup> So much so that very often the end product of a typical ESP lesson might, in certain cases, still be the translation of the authentic text that was first presented as the basis for discourse and grammatical analysis.

<sup>47</sup> For example, comprehension questions may be asked and answered in Spanish or asked in English and answered in Spanish with the sole purpose of checking comprehension rather than as a translation exercise.

way that, for instance, a one hundred and fifty word text should be rendered into the vernacular in not more than eighty words). This procedure, we understand, involves the recreation of the text in a two-fold fashion: first by extracting the main ideas contained in it and then by translating them into the learner's mother tongue. This, we understand, goes far beyond the mere literary or word-by-word translation and, following Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy<sup>48</sup>, we can say that it engages the higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis<sup>49</sup> and evaluation. Before passing on to the discussion of Behaviourism and the Audiolingual Method, we thought it convenient to include a few lines about those methods and "theories" of learning that we included in our table on pages 26 and 27 and that we are not to discuss in detail in the rest of this work. We will do so, by using the methods, rather than the theories of learning, as organizers, although both methods are, in a way or another, related to some kind of Behaviourism.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Direct Method**

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth theoreticians turned their attention to what they advocated to be more naturalistic methods for teaching languages. As Richards and

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<sup>48</sup> See also Bloom (1976) for a detailed account of his theory of school learning (specifically, what he calls *mastery learning*)

<sup>49</sup> *Synthesis* should not be misconstrued as simply indicating *summarizing*. In Bloom's taxonomy, synthesis includes, among others, the processes of changing, combining, composing, constructing, rearranging, reorganizing, and ultimately creating.

<sup>50</sup> This connection might be weak in the case of the Direct Method. Total Physical Response which is another method with a Behaviourist influence will be briefly alluded to in Chapter 2.

Rodgers (2005:11) explain: “(They) argued that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learner’s mother language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action”.

About the principles that informed the Direct Method, Richards and Rodgers (2005) state:

It overemphasized and distorted the similarities between naturalistic first language learning and classroom foreign language learning [...] In addition it lacked a rigorous basis in applied linguistics theory, and for this reason was often criticized by the more academically based proponents of the Reform Movement. The Direct Method represented the product of enlightened amateurism [...] It offered innovations at the level of teaching procedures but lacked a thorough methodological basis (pp.12-139).

Stern (1994:459), makes a brief mention of what could be interpreted to signal some kind of connection between the Direct Method and the ideas of Associationism: “ the learning of languages was viewed as analogous to first language acquisition, and the learning processes involved were often interpreted in terms of an associationist psychology” and then citing Rückler (1969: 19-20) goes on to say “Hence, the emphasis on [...] direct association of language with objects and persons of the immediate environment, for example, the classroom, the home, the garden, and the street”.

Stern (1994) must probably be referring to the interpretation that we can make of the practices of the Direct Method today in the light of our

knowledge of Thorndike's Associationism (or Connectivism), a forerunner to Watson's Classical Behaviourism, but there is no mention of this psychological school in the writings of the proponents of the Direct Method (Howatt: 2004, pp 217-227).<sup>51</sup>

Even when the enthusiasm for the Direct Method started to decline in Europe in the 1920's (Richards and Rodgers, 2005: 13), it was to find staunch supporters in other corners of the world. In our country, Roberto Raufet battled incessantly for the adoption of the Direct Method as the exclusive methodology for our schools even well into the sixties<sup>52</sup>.

Raufet (1963) stresses the advantages of the Direct Method and the practices that it entails, but does not say much about the learning theory that supports it:

El Método Directo se inspira en las observaciones psicológicas que demuestran el papel importante desempeñado en la adquisición del idioma por las *asociaciones auditivas y motrices* (es decir la memoria del oído y de los órganos vocales). Hace el mayor uso posible de estos factores en lugar de depender casi únicamente de las asociaciones visuales como ocurre en el método clásico (p. 183).

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<sup>51</sup> Richards and Rodgers (2005) hint at the fact that Direct Method could have derived from the ideas of Franke's (1884) who Richards and Rodgers (2005:11) say "wrote on the psychological principles of direct Association between forms and meaning in the target language and provided a theoretical justification for a monolingual approach to teaching".

<sup>52</sup> Even when by the 1950s the Direct Method had fallen into total disrepute and , as we shall see later, Audiolingualism had replaced it worldwide, it is worth noticing that it was the standard method (with some vernacular modifications that only enlarged on its strictness) into which teachers of English were educated in prestigious institutions Colleges, like the former Instituto Nacional Superior en Lenguas Vivas "Juan Ramón Fernández" in the 1960s (Jaeger, personal communication).

## The Oral Approach

About the origins and principles of the *Oral Approach* often referred to as the *Situational Approach* by ones and the *Oral Situational Approach* by others, Knight (2001) explains:

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the forerunners of today's applied linguistics started to take the ideas of the Reform Movement further. In the United States the foundations of Audio-Lingualism were being laid, while in the U.K. the Oral Approach was developed by Palmer, Hornby and others. The Oral Approach proposed principles of selection, gradation and presentation that had been lacking in the Direct Method (Richards and Rodgers 1986:33). The principle that language should be introduced and practised in situations, that is, it should be contextualized, led to the Direct Approach becoming known as Situational Language Teaching. This did not mean that a Situational Syllabus was proposed, rather than references should be made to the real world in order to teach a structural syllabus, e.g. by using pictures, realia and actions [...] By the 1950s this was the standard British Approach to language teaching. It shared with Audiolingualism a structural view of language and a belief in behaviourist models of learning, but its focus on situations made it distinct (p. 149).

Though Howatt (2004:305) believes differently, he says

The contrastive analysis technique was the prime difference between the American and the British versions [...] In most other respects, however,

they were very similar: they both stressed the importance of the early stages of learning, both adopted sentence patterns (structures) as the basis for course design, and they both emphasized practice as essential for fixing the foreign language speech habits (p.305).

Hagaraj (1996) stresses the difference between Audiolingualism and the Oral Approach and credits Harold Palmer with the coinage of the name the *Situational Approach*:

While the structural approach developed by linguists at Michigan and other universities was gaining ground, the applied linguists and methodologists were developing the oral approach to teaching English as a foreign/second language. The two traditions developed independently. Two prominent linguists in this movement were Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby. They developed a more scientific foundation for the oral approach than was seen in the direct method [...] It was Hornby himself who used the term "*situational method*" in the title of a popular series of articles published in *ELT* (1950). The approach suggests that any language item, whether it be a structure or a word, should not be presented in isolation. It has to be introduced and practised in a context, situationally (p.14).

But as we had advised earlier in this chapter, the terminological disarray in our field is considerable. For example, Hulik (1995) in a publication of the English Language Institute (ELI) of the University of Michigan states:

"Fries's influence on the ELI and on the teaching of English throughout the world was enormous," says H. Joan Morley, associate professor of

linguistics and a member of the ELI faculty in the North University Building. "Until this Institute was founded, there was no oral methodology for teaching English. A fast method was desired, and Fries developed the Oral Approach, which presented grammatical forms and patterns as exercises that were listened to, repeated and varied in a series of drills" (p.6).

As a matter of fact, Charles Fries, as we shall see in the relevant section of this chapter, is widely acknowledged as one of the founders of what was later to be called the *Audio-lingual Method* or the *Structural Approach*, as Hagaraj (1996), among many others, would have it, but not precisely with the development of the *Oral Approach*, a typically British method.<sup>53</sup> However, Howatt (2004:306) speaks of a "Michigan Oral Method" which further adds to the terminological confusion.

Celce-Murcia (2001:7) draws attention to the fact that the Oral Approach draws from the Direct Method but "adds features from Firthian linguistics and the emerging professional field of language pedagogy". Richards and Rodgers (2005) make a similar point:

Many British linguists had emphasized the close relationship between the structure of the language and the contexts and situations in which language is used. British linguists, such as J.R. Firth and M.A.K. Halliday,

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<sup>53</sup> As to the fact that "Until this Institute was founded, there was no oral methodology for teaching English" that Hulik (1995) reports, we believe that the history of ELT conclusively proves this member of the Michigan faculty to be mistaken.

developed powerful views of language in which meaning, context and situation were given a prominent place (p.40).

The theory of learning that is at the basis of the Oral or Situational Approach, as has been pointed out before, seems to bear no differences with the budding Audiolingualism on the other side of the Atlantic. Richards and Rodgers (2005: 40-41) state: “The theory of learning underlying Situational Language Teaching is a type of behaviourist habit-learning theory. It addresses primarily the processes rather than the conditions of learning”. Richards and Rodgers (2005) go on to cite French (1950,vol. 3:9): “The pupils should be able to put the words, without hesitation and almost without thought, into sentence patterns which are correct. Such speech habits can be cultivated by blind imitative drill”.

### **Behaviourism and Operant Conditioning Theory**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Edward Thorndike developed a theory of learning which came to confront the long established theory of mental discipline that had pervaded teaching practice for centuries. In regard to college education in the United States<sup>54</sup> at the beginning of the twentieth century, Fincher (2000) illustrates:

Early curricula were adaptations of the English version of medieval courses of study—aiming for orthodoxy and based on the belief in

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<sup>54</sup> Though we felt that this quotation could be extrapolated to include education in general.

classical literacy and philosophical studies. A college curriculum reveals, according to Hofstadter, what the educated community believed worthy of passing along—and the kind of mind and character a college education was expected to produce. The assumptions of such a curriculum were: (1) the belief that education was for gentlemen, (2) a particular conception of knowledge, namely that truth is fixed and should be transferred to others, and (3) a particular theory of mind [the theory of mental discipline] (P.3)

Marsh (2000) refers to Thorndike<sup>55</sup> and his theory of Associationism<sup>56</sup> in the following way:

E.L.Thorndike, the "father" of educational psychology, challenged the theory that the brain is a muscle and, through a series of investigations, was able to demonstrate that mental discipline training did not actually exercise various mental faculties. [...] and students who completed courses in Latin or Geometry were no better at solving logical problems than students who had not taken these courses. The emphasis was shifted to transfer of learning, the theory that the knowledge bases must be specifically applied to problems, and that those who are well-grounded in a knowledge base will more easily solve novel problems. In the process, Thorndike developed the "law of effect" or the association between a stimulus and a response. He put cats and dogs in boxes and, through various methods, studied their learning curves for escaping

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<sup>55</sup> Thorndike's early production includes: *Educational Psychology* (1903) *Introduction to the Theory of Mental and Social Measurements* (1904), and *The Elements of Psychology* (1905). Special attention should be paid to the sequence of publication of his early works which denotes a frantic academic activity. His *The Fundamentals of Learning*, one of his last books, saw the light in 1932, long after Behaviourism had become the standard theory of learning among academe.

<sup>56</sup> Some authors refer to Thorndike's *Associationism* as *Connectionism*, for instance Bigge and Shermis (2004) and Richards and Rodgers (2005).

confinement. He generalized his findings to humans [and] laid the basis for Associationism.

Thorndike's law of effect posited that rewarded behaviours tended to be increased in an animal's repertoire and, conversely, punished behaviours tended to be decreased.<sup>57</sup>

Thorndike (as much as Pavlov) are very often considered forerunners to or early versions of what with J.B. Watson was going to become full-fledged Behaviourism<sup>58</sup>.

In the opening paragraph of Watson's seminal article *Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it*,<sup>59</sup> we find expounded in a few lines his psychological credo:

Psychology as the behaviorist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness. The

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<sup>57</sup> Thorndike later replaced the expression *punishment behaviours* by *non-rewarded behaviours*.

<sup>58</sup> There are minor discrepancies as to the inclusion of these psychologists into one group or another. Some theorists include the three of them: Pavlov, Thorndike and Watson within *Classical Behaviourism* (Barlett et al: 2006). Others include only Watson under *Early Behaviourism* and Pavlov under *Precursors* (Hauser: 2006).

<sup>59</sup> Watson went on to publish his first two books in the next few years: *Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* in 1914 and *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* in 1919. It is precisely the publication of his second book which is often credited with having made Watson the father of the American school of Behaviourism (see Kentridge: 2007).

behaviorist, in his efforts to get a unitary scheme of animal response, recognizes no dividing line between man and brute. The behavior of man, with all of its refinement and complexity, forms only a part of the behaviorist's total scheme of investigation (p.158).

In this very first paragraph of Watson (1913)'s work, we find a number of definitions that would be decisive in the shaping of the psychological thought of the early twentieth century:

1. - Psychology is construed as a branch of natural science, and as such its findings had to be the fruit of scientific experimentation (hence, the need for objectivity in the design and conduct of the experiments and the need for those experiments to provide the psychologist with clearly observable<sup>60</sup> and measurable results became cornerstones of his theory).
2. – The aim of psychology is to predict and control behaviour (as it is common ground, this assertion had a tremendous influence in the teaching scene of the time).
3. - All forms of Mentalism are to be rejected (e.g. introspection).
4. – Behaviour is explained in terms of “animal response” ( and since there was no place for mental considerations, the behaviour of man as well as

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<sup>60</sup> In this respect, says Marsh (2000): “He argued strongly against the use of the "mind" in describing mental behavior, because it could not be observed. Rather, he suggested that only observable behavior could be examined because it could be verified”.(p.11)

that of animals could be explained in the biological terms categories of stimulus-response)<sup>61</sup>

As Kentridge: 2007 explains:

Watson's theoretical position was even more extreme than Thorndike's - he would have no place for mentalistic concepts like pleasure or distress in his explanations of behavior. He essentially rejected the law of effect, denying that pleasure or discomfort caused stimulus-response associations to be learned. For Watson, all that was important was the frequency of occurrence of stimulus-response pairings. Reinforcers might cause some responses to occur more often in the presence of particular stimuli, but they did not act directly to cause their learning. Watson could therefore reject the notion that some mental traces of stimuli and responses needed to be retained in an animals mind until a reinforcer caused an association between them to be strengthened, which is a rather mentalistic consequence of the law of effect [...] (p. 1).

Marton and Booth (1997) explain the causes that eventually led Watson's Behaviourism<sup>62</sup> to its demise:

In our search for illumination, *classical conditioning*, as this form of learning is called, offers no solution at all, because it has nothing at all to

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<sup>61</sup> Watson went as far as accounting for language and thought in purely physiological terms. Says Kentridge (2007): "He felt that thought was explicable as subvocalisation and that speech was simply another behavior which might be learned [...]".(p.2)

<sup>62</sup> Watson's Behaviorism is at times referred to as *Classical Behaviourism* (Todd: 1994) or *Classical Conditioning* as opposed to Skinner's *Radical Behaviourism* (The Stanford University Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2007) or *Operant Conditioning*.

do with gaining knowledge about the world; what it does deal with is the transposition of physiological reactions to the stimuli to which they have a built-in response to stimuli that can acquire a conditioned response. Even if the set of stimuli to which reactions can be conditioned, what can be learnt from classical conditioning is limited to reactions that naturally appear as reflexes (p13).

### **Skinner's Operant Conditioning**

If Watson is credited with being the father of Behaviourism, probably B.F. Skinner should be acknowledged as the most influential behaviourist of all times. His own approach to the description of human behaviour is widely known as *Operant Conditioning* and even when many would like to see his theory superseded by cognitive psychology; his ideas are, of late, making a decided comeback in different guises, very particularly in the fields of Instructional Design and Instructional Technology<sup>63</sup>.

In a way, it could be said that Skinner refined and improved Watson's model, but as Marsh (2002) points out:

[Skinner] was just as resolute about behaviorism as Watson. Skinner viewed behaviorism as the only science of psychology and believed that he could discover all the laws for understanding and predicting human behavior. Skinner and other behaviorists viewed the brain as a "black box"

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<sup>63</sup> For the a discussion of the application of Operant Conditioning to these fields, consult Scrimshaw (1993).

that is beyond study because it is unobservable, so they rejected cognitive theories outright (p.11).

Kentridge (2007) differs in his appreciation of Skinner's support for Watson's original Behaviorism. He says:

Skinner developed the basic concept of operant conditioning, claiming that this type of learning was not the result of stimulus-response learning - for Skinner the basic association in operant conditioning was between the operant response and the reinforcer, the discriminative stimulus served to signal when this association would be acted upon (p.3).

One aspect in which both Skinner and Watson certainly coincide is their disregard for mentalistic explanations for human behaviour<sup>64</sup>. Skinner's Radical Behaviourism, as much as Watson's Classical Behaviourism, is concerned with the external observable behaviour of organisms, and not, in the case of human beings, with their internal mental processes<sup>65</sup>. It is therefore, only natural, that they should not pay attention to the mind's internal processing or seek ways to account for a reality that they had chosen to ignore. In this respect, Graham (2007) remarks:

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<sup>64</sup> Behaviourists were not concerned with notions such as, *thinking, sensation, instinct, drive, will power* or *consciousness*, simply because they were not observable and therefore, they are not susceptible to scientific analysis. As Burt (1962) points out: "psychology, having first bargained away its soul and then gone out of its mind, seems now [...] to have lost all consciousness" (p.229). He was no doubt, referring to the successive demise of the classical philosophical conception of man as a composite of body and soul, and later, of the theory of mental discipline, only to be replaced by Behaviourism that did not pay any attention to concepts such as *consciousness*. (hence, *psychology has lost its consciousness*)

<sup>65</sup> Bigge and Shermis (2004:100) cite Skinner as positing: "We can predict and control behavior without knowing anything of what is happening inside" Skinner, *Recent issues in the Analysis of Behavior*,p.130.(citation has been kept as in the original).

Skinner's radical behaviorism [...] follows analytical strictures (at least loosely) in paraphrasing mental terms behaviorally, when or if they cannot be eliminated from explanatory discourse. In *Verbal Behavior* (1957) and elsewhere, Skinner tries to show how mental terms can be given behavioral interpretations. In *About Behaviorism* (1974) he says that when mental terminology cannot be eliminated it can be "translated into behavior" (p. 18, Skinner brackets the expression with his own double quotes) (p.24).

Skinner's theory came to be known as *Operant Conditioning*<sup>66</sup>, since its main principle was that if human behaviour (an operant) is reinforced by the use of a reinforcing stimulus (a reinforcer), the behaviour is strengthened and is more likely to occur again. On this point, Jones and Mercer (1993) elaborate:

According to Skinner's law of operant conditioning,[...] the correct or desired behaviour is reinforced. No action is taken after incorrect or undesired behaviour, and this behaviour will gradually disappear, or in Skinner's terms be extinguished.

[...] There are [...] often problems in extinguishing undesired behaviour, i.e. 'stopping' it. Skinner would argue that is because the contingencies for reinforcement haven't been designed accurately enough. What this means is that the process of breaking down the behaviour into its components and rewarding each desired component has not been carried

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<sup>66</sup> A number of authors also use the term *Instrumental Conditioning* to refer to Skinner's Behaviourism, among them Cardwell (2003).

out carefully enough. Or perhaps we have failed to see that undesired behaviour is being rewarded in some way that we haven't realized. According to Skinner with the 'correct' environment, the desired behaviour can be produced.

An operant is, according to Bigge and Shermis (2004) "a set of acts -- behavioral atoms -- that constitutes an organism's doing something -- [...] It is so called because behavior operates upon the environment and generates consequences" (p.97). They go on to explain that:

Skinner thought that nearly all human behavior is a product of either biological natural selection or psychological operant reinforcement. He noted that in everyday life, in various fields including education, people constantly change the probability of responses of others by arranging reinforcing consequences. Furthermore, through being operantly reinforced, people learn to keep their balance, walk, talk, play games, and handle tools and instruments; they perform a set of motions, reinforcement occurs, and the likelihood of repeating the motions is increased.

Whenever something reinforces a particular form of behavior, the chances are better that that behavior will be repeated. The task of psychologists is to gain more understanding of conditions under which reinforcement works best, thereby opening the way for cultural control through social engineering (pp. 97-98).

Expanding on this topic of social control<sup>67</sup>, Marsh (2002) remarks that “The theory was appealing, particularly in America, for several reasons, perhaps the most important being the belief that social control could be achieved easily by means of simple procedures. It is noteworthy that behaviorism was also highly appealing in Russia and later in the Soviet Union” (p.11).

Following the exposition that Bigge and Shermis (2004) make of Skinner’s Operant Conditioning, we will now attempt to summarize the main tenets of this theory:

1. – Behaviour can be reinforced by reinforcing events of two kinds: positive and negative reinforcers (or stimuli). The presentation of a positive reinforcer (e.g. a smile or praise from your teacher) strengthens the behaviour evidenced. The removal of a negative reinforcer (a recriminating look on your teacher’s face) also strengthens the behaviour that it accompanies. Since in both cases the behaviour is strengthened by adding or withdrawing something from the subject’s environment, the probability that the response will recur is increased. Conversely, punishment entails the presentation of a negative stimulus (e.g. presenting a recriminating look) or the removal of a positive one (e.g. withdrawing praise from your teacher). Punishment weakens the response as much as reinforcement strengthens it. When a learned behaviour is neither reinforced nor punished, it becomes less frequent and ultimately, perishes

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<sup>67</sup> The use of Operant Conditioning for social control, we believe, is probably one of the most unwanted, forced and far-fetched interpretations of the theory.

(operant extinction) and this is precisely what we do to break a habit. Operant extinction takes much longer than Operant reinforcement. Intermittent reinforcement of a response tends to create stronger associations, but as Marsh (2002) posits: “While continuous, immediate reinforcement gets high levels of responses, the behavior can be more easily extinguished” (p.12).

2. – Operant reinforcement can be operated in two distinct ways: stimulus discrimination and stimulus differentiation<sup>68</sup>. Bigge and Shermis (2004) explain:

Through operant reinforcement, a relatively new unit of behaviour may be learned or an existing unit of behaviour may be refined. In general, reinforcement that leads to behaviour acquirement is a process of discrimination of stimuli, whereas behaviour refinement or skill development is a process of differentiation of responses. [...] (a) discriminative stimulus [...] is the stimulus that either precedes or accompanies the operant response or behaviour.

[...] Operant discrimination of a stimulus causes an organism readily to respond in a given manner when the occasion is appropriate for it to do so. In an elementary schoolroom a teachers says “yellow”; a girl points to yellow on a color chart; she then is reinforced for doing so, but only on those occasions when the teacher has said first “yellow”. In this way the

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<sup>68</sup> Marsh(2002) also includes the concept of *Stimulus Generalization*, which he explains as “Given similar stimulus situations (S), a person responds in similar ways (R), expecting a reinforcement” (p.12)

girl is conditioned to point to yellow after the teacher, or someone similar to the teacher, has said “yellow”.

Rules, laws and maxims constitute a special category of discriminative stimuli. As well as specifying the occasions upon which a behaviour will occur, they also often describe the behavior itself and its reinforcement consequences [...] Whereas behaviour that is reinforced is under the control of succeeding stimuli, rules, laws, and maxims are under the control of prior ones.

[...] Skills are improved through differentiating reinforcements of varying responses [...] To throw a ball skillfully, a person must release it at the proper moment; instances in which release comes before or after the proper moment are not reinforced. However in more complex skill learning, reinforcement should be provided by a teacher, teaching machine or computer [and it must] be immediate (pp.110-111).

Operant Conditioning theory had a direct and strong influence on the educational practices of the forties, and very particularly on those of the fifties and the sixties. We have the impression that even today the rejection of Skinner’s Behaviourism is more a pretence of being “pedagogically correct” than a real statement of how teachers believe that they help their students to learn. In our own particular field of teaching foreign languages, it is almost impossible not to find, as a minimum, traces of Behaviourism in the day-to-day classroom practices in our country and in the materials published locally and abroad.

Following Hartley (1998), we could summarize the main implications of Skinner's model as applied to education into the following principles:

1. – Learner motivation is increased or decreased depending on the kind of reinforcement that he is provided with for his behaviour, this is positive reinforces (rewards or success) or negative reinforces (punishment or failure).
2. - Learning can only take place as a result of frequent practice in a variety of contexts (hence, the learner must be an active participant in the learning process).
3. - Repetition, generalization and discrimination are cue operations in any learning event.
4. – Information should be presented in small doses so that responses can be properly reinforced.
5. – Learning is facilitated when the learning outcomes are clearly defined.

This last principle led to a concern by classroom teachers to be able to design appropriate objectives to measure their students' performance. These types of objectives came to be known as performance objectives<sup>69</sup> and Robert Mager became the most influential author in this area. In his

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<sup>69</sup> In our country performance objectives went by the name of *objetivos operacionales*.

celebrated *Preparing Instructional Objectives* (Mager: 1962)<sup>70</sup> established that objectives should include a description of the desired performance, the conditions for performance, and the criteria for measurement. Those three essential components of any good instructional objective should state:

1. – Performance: The result or product through which the learner is supposed to show that he has learnt. This includes a description of the desired product or result.

2. - Condition – The circumstances under which the learner is supposed to perform.

3. - Criteria – The information about the standard of achievement. A description of what kind of performance is to be considered acceptable.

Evans (1999)<sup>71</sup> examines the causes of the downfall of Operant Conditioning:

By the 1940s and 1950s, behaviorism reigned supreme in American experimental psychology, moving into virtually every sphere in psychology, applied and theoretical. With it came an environmentalist

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<sup>70</sup> His work has gone through a number of reprints and revised editions. The latest revised edition of this work was published in 2005. It is now widely used by instructors in corporate contexts.

<sup>71</sup> See also Evans, Rand B., Sexton, Virginia Staudt, & Cadwallader, (1992). 100 Years: The American Psychological Association, a historical perspective. Washington, D.C.: APA Books. for an authoritative roundup of the psychological ideas of the twentieth century

view, emphasizing learning and experience over inheritance of traits. But, around 1965, the tide began to turn with the coming of the "cognitive revolution" in experimental psychology.

Just why behavior theory declined is complicated. Perhaps the extensions of behavior theory into issues of everyday life demonstrated in ways the laboratory could not that the extant behavior theories were overly simplistic and inadequate, particularly as they applied to human beings. Psychologists sought something more to explain the complexity of human conduct.

At the turn of the new century, behavior theory, while still viable, no longer holds the dominance it once did in theoretical psychology. Applications, such as behavior modification, have remained fruitful, although even in the clinical area, more cognitively oriented therapies and approaches are gaining favor (p.4).

We could not agree more, Operant Conditioning with all its efforts to explain human behaviour in as scientific a way as possible (and this, to Skinner, meant the analysis of only observable and tangible outcomes) failed to address basic concepts, like previous experience, intelligence, motivation, and individual styles of processing information which we believe are central to explain the complexities of learning. Probably we would more readily agree with Mackintosh (1997) when he suggested that psychology, "[...] has at last emerged from the long, dark night of behaviorism to the sunlit uplands of cognitive psychology" (p. 880).

## **The Audiolingual Approach: Behaviourism in the language classroom**

It is a common assumption held among academe and classroom teachers alike that what was later to develop into the *Audiolingual Method* is a direct offspring of, or, at least has its foundations in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP)<sup>72</sup> of the United States. Spolsky (1995) clarifies the issue:

The popular history of English language teaching assigns a significant role to what is still mistakenly called the Army Method, presented as the forerunner of the even more fabulous Audiolingual Method. In spite of the doubt expressed by Stern (1983:102) “that it was such a radical and successful innovation”, this over simplification has become so deeply ingrained that we find it repeated in one of the first books to make a serious attempt at re-evaluating the history of English language teaching. [...] Phillipson’s account is very close to what generations of applied linguists and language teachers have learnt in their history of methods course. The published contemporary reports suggest a somewhat different story [...] The experience of the ASTP [...] was limited. Its most important effect was in reasserting the emphasis, strong in 1913 but weakened after 1930, on the spoken language, and thus reasserting the emphasis on face-to-face interaction which is usually associated with the communicative goal of language teaching<sup>73</sup> (pp. 323-324 & 331)<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The Army Specialized Training Division was created on December 18th, 1942, a year after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the entrance of the United States into WW II.

<sup>73</sup> Here Spolsky(1999) refers to Phillipson(1992)’s authoritative *Linguistic Imperialism*.

This paper by Spolsky cited above throws some light on one (The Army Method) of the number of names by which the Audiolingual Method has come to be known. For example, Zimmerman (1997:10) says: “The audio-lingual method or the structural approach, as it was called by its founders”, or Burstall (1965:212) who referring to this method says: “what is termed variously the “audio-lingual”, the “audio-visual”, or the “scientific approach”.

We believe that this terminological question is not a minor one. In the questionnaire that we administered to the teachers in our sample (see Chapter 3) we felt compelled to use all three terms “Structural”, “Audiovisual”<sup>75</sup>, and “Audiolingual” to refer to the same reality (Audiolingualism) because of the popularity of these three labels with the Argentinian practitioners, and the fact that many of them tend to construe these three as separate pedagogical developments. As to the fourth term in question, the *Scientific Approach*, we shall return to it in the concluding remarks to this section.

While it is true, as Liu and Jin (2007) contend, that Audiolingualism was, in fact, born as a new approach to pedagogical grammar rather than as a

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<sup>74</sup> Howatt (2004:304) says that the ASTP “became known as the ‘mim-mem’ (mimicry and memorization) and is the obvious forerunner of ‘pattern practice’ and the Audiolingual Method” and that it was “irreverently called” the ‘G.I.Method’ (p.305)

<sup>75</sup> We cannot fail to remember, for instance, Rosa Clarke de Armando’s *Structural English* that was published in the early seventies by a local publisher or the proliferation of ELS’s in our country that purported to teach an “Audiovisual method” or “with an Audiovisual method” in the sixties and the seventies. The term *Army Method* was not as widespread as the other three among Argentinian teachers.

method for teaching languages and that, as Zimmerman (1997) points out, Charles Fries, the father of Audiolingualism, saw it as the practical interpretation of the “principles of modern linguistic science”<sup>76</sup> (Fries, 1945: v); the link between Skinner’s ideas and the Audio-lingual Method seems to be weaker. When Audiolingualism came into being<sup>77</sup>, Skinner had just become the chairman of the Psychology department at Indiana University (1945) after serving a stint at the University of Minnesota. Although he had written numerous articles in which he had expounded his ideas about behaviour conditioning and was already a reputed scholar, he was far from being the influential figure he turned out to be in the following years.<sup>78</sup>

1945 was twelve years away from the publication of, what is considered by many to be his masterpiece, *Verbal Behavior* (1957). Even if Skinner did not exercise a decisive influence on the first few years of Audiolingualism, we cannot fail to notice the connection between Classical Behaviourism and its postulates about habit formation and the new method that Fries heralded<sup>79</sup> or the influence that Skinner’s Operant Conditioning exerted on

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<sup>76</sup> It is not unusual for the different language teaching methods to reflect the prevalent linguistic paradigms of the times when they originate. In this sense, Byram and Risager (1999:3) say: “The search for better methods, as one panacea after another failed, was affected by progress within the study of language. Influential figures in language teaching have often been major scholars in linguistics, for example, Jespersen, Bloomfield, Halliday, Chomsky, even though the latter has not always been a willing recruit to “applied linguistics”, as language teaching became known for some people“

<sup>77</sup> The publication of Fries’s *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* in 1945 is often taken as the formal date of birth of this method.

<sup>78</sup> He joined Harvard University faculty in 1948.

<sup>79</sup> Reviewing Lado (1964)’s *Language Teaching: a scientific approach*, Burstall (1965:119) points out: that in Lado’s explanation and interpretation of the Audio-lingual Method “the treatment of learning theory is unsatisfactory. The “laws of learning” which Professor Lado enumerates appear to owe more to the Associationists than to any more

the development and consolidation of this method in the fifties and sixties. It is interesting to observe that a number of language specialists think otherwise, for instance, Castagnaro (2006) contends that:

[...] the modern descendant of B. F. Skinner's experimental analysis of behavior, "behavior analysis," and as well his 1957 masterwork "Verbal Behavior," have rarely if ever been seriously contemplated by applied linguists for possible contributions to the field. Rather, a pat literature of dismissal has developed that justifies itself on (a) a fictitious link between the audiolingual method and undifferentiated behaviorism, and/or (b) a demonstrably erroneous notion that operant psychology is too simplistic to effectively take up language issues. In reality, behavior analysis is alive, well, and making significant contributions in applied language settings, but "not" typically in the second language area (p. 519)

What there has never seemed to be any possible dispute about is the fact that Audiolingualism rapidly gained ground over the second half of the 1950s and enjoyed its heyday in the 1960s. Ausubel writes in 1964:

The great popularity of audio-lingual methods in second-language teaching today is more than just an over-reaction to previous pedagogic techniques that concentrated almost exclusively on reading, translation,

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recent psychologist [...] Professor Lado's treatment of this most important topic serves only to blind the reader with obsolete science".

It must be noticed that by the time of publication of Lado's work (1964), Skinner's ideas occupied, almost exclusively, the centre of the psychological stage and most classroom practices were shaped along his ideas.

and composition skills, and neglected oral comprehension and speaking ability...

The argument runs, if children achieved such spectacular success by means of an audio-lingual approach, it must obviously be the most effective way of learning foreign languages, and adults should follow their example [...]

Certain features of the audio-lingual approach are psychologically incompatible with effective learning processes in adults. These features include (1) the rote learning of phrases; (2) inductive rather than deductive learning of grammatical generalizations; (3) avoidance of the mediational role of the native language; (4) presentation of the spoken form of the language before the written form, and (5) insistence on exposing the beginner to the “natural speed of rendition” of the spoken language.<sup>80 81</sup> (p. 420)

Ausubel (1964) was not alone in his criticism. Apparently, even at its prime, Audiolingualism was not without opponents. Woodsworth (1967) points out:

The term audio-lingual approach is used to denote a specific pedagogical orientation which grew out of language-teaching programmes for United States military personnel during the Second World War. Its basic

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<sup>80</sup> Ausubel (1964) warns us that “In this article, adolescents may be substituted for adults in most contexts” (p.420).

<sup>81</sup> Huang (1998:3) says: “N. Brooks coined the term audio-lingual in 1964”. Bearing in mind that Ausubel (1964) uses the same term as if it were standard practice by that year, Huang(1998) is probably mistaken about the date when the term originated.

distinction from the traditional approaches is that language is to be taught as speech rather than as writing and grammar, as a living vehicle of communication rather than as a fossilized set of printed rules and paradigms. Language-learning, as defined audiolingually involves the acquisition of skills in speaking and understanding speech, while reading and writing are secondary skills based on the spoken language. Despite the acknowledged superiority over traditional methods, however, the new approach has not met with widespread acceptance. Its radical requirements have brought opposition from grammar-oriented language--teachers. Linguists themselves have challenged its effectiveness in actual classroom experience (p.1).

Willis (1965) seems to agree with Ausubel (1964) as to the popularity of the Audio-lingual Method but he does not fail to mention the reservations that “more traditional” teachers had about it:

The first campaign in the battle for audio-lingual methods in language teaching is drawing to a close. Pattern drills seem to have penetrated to the most conservative of classrooms [...] If the clarion call of “Je donne le livre à Jacques, tu-, tu donnes le livre à Jacques, il-, il donne...etc” is out of theory and into practice, it is possible for a classroom teacher to humbly submit a few judgments and suggestions based on classroom experience [...] more than one language teacher is anxious to evaluate the effects of the recent innovations.

Criticism of the present state of affairs seems for the most part to be summed up by 1) the fear that the valuable experiences and successes of

the grammar method will be scrapped needlessly, and 2) the opinion that the audiolingual revolution has been too inflexible, tending to intimidate some teachers into abandoning a variety of techniques and materials. An example of the first is an article recently published on how dictation can still be used to advantage, of the second, articles which say that we must teach good literature, and not limit our students to banal dialogues. There is no doubt in my mind that the introduction of new methods has been a boon to teacher and student alike. However, the exacting science of ALM has put harmful limitations both on teacher and on student. [...] Certainly our job in secondary education is to encourage the students to cultivate their intelligence, and not just to control their responses (p.396).

At a first reading, this seems to be an account of a traditional teacher nostalgic of the times of Grammar and Translation, but on a second more careful reading, we can easily realize that this “humble classroom teacher”, as Willis (1965) defines himself, certainly knew how to make his point. By citing an example from a French lesson he mocks the backbone of the Audio-lingual Method: pattern practice; and he does not hesitate to call the modelic dialogues, another *pièce de résistance* of the method, *banal*. He alludes to the *inflexible* and *exacting* nature of a method whose advocates indulged in meticulousness and severity in their search for *science*. Finally he assaults the theory of learning at the basis of the method: Behaviourism. His reference to the *clarion* call brings to mind the behaviourist laboratory experiments in which sounds and light were used as stimuli and finally he contends that “controlling students’ responses” does not necessarily imply “cultivating their intelligence”. Undoubtedly, this

is a remarkable piece of criticism for a foreign language teacher writing in 1965 when Audiolingualism was at its zenith and seemed to reign uncontested.

With due historical perspective, Liu and Jin (2007) summarize the main tenets and contributions of the Audio-lingual method in the following way:

The audio-lingual method was the first to claim openly to be derived from linguistics and psychology. Audiolingualism reflects the descriptive, structural, and contrastive linguistics of the fifties and sixties. Its psychological basis is behaviorism which interprets language learning in terms of stimulus and response, operant conditioning, and reinforcement with an emphasis on successful error-free learning. It assumes that learning a language entails mastering the elements or building blocks of the language and learning the rules by which these elements are combined, from phoneme to morpheme to word to phrase to sentence. Therefore, it was characterized by the separation of the skills---listening, speaking, reading, and writing---and the primacy of the audio-lingual over the graphic skills. This method uses dialogues as the chief means of presenting the language and stresses certain practice techniques, such as pattern drills, mimicry and so on. Listening and speaking were now brought right into the centre of the stage in this method, tape recordings, and language laboratory drills were offered in practice.

As one of the most popular methods in the history of foreign language teaching, the audio-lingual method is of some great contributions to language teaching, for example, it attempted to make language learning

accessible to large groups of ordinary learners because it proposed that language teaching should be organized in such a way as not to demand great intellectual feats of abstract reasoning to learn a language. In addition, it stressed syntactical progression, while previously methods had tended to be preoccupied with vocabulary and morphology.

In spite of these contributions, Audiolingualism was also criticized in many ways. First, its theoretic foundation was attacked as being unsound both in terms of language theory and learning theory by Chomsky's theory of UG grammar; second, the practical results fell short of expectations and students were often found to be unable to transfer skills acquired through Audiolingualism to real communication outside the classroom. Therefore, it ignores the communicative competence in teaching practice.<sup>82</sup> (pp.70-71).

Elaborating on the reasons why Audiolingualism fell out of favour with the academic community of the time, Juppé (2000) explains:

Wilga Rivers, then Noam Chomsky, then virtually all of the linguistic community picked apart the audio-lingual method. Rivers criticized the assumption that foreign language learning is a mechanical process; she felt that the process was less concerned with outward behavior and more so with the inner thoughts and feelings of the learner. Audio-lingual advocates also urged (in Skinnerian terms) that foreign language habits are reinforced by giving correct responses. If interpreted too narrowly, however, Rivers argued that such an approach could limit learners. As to

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<sup>82</sup> We must remember that, as Pencheva and Shopov(1999) point out., "Noam Chomsky openly criticized audio-lingual theory and practice in his address to language teachers at the Northeast Conference, U.S.A., in 1966, "I am, frankly, rather skeptical about the significance, for the teaching of languages, of such insights and understanding as have been attained in linguistics and psychology". (p.37)

the assertion that language skills are learned more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented first in spoken form (as opposed to written), Rivers countered by saying that there was little to no support for this renunciation of the written word. Finally, Rivers pointed out that “language communication involves a relationship between individuals and not merely the memorization and repetition of phrases and the practicing of structures.” (Rivers, 1964, pp. 47-50)

It is this aspect of audio-lingual practice that is worth exploring. Rivers framed the proper rationale for practicing aural/oral exchange; it is therefore up to the instructor to figure out how the LL can be used toward this end. Rivers did argue in later work that early foreign language learning was particularly suited to the audio-lingual approaches (i.e., the reproductive tasks).

Rivers had essentially concluded that the audio-lingual theory had oversimplified the underlying psychology of language learning. A more cognitive approach would be needed to help balance it. In fact, of all the conceptualizations she had reviewed, she came to the conclusion that an eclectic approach to language teaching was needed to respond to the diverse needs of language learners (Rivers, p. 58).

Audiolingualism fell prey not only to a faulty ideological base, but to criticisms of its applications: Limited techniques, boredom engendered in students, etc. (Stern, 1983). It did, however, attempt to make language learning available to large numbers of students, and it did focus on

syntactical progression, still an area in which development is needed in AOC courses.<sup>83</sup> (pp.92-93).

By the end of the sixties enthusiasm for Audiolingualism started to wane and the reliability of this method started to be questioned<sup>84</sup> as Clarke (1968) in his report about a large-scale project conducted in Pennsylvania seems to indicate:

The Pennsylvania project had as its major focus the in-field comparison of three different foreign language teaching methods for beginning and intermediate French and German classes at high school level: 1) “traditional”; 2) “functional skills” (essentially the “audio-lingual” approach has broadly defined within the profession); and 3) “functional skills plus grammar “ (similar to the “functional skills approach” but specifying the use of grammatical explanations by the teacher as a supplement to the regular audio-lingual procedures) [...]

The reported major conclusion that after two years of “traditional”, “functional skills”, and “functional skills plus grammar instruction” there were no significant differences in student achievement in listening comprehension, speaking, and writing -- and slight superiority of the “traditional” group in reading\_\_ was a rather disheartening outcome for the many persons who had played their faith and developmental effort in

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<sup>83</sup> The acronym AOC mentioned in Juppé (2000)’s article stands for *Aural Oral Communication*, a scheme established by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1993.

<sup>84</sup> Even when Audiolingualism was to survive well into the seventies (as all other methods, it was to die hard), disillusionment over the results of its application were felt in many quarters as early as the mid sixties. See Willis (1965) mentioned before.

the audio-lingual approach. While relatively modest student performance in reading and writing might have been anticipated following one or even two years of audio-lingual instruction, the lack of superiority in speaking and listening comprehension shown by audio-lingual students in the Pennsylvania study was difficult to accept [...]

The researchers on The Pennsylvania project should be warmly praised for having undertaken a large-scale study attempting to provide empirical data on the relative merits of basic instructional procedures which have been [...] accepted on faith (p.388).

With Structural Linguistics having lost most of its vitality and past prestige, and the frustration over the failure of Behaviourism and Operant Conditioning to give account of the intricacies of the human mind and systematically explain human learning, Audiolingualism soon lost the hold it had had over the language teaching profession for more than two decades. By the beginning of the seventies the time was definitely ripe for methodological innovation in ELT.

### **The Audiovisual Method**

The Audiovisual Method, the French contribution to the Methods debate of the 1960s, is often referred to as a by-product of Audiolingualism, or, in the best of cases, as having developed laterally to that approach. As a direct consequence of this widespread belief, the Audiovisual Method is automatically ascribed to the behaviourist tradition but, as we shall see in

this section, neither of these two contentions can be asserted beyond reasonable doubt.

Howatt (2004: 316) explains that this method “consisted of (i) a story depicted in a sequence of pictures displayed to the learners on a filmstrip, and (ii) a dialogue linked to the story played on a tape recorder along with the pictures”.

Byram (2001:61) elaborates on the characteristics of the method and clarifies how it originated:

It exists in ‘strong’ versions in which the simultaneous use of pictorial and auditive material is dominant, and in ‘weak’ versions in which pictorial and auditive materials are used only as a component within language instruction or , more frequently, with both elements dissociated from each other. The best-known implementation of the ‘strong’ variant is the *Méthode Structoro-Globale Audio-Visuelle* (SGAV) which was developed in the 1950s simultaneously at the University of Zagreb (under the direction of Petar Guberina) and at the *École Normale Supérieure* in Saint Claude, France (in the institution which was predecessor to the CREDIF, under the direction of Paul Rivenc). The prototype is the audio-visual course *Voix et Images de France* (1961) This classical form of the audio-visual method is strictly monolingual and puts great emphasis on basic oral skills, whereas reading and writing are only introduced after a

considerable time delay. The choice of vocabulary and grammatical structures is based on *le Français Fondamental*.<sup>85</sup>

Howatt (2004) expands on the concept of *Français Fondamental*:

(it was) a modernized frequency count of French [...] which included a novel feature known as 'disponibilité' (usually translated as 'availability'). This was a measure of how strongly people associated particular words with the situations in which they were likely to occur. Given the situation 'at the baker's', for instance, you could guess that 'bread', 'cake', and 'biscuits' would occur, but a measure of availability would tell you the order in which they were likely to come to mind and therefore how to rank them in order of usefulness to learners (p.316)<sup>86</sup>.

Stern (1994) describes the procedure that teachers using the Audio-visual Method were expected to follow. As can be easily noticed there was a considerable degree of rigidity in the application of the method:

Audiovisual teaching, as developed in the CREDIF method, consists of carefully thought out but rigid order of events. The lesson begins with the filmstrip and tape presentation. The sound recordings provide stylized dialogue and narrative commentary. A filmstrip frame corresponds to an utterance. In other words, the visual image and spoken utterance

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<sup>85</sup> CREDIF stands for *Centre de Recherches et d' Études pour la Diffusion du Français* (Centre of Research and Studies for the Dissemination of French)

<sup>86</sup> As Howatt (2004) points out *Français Fondamental* was a government-funded research and development project. *Français Fondamental* was published by the French National Ministry of Education in 1954.

complement each other and constitute jointly a semantic unit. In the second phase of the teaching sequence the meaning of sense groups is explained ('explication') by the teacher through pointing, demonstrating, selective listening, question and answer. In the third phase, the dialogue is repeated several times and memorized by frequent replays of the tape-recordings and the filmstrip, or by language laboratory practice. In the next stage of the teaching sequence, the development phase ('exploitation' or 'transposition'), students are gradually emancipated from the tape-and-filmstrip presentation: for example, the filmstrip is now shown without the tape recording and the students are asked to recall the commentary or make up their own; or the subject matter of the scenario is modified and applied to the student himself, his family or friends, by means of question and answer or role playing. Besides this thorough treatment of the dialogue situation each lesson contains a portion for grammatical drill which practises a pattern or a group of patterns which has previously occurred in the context of the tape and filmstrip dialogue presentation. Grammatical as well as phonological features are practised. No importance is attributed to linguistic explanations. Writing and reading, as in the audiolingual method, are delayed, but in due course are nonetheless given emphasis. (p.467)<sup>87</sup>

The similarities between the Audio lingual and the Audio-visual methods appear to be self-evident. However, Byram (2001) contends that

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<sup>87</sup> Not with the same degree of orthodoxy, the Audio-visual Method was also used in Britain in a *à la anglais* version. Howatt (2004:317) recounts: "The Audio-Visual Method caused quite a stir at the time and inspired the British Council to commission a similar course for English as a foreign language. It was called *The Turners*, but it did not appear until 1969, by which time a modified version of the technology, which put the pictures in a book instead of projecting them in the classroom, had been adapted for an EFL beginners' course called *First Things First* (1967)".

connection and opts for relating the Audio-visual Method to the Direct Method:

The audio-visual method is often linked to the audiolingual method because both methods use tape-recorders, work mainly with dialogues and were presented as scientifically-based methods during the 1960s. This affinity exists, however, only in a certain number of courses. Most SGAV methodologists reject pattern practice, and some even have a sceptical attitude towards the language laboratory.

The A-V method not only has a closer relationship to the direct method, but it can even be seen as an offshoot of this approach [...] there are none the less some differences. The direct method is, above all, descriptive whilst the A-V method is oriented towards dialogues. The direct method frequently uses complex single pictures, whereas the A-V method uses sequences of pictures in which a single picture corresponds to only one sentence or event or part of a sentence. Furthermore, the picture-based direct method is a relatively open methodological variant which can be complemented by real or artificial objects and by the reading of lesson texts, whereas, the classic A-V method represents a closed method with precisely stipulated teaching techniques. (p.61)

Stern (1994) distinguishes other features of the two methods:

In contrast to the antecedents of the audiolingual method, the audiovisual method stresses the social nature and situational embeddedness of language:

‘...le langage est avant tout un moyen de communication entre les êtres ou les groupes sociaux...” (CREDIF 1961:viii)

The visual presentation is, therefore, not an added gimmick. It is intended to simulate the social context in which language is used. [...]

By its insistence on a non-analytical learning approach, and its well-defined teaching sequence the method makes definite assumptions about optimal ways of language learning. The learner is encouraged to absorb in a global fashion the utterances he hears on tape in the context he sees on the screen, in other words, not to analyse [...] But the practice sequences, based on the global presentation, are not fundamentally different from those of the audiolingual method. However, the stimuli in the exercises are pictorial and the attempt is made to practise all features to be learnt in a meaningful context. Pure pattern practice without attention to meaning and outside a context is avoided. (pp.467-468)<sup>88</sup>

As we can see, the linguistic and pedagogical bases of the Audio-visual Method can be established with a fair degree of certainty. The characterization of the theory of learning underpinning the method is somewhat more elusive: the pendulum seems to sway alternatively in the direction of the Gestalt theory and Behaviourism.

Byram (2001:62) expounds that the Audio-visual approach has its roots in the Gestalt psychology:

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<sup>88</sup> ‘...le langage est avant tout un moyen de communication entre les êtres ou les groupes sociaux...” Language is, above all, a means of communication among individuals or social groups” [our translation].

The linguist Petar Guberina, (1964.1984) developed approaches which were directed towards a structural-global learning theory. He starts with the concept of structure as developed in the first half of the twentieth century (especially in Germany and France) within the context of a holistic theory of language and the psychological gestalt theory. The act of linguistic understanding is for Guberina primarily a holistic process, from which the *valeur* of the individual structure is interpreted...this emphasis on globality applies to both the reception and production of all the structures: linguistic units (whether sounds, lexemes or grammatical structures should be presented to learners only in a situational or textual context, i.e. they should neither be isolated nor analysed in the classroom)

Stern (1994: 468) holds the same stance, but is not so conclusive: “The assumed learning process of this method has an affinity with Gestalt psychology. It proceeds from a total view of the situation to particular segments of language” and cites as an example: “in the teaching of French phonology or grammar, the authors insist that intonation, rhythmic patterns, and semantic units should not be broken down”.

Danesi, M. (2000:9) proposes a different view:

In Europe, the success of the army program was translated into a slightly different method that came to be called the audiovisual, method [...] The method was very similar in pedagogical design to its American counterpart, stressing pattern practice, *habit formation*, [our italics] and the teaching of oral skills before reading and writing skills. But it added an

innovative feature to this basic plan—the new material was to be presented visually with filmstrips.

The enthusiastic expectations thus both these methods raised were heightened by a naive faith in technology. The incorporation of the 'language laboratory' into the modus operandi of the audiolingual method, and of visual aids into that of the audiovisual method were hailed by many teachers at the time as the final missing pieces to the puzzle of what had to be done in the classroom to instil true mastery of the SL into the learner. But their enthusiasm turned into disenchantment as a series of events and experiences coalesced by the mid-1960s to bring about the large-scale abandonment of both methods. For one thing, the expectations raised by the two methods were never fulfilled in practice. Moreover, by the 1960s *the psychological and linguistic platform upon which they were constructed crumbled under the weight of a new emphasis on cognitivism in psychology,* (Ausubel 1967) and generativism in linguistics (Chomsky 1957, 1965). A series of psycholinguistic experiments moreover — especially the one by Scherer and Vertheimer (1964)— showed that no significant learning outcomes were produced by these methods, when compared to grammar-translation approaches.

## **Postscript**

In more than one way the demise of Audiolingualism was a great frustration to the language teaching profession. Structuralism as a linguistic theory and Behaviourism as a theory of learning, had, for the first time in history, offered the teacher of English what appeared to be a

scientific way to approach teaching languages, of bringing the order and uniformity of science to the rather disorderly and “artistic” field of language teaching. Teachers of languages had lived under the illusion that they were “doing science” in their classrooms and now they saw this illusion falling to pieces under the onslaught of cognitive psychology and the new “humanistic” approaches to language learning.

Paraphrasing Bedell (1973), we could say that “they threw us a crumb of hope and, Oh, how we snatched at that crumb and tried to turn it into a cake, the one that we might eat and have, too”

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **FROM THE HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGIES TO CONSTRUCTIVISM**

#### **The communicative revolution in foreign language teaching**

##### **The Post Audiolingual Era**

The disillusionment over Audiolingualism and its consequent downfall left a significant gap in the ELT profession that for over two decades had toyed with the idea of having finally reached the promised land of science in language teaching.

Different methods proliferated during the 1970's that attempted to fill this void. In the following section, we will briefly survey the main contributions of this après Audiolingual decade: the Cognitive Method and a number of alternative (and controversial) Humanistic Methods.

##### **Cognitive Code Learning**

Stern (1994) examines the origins of Cognitive Psychology and explains the different positions that some of the leading figures in Cognitive Psychology adopted as regards Behaviourism:

An early representative [...] Gestalt psychology, had for many decades--- well before Chomsky's critique of behaviourism--- opposed, first, associationism and later, behaviourism. It had laid emphasis on innate organizing principles (Gestalt, pattern, or configuration) in human perception, cognition, sensorimotor skills, learning, and even in social conduct. Gestalt theory does not regard repetition or practice, the mechanical 'stamping in' of Thorndike's laws of learning, or Skinner's 'shaping' as characteristics of human learning. For Gestalt theory it is impossible to represent human learning without concepts of subjective experience, such as the sudden click of understanding or 'insight'. Gestalt psychology was able to throw light on perceptual and cognitive learning by describing and demonstrating the subjective experiences of the learner with such concepts as 'whole and part', 'integration' and 'differentiation', 'figure and ground', 'field', 'structure', and 'organization'.

Without necessarily subscribing to all the concepts of the Gestalt school, some psychologists have developed a cognitive theory of learning. They lay emphasis on 'meaningful learning', meaning being understood not as a behavioural response, but as 'a clearly articulated and precisely differentiated conscious experience that emerges when potentially meaningful signs, symbols, concepts, or propositions are related to and incorporated within a give individual's cognitive structure...' (Ausubel 1967:10). Among those who adopt a 'cognitive position' there are some who reject the behaviourist position completely (for example, Ausubel) while others (for example, Bruner and Gagné) have adopted a less extreme point of view. In their view certain kinds of learning are adequately covered by a behaviourist stimulus-response theory, but

conceptual learning or the learning of principles requires a cognitive theory.

Bruner's persuasive presentation of a strongly cognitive approach to school learning made a powerful impact on curriculum development in the sixties, [...] but its relevance to language teaching was left unrecognized until much later. Gagné distinguishes several varieties of learning. In his latest interpretation (Gagné 1977), he identifies five: learning intellectual skills, concepts, and rules; learning problem solving or cognitive strategies; verbal information learning, motor skill learning, and the learning of attitudes. In his analysis of these different kinds of learning he uses behavioural (S-R) as well as cognitive concepts. Any concrete learning task, such as learning a language, might, in fact, involve several or indeed all kinds of learning (pp.307-308)<sup>89</sup>

Lally (1998: 7-8) elaborates on the origins and theoretical foundations of the Cognitive Method:

A major reaction against the behaviourist audiolingual approach to language instruction was the cognitive method. A new interest in the cognitive, internal, or mentalistic theories of language learning was prompted by Chomsky (1957; 1959; 1968). Chomsky rejected Skinner's empiricist view of language learning and proposed, instead, that language is an innate, species-specific capacity regulated by a language acquisition device (LAD). In essence, by arguing that language is too complex to be explained by behaviourist theories, Chomsky espouses a mentalistic,

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<sup>89</sup> Regarding the influence of Bruner's ideas to the teaching of languages, Stern (1994:315) remarks " No sustained attempt has, in fact, been made by those whose approach to language learning was 'cognitive' to work out in any depth the application of Bruner's ideas to language teaching".

rationalist view of learning and language closely tied to the basic assumptions of cognitive psychologists. In fact, for Chomsky the system of linguistic competence is "qualitatively different from anything that can be described in terms of the taxonomic methods of structural linguistics (or] the concepts of S-R psychology" (4). Although Chomsky was describing first language learning, his writings served to upset the dominance of behaviourist methodologies, such as audiolingualism, and allow for the emergence of other mentalistic or cognitive methods. In addition to Universal Grammar, Chomsky's transformational-generative (TG) grammar and government and binding theory (GB), continue to shape language learning theory and methodology.

Whereas the audiolingual method can be considered as the direct descendant of behavioural psychology and structural linguistics, its successor, the cognitive method is the result of both cognitive psychology and transformational-generative grammar (Chastain, 1976). The cognitive method views language not as a set of habits, but as a conscious, creative activity. For example, classroom procedures of the cognitive method are designed to: 1) build on what the student already knows, 2) allow the student to create meaning, and 3) avoid rote learning.

The basic goal of the audiolingual method and of the cognitive approach to language instruction is the same: both seek to teach students to handle language unconsciously, like native speakers (Benseler and Schulz, 1980; Omaggio Hadley, 1993). However, in addition to having vastly different theoretical underpinnings, audiolingualism and the cognitive approach disagree on the place of grammar in the classroom. For example, whereas audiolingualism uses pattern drills and presents new

grammatical structures inductively, a cognitive approach to grammar instruction uses traditional exercises and deductive grammar explanations (Chastain and Woerdehoff, 1968). Because the cognitive method teaches language through formal grammatical analysis and cognitive exercises (Benseler and Schulz, 1980), the presentation of new grammatical structures in a cognitive classroom takes place through explicit examples and explanations. In addition, the goal of cognitive grammar practice exercises is "the comprehension of forms, the conscious learning of forms, and the conscious selection of forms to fit the context" (Chastain 151). Clearly, while reemphasizing the role of the student's mind and cognitive abilities in the language learning process (somewhat reminiscent of the grammar-translation's goal of training the mind), the cognitive method also reinstates explicit grammar presentation and practice into the classroom. In fact, the cognitive code learning method is often referred to as a "modified grammar-translation approach" (Rivers 5)

Celce- Murcia (2001)<sup>90</sup> summarizes the pedagogical creed of Cognitive Code Language into the following eight postulates:

- a. Language learning is viewed as rule acquisition, not as habit formation.
- b. Instruction is often individualized; learners are responsible for their own learning.

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<sup>90</sup> Like Lally(1998) Celce-Murcia (2001) acknowledges the ascendancy of Cognitivism and Transformational Grammar on the Cognitive Method. She mentions two specific sources for what she calls the *Cognitive Approach*. Celce-Murcia (2001: 7) asserts that it was "influenced by cognitive psychology [Neiser 1967] and Chomskyan linguistics [Chomsky 1959, 1965]". We understand that she refers to Neiser's celebrated "*Cognitive Psychology*" (1965)-

- c. Grammar must be taught but it can be taught deductively (rules first, practice later) and /or inductively (rules can either be stated after practice or left as implicit information for the learners to process on their own).
- d. Pronunciation is de-emphasized; perfection is viewed as unrealistic or unattainable
- e. Reading and writing are once again as important as listening and speaking
- f. Vocabulary instruction is once again important, especially at intermediate and advanced levels.
- g. Errors are viewed as inevitable, to be used constructively in the learning process.
- h. The teacher is expected to have good general proficiency in the target language as well as an ability to analyze the target language.

Ghenadenik (1975)<sup>91</sup> elucidates the reasons for the name<sup>92</sup> Cognitive Code Learning and compares it to Audiolingualism. He explains:

Why the name?

Language is approached here from a Transformational viewpoint, thus consisting of two basic levels: deep and surface. Deep structures may be said to be similar in all human languages; surface structures – and some transformations- are unique. Learning a language is cracking its code.

Why cognitive? Because the emphasis is on meaning-apprehension.

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<sup>91</sup> One the staunchest advocates of this method in our country.

<sup>92</sup> This Method has been alternatively called *Cognitive Method*, *Cognitive Approach* and *Cognitive Code Learning*. In our discussion we have used the names *Cognitive Method* and *Cognitive Code Learning* interchangeably. In our country the term *Cognitive Code Learning* is perhaps the most popular label for this method.

Does cognitive learning exclude pattern practice? By no means. Surface phenomena (such as phonology) are only learnt through practice and conditioning. How would Cognitive Code Learning differ from the Audio-Lingual Method? Basically in the importance they grant to explanation. Far from being an eclectic approach, Cognitive Code Learning is very transformationalist in principle, but it does not preclude the specific techniques necessary to achieve proficiency in surface structure production.

(p.118)

Finally, referring to the fact that Cognitive Code Learning affords learners “more freedom of expression”, Ghenadenik (1975) provides a very suitable summary of the pedagogical intent of this method:

Since the aim of Cognitive Code Learning is *competence* we should try to give students as much freedom of expression as possible. At times we would rather tolerate an error and have a student speak than confine him to the tight bounds of controlled responses. Beyond the level of intelligibility, our aim should be *fluency* rather than *accuracy*. We should strive for an *emic*, meaning-conveying performance.

(p.119)

### **The Designer Methods: Humanism in Language Teaching**

A number of methods that boomed in the prolific decade of the seventies are usually grouped together under the label of *Humanistic Methods*, Celce-Murcia (2001:6) saw them as “a reaction to the general lack of

affective considerations in both Audiolingualism and the Cognitive Approach; e.g., Moskowitz 1978 and Curran 1976<sup>93</sup>. According to Richards (1992):

Humanistic approaches in language teaching refer to approaches which emphasize the development of human values, growth in self-awareness and in the understanding of others, sensitivity to human feelings and emotions, and active student involvement in learning and in the way human learning takes place.

(p.43)

Stern (1994) elaborates on the need not to overlook the “affective factor” in language teaching:

An affective component is always involved in second language learning. The student approaches language learning with certain affective predispositions; the actual learning of the language is accompanied by emotional reactions, and the entire learning experience may lead to a fixed constellation of likes and dislikes directed towards the whole language in question for features of that language, languages in general, the people speaking the language, and so on.

(p. 310)<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Celce-Murcia (2001:7) uses the umbrella term *Affective-Humanistic Approach* to refer to the whole group.

<sup>94</sup> The learner’s predispositions, and in particular the learner’s apprehensions as learning barriers, are leitmotif to most of the Humanistic Methods. A clear example is Lozanov’s insistence on the need to “desuggest” the learner to rid him of his fears and apprehensions.

Celce-Murcia (2001) enumerates some of the common characteristics that these humanistic methods shared:

- a. Respect is emphasized for the individual (each student, the teacher) and for his feelings.
- b. Communication that is meaningful to the learner is emphasized
- c. Instruction involves much work in pairs and small groups.
- d. Class atmosphere is viewed as more important than materials or methods.
- e. Peer support and interaction are viewed as necessary for learning.
- f. Learning a foreign language is viewed as a self-realization experience
- g. The teacher is a counsellor or facilitator
- h. The teacher should be proficient in the target language and the student's native language since translation may be used heavily in the initial stages to help students feel at ease; later it is gradually phased out.

(p. 7-8)

These methods are very often referred to as designer methods<sup>95</sup> because as Celce- Murcia (2001) remarks:

They were typically very specific in terms of the procedures and materials that the teacher, who required special training, was supposed to use.

They were almost always developed and defined by one person. This

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<sup>95</sup> By Maley (2003:307), among many others. Richards and Rodgers (2005: 253) call these methods *guru-led innovations* and predict: " Just as Gategno, Lozanov, and Krashen inspired a number of teachers in the 1970s and 1980s, and as Gardner does today, so doubtless new gurus will attract disciples and shape teaching practices in the future"

person, in turn, trained practitioners who accepted the method as gospel and helped to spread the word (p. 6).

Brown (2001) expands on this topic:

These designer methods (to borrow a term from Nunan 1989a:97) were soon marketed by entrepreneurs as the latest and greatest applications of the multidisciplinary research findings of the day (p. 24).

As it was to be expected the high degree of specialization required from teachers who were to use these methods and the meticulousness and stringency of their syllabus design and classroom procedures, and notably the disproportionate claims that their originators and acolytes made about them were soon to meet with opposition. As Celce- Murcia (2001) recounts:

However, the lack of flexibility in such methods led some applied linguists (e.g., Richards 1984) to seriously question their usefulness and aroused a healthy scepticism among language educators, who argued that there is no such thing as the best “method”:

the complex circumstances of teaching and learning languages— with different kinds of pupils, teachers, aims and objectives, approaches, methods , and materials, classroom techniques and standards of achievement—make it inconceivable that any single method could achieve optimum success in all circumstances (Strevens 1977, p. 5)

Kumaravadivelu (2005: 94) is definitely more conclusive in his onslaught of the designer methods of the seventies:

I prefer to call them designer nonmethods because none of them, in my view, deserves the status of a method. They are all no more than classroom procedures that are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of a learner-centered pedagogy. From a classroom procedural point of view, they are highly innovative and are certainly useful in certain cases. But, they are not full-fledged methods. As I have argued elsewhere (Kumaravadivelu, 1995), a method, to be considered a method, must satisfy at least two major criteria. First, it should be informed by a set of theoretical principles derived from feeder disciplines and a set of classroom procedures directed at practicing teachers. Both the underlying principles and the suggested procedures should address the factors and processes governing learning and teaching in a coherent fashion. Second, a method should be able to guide and sustain various aspects of language learning and teaching operations, particularly in terms of curricular content (e.g., grammar and vocabulary), language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate and advanced).

None of the designer methods satisfies the just-cited criteria. In spite of their limitations, they have been wrongly treated as new methods, a treatment that really requires a stretch of interpretation, as seen in the case of Richards and Rodgers (1986) who attempted, rather laboriously, to fit the new methods into their tripartite framework of approach, design, and procedure. In fact, a reputed Canadian scholar expressed surprise at

“the tolerant and positive reception the new methods were given by sophisticated methodologists and applied linguists in North America. One could have expected them to be slaughtered one by one under the searing light of theory and research” (Stern, 1985, p. 249).

In his very authoritative and to date only complete account of the history of English language teaching, Howatt (2004) disposes of the humanistic methods in only seven lines<sup>96</sup> and exclusively in relation to his discussion of Stevick’s (1990). Howatt (2004: 256) notes:

Stevick’s choices reintroduced approaches and ideas, most of which had been put forward some time before, but had been overlooked because they did not fit the dominant paradigm of the time. Among these were Gattegno’s ‘Silent Way’, Curran’s ‘Community Language Learning’, Asher’s ‘Total Physical Response’ and Lozanov’s ‘Suggestopedia’, and they became known as ‘humanistic’ methods, a label Stevick picked up in his summary account Humanism in Language Teaching (1990).

In the next few pages, we will succinctly refer to each of these four humanistic methods.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> In a work of 418 pages.

<sup>97</sup> With the exception of the *Silent Way*, Richards (1992:42) groups the humanistic approaches under the title of *Values-based approaches*. He states: “A different approach to a theory of teaching is to develop a teaching model from the values one holds about teachers, learners, classrooms, and the role of education in society. Certain ways of going about teaching and learning are then seen to be educationally justifiable and should therefore form the basis of teaching practice. In some situations this leads to certain approaches to teaching being viewed as politically justifiable (and therefore good) and others seen as not morally, ethically or politically supportable (and therefore bad).”

## Total Physical Response

Lally (1998) discusses how Total Physical Response (TPR) relates intimately to the principles of child language acquisition; probably Asher's strongest claim to present TPR as a *natural*, humanistic method:

Chronologically, the first major language learning method to follow the various cognitive approaches was the Total Physical Response (TPR) technique (Asher, Kusudo, and de la Torre, 1974). Rivers (1983) noted that in general, language teachers have always been fascinated by the effortless, enjoyable, and successful experience of little children learning their first language. This fascination with children's pleasant and casual acquisition of their first language inspired and shaped the Total Physical Response approach. For Asher the relative superiority of children who learn a second language compared to adults is not the result of "some unknown gift for language learning" (1-31), but rather it is due to the fact that children are spoken to in short directives and commands that require the performance of a kinesthetic event (Asher, 1988). For example, according to Asher, young children acquire a second language when caretakers speak to children in the target language while providing a series of directions for the child to follow. Caretaking commands guide the child through activities such as bathing, eating, dressing, and playing (pp. 8-9).

In an excerpt from *Babies don't learn by memorizing lists; why should children or adults?*, a lecture delivered by Asher at Cambridge

University<sup>98</sup>, the creator of TPR explains in his own words how the concept of *conversation*, between parent and child or between teacher and learner works in his method:

The secret is a unique "conversation" between the parent and infant. For example, the first conversation is a parent saying, "Look at daddy. Look at daddy." The infant's face turns in the direction of the voice and daddy exclaims, "She's looking at me! She's looking at me!" Dr. Asher calls this "a language-body conversation" because the parent speaks and the infant answers with a physical response such as looking, smiling, laughing, turning, walking, reaching, grasping, holding, sitting, running, and so forth. Notice that these "conversations" continue for many, many months before the child utters anything more intelligible than "mommy" or "daddy." Although the infant is not yet speaking, the child is imprinting a linguistic map of how the language works. Silently, the child is internalizing the patterns and sounds of the target language. When the child has decoded enough of the target language, speaking appears spontaneously. The infant's speech will not be perfect, but gradually, the child's utterances will approximate more and more that of a native speaker. Children and adults experience the thrill of immediate understanding when you apply this powerful concept in your classroom.

Lally (1998: 9) outlines the basic principles of Asher's proposal:

Asher and other proponents of the Total Physical Response methodology believe that by integrating physical command activities into the foreign language classroom, there will be a "dramatic gain in comprehension" for

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<sup>98</sup> This excerpt has been retrieved from Asher's website TPR World. The date when the lecture at Cambridge took place is not quoted in the website.

children and adult language learners. Thus, the three key ideas of the Total Physical Response approach are the following:

- 1) Comprehension of spoken language must be developed before the student engages in speaking.
- 2) Comprehension and retention is best achieved through the movement of students' bodies in response to commands.
- 3) Students should not be forced to speak before they are ready. Speaking will emerge naturally (Benseler and Schultz, 1980).

Richards and Rodgers (2005) seem to be at odds when the time comes to link TPR to a particular theory of learning. They say “Asher sees a stimulus-response view as providing the learning theory underlying language teaching pedagogy” (p.73), and in this sense they coincide with Knight (2001) who remarks:

The learner is required to listen and act upon instructions given. The degree of reflection on the content is not specified, and the method clearly has some links with habit formation theories of language learning (p. 155).

But the same Richards and Rodgers (2005) later on in their discussion of TPR, positioning Asher closer to Cognitive Psychology, affirm that “Drawing on work by Jean Piaget, Asher holds that the child language learner acquires language through motor movement--- a right hemisphere activity”<sup>99</sup> (p.75). At the same time, Richards and Rodgers (2005) claim that:

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<sup>99</sup> It should be remembered that *brain lateralization* (or the specialized functions of each hemisphere of the brain), together with the *bio-program* and *stress reduction* are, according to Richards and Rodgers (2004: 74-75), the three pillars of Asher’s model.

(TPR) draws on several traditions, including developmental psychology, learning theory, and humanistic pedagogy [...]

Asher shares with the school of humanistic psychology a concern for the role of affective (emotional) factors in language learning (p. 73) <sup>100</sup>.

It is true that one of the typical notes of TPR is its attention to the reduction of the stress as affective filter that inhibits learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2005: 74) by engaging learners in game-like movement as it is also true that Behaviourism disparaged the role of the affective domain in human learning; but this does not make TPR less behaviouristic. In TPR, even when the learners appear to be very active, the teacher is still the “sage of the stage” and the learners respond physically to the oral stimuli (commands) that the teacher provides.<sup>101</sup>

Richards and Rodgers (2005) provide an alternative explanation to account for the theoretical basis on which TPR rests:

TPR can also be linked to the “trace theory” of memory in psychology (e.g. Katona 1940), which holds that the more often or the more intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory

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<sup>100</sup> Unfortunately we have no way of knowing what Richards and Rodgers (2004) had in mind when they mentioned *learning theory* as one of the “traditions” that underlie TPR. What they understand by the *tradition of learning theory* or what theory of learning they actually refer to remains, therefore, a mystery.

<sup>101</sup> Even when we are aware that , as Knight (2001:155) points out, “TPR proponents would claim that the linking of the language with the physical response shows that meaning is considered paramount”

association will be and the more likely it will be recalled. Retracing can be done verbally (e.g., by rote repetition) and/or in association with motor activity. Combined tracing activities, such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity, hence, increase the possibility of successful recall (pp. 73-74).

The limitations of Total Physical Response were soon noticed by many scholars and practitioners. In this respect, Lally (1998: 9-10) comments:

In spite of numerous studies supporting the effectiveness of Total Physical Response (Asher, 1963; 1965; 1972; 1974; 1979), many language instructors question the comprehensibility of this method. For Omaggio Hadley (1993), Total Physical Response is not a method in and of itself, "but represents instead a useful set of teaching Ideas and techniques that can be integrated into other methodologies for certain instructional purposes" (107). Although Asher (1988) believes that "listening comprehension maps out the blueprint for future acquisition of speaking" (2-3), a common criticism of the Total Physical Response method is the lack of classroom attention given to speaking, reading, and writing. Another commonly posed question is if the majority of Total Physical Response class time is devoted to development of listening comprehension through physical response to commands, what role does grammar instruction play in the Total Physical Response classroom, if any? In response to this type of question and criticism, Asher, Kusudo, and de la Torre (1974) state that most of the grammatical structures of the target language can be learned through the physical commands given by the Instructor. As far as explicit grammar presentations are concerned,

Asher et al. suggest that only an occasional few minutes at the end of class be spent putting structures on the blackboard, and then only at the students' request. Asher (1988) believes that there is a "transfer-of-learning from understanding spoken [language) to reading, writing and speaking" (2-6). Therefore, grammar instruction, in and out of the classroom, is not necessary. For example, proponents of Total Physical Response believe that students will naturally come to understand the past tense without ever receiving rules or explicit instruction concerning its composition and use (Asher, 1988).

As Brown (2000: 107) highlights:

Today TPR is used more as a type of classroom activity, which is a more useful way to view it. Many successful communicative, interactive classrooms utilize TPR activities to provide both auditory input and physical activity.

### **The Silent Way**

As an introduction to his interview to Caleb Gattegno published in the *ELT Journal* in July 1982, Rossner (1982) outlines some of the principles of The Silent Way within the framework of the other *humanistic methods*:

In recent years language teaching has been influenced by a number of methodologies which, their authors and supporters claim, represent radical breaks with the established traditions of the field. These so called 'fringe methodologies' - a term some adherents find objectionable - include Suggestopedia (developed by Lozanov and his followers in

Bulgaria), Community Language Learning (which arises out of the work of Charles Curran and his followers in the U.S.A.), and - perhaps the best known of all - the Silent Way.

In spite of the fact that they are often loosely grouped together in discussion, these methodologies (and others such as Total Physical Response) have very different origins. While Community Language Learning (CLL) has its roots in the counselling techniques of psychotherapy, the Silent Way is derived from an assertively individualistic view of learning, for example. It relies on the teacher's ability to exploit each student's previous experiences with language, his or her imagination and intuition, rather than solely memory or intellect. Devices such as the colour coded pronunciation charts and pointer are used to assist the teacher to develop students' sensitivities to the new language via its sounds without the traditional techniques of 'modelling' pronunciation and correcting errors. Indeed, those who use the method claim that it is unnecessary for the teacher to intervene verbally at all since students can be guided and student production can be elicited much more effectively by the use of gesture, facial expression, and (on the teacher's part) silent routines using the materials (p. 237).

Rossner (1982: 240 – 241) goes on to transcribe the text of his *Conversation with Caleb Gattegno*, in which the inventor of The Silent Way expounds the principles behind his method and (at Rossner's enquiry) compares it to other approaches and to the work of Jean Piaget and Maria Montessori:

Rossner - Dr Gattegno, you seem in your seminars to be absolutely convinced, and many of those using the Silent Way seem absolutely convinced, that it is the 'right way' to teach languages. Why is it the 'right way'?

Gattegno - I cannot say that it is the right way as a political statement, and the fact that I am the author of it weakens my position. I can tell you only what I know: I looked at the field and found that nobody was making a study of the learning of foreign languages, so I began to make a study of my own. As a result, I had ideas that didn't occur to others, and I practised and experimented in 48 countries in a dozen languages, with people from all sorts of backgrounds, and I succeeded in making all of them work. I was able to get all of them to read a script which they were seeing for the first time. So my feedback was that my method was working.

Rossner - So basically it's the right way according to your empirical evidence.

Gattegno - Yes. Now, I don't say it's the right way for everybody. But if teaching is to be subordinated to learning, there is no other method to turn to.

Rossner - What do you mean precisely by 'the subordination of teaching to learning'?

[...]

Rossner - So you adopted an evolutionary approach. How would you compare your work with, say, Montessori's?

Gattegno - She was mainly concerned with very young children, and her psychology, which was right for her times, was too narrow for me. We have learnt a lot since her time. Therefore, although I studied all her work and applied it and worked in Montessori schools, and although she had

the view, now shared by many, that children can do a lot more than we assume they can, she didn't know what they can do and why.

Rossner - You mentioned just now that babies are able to learn much more and in a much shorter time than 'non-babies', shall we say.

Gattegno - Only if we teach (the non-babies) in a manner which hinders their learning.

Rossner - So the first step in your approach is to locate these learning abilities of the baby that are still within us.

Gattegno - That's right, and they are in everybody, except those who erect barriers and don't allow anything to go through them. And there are some.

Rossner - What can the language teacher, for example, do in order to help his or her students find the baby in them?

Gattegno - He (or she) doesn't have to help them find the baby in them: he can give them exercises which are immediately accessible, and the baby comes out. I work with rectangles and discipline them to make the sounds (of the L2). If they agree to remember a very few items, say a dozen, the rest follows naturally because they are intelligent learners. And then I put up a chart of the written forms, which they have never seen before, and ask them to locate the words (we have been practising). The charts are coloured so that there is a clue to allow them to overcome the difficulties of different scripts (and spelling systems). I do several things to free students from having to remember, which is not what we do at school. All the time (at school) memory is stressed, and, since people forget, we are in trouble!

Rossner - And how does the concept of 'surrender', another key word in your vocabulary, relate to this 'baby in us'?

Gattegno - Babies know that language is not theirs. It belongs to others. What surrender does is to put you where you belong. You have power, but you don't know the language; you have powers that you have cultivated in one language - call them discrimination, sense of generalization, recognition through analogy, recognition of alterations - but it's not memory. All this is available to you only if you 'surrender', and you respond because it's in you, not because you make analogies.

Rossner - So it's getting rid of the intellectual games that students and teachers play?

Gattegno - If they were intellectual, I wouldn't get rid of them, because the intellect is a power. We have not asked students to use their intelligence while learning, and they become stultified, paralysed.

[...]

Rossner - To return to language learning and 'the baby in us', another key concept in your approach is that of the 'temporal hierarchy'. As I understand it, you are implying that there is a certain order in which growing and learning take place. How can this be exploited in the language-learning situation?

Gattegno - It is exploited in my method and my demonstrations: I make students make noises; they can see and concatenate sounds; I work-entirely at a level of perception and action. But when students have a developed intelligence (as the participants at this seminar have), they can make inferences, and I can exploit that too. So the hierarchy works like this: as babies, we handle what is brought to us through the senses and integrate this with the sensitivities we have accumulated since birth and since before birth. But there is a universe of perception, which takes a number of years to explore. Then we take the next step: we use what we have gained through perception to explore the world of action. If you look

at very young children, they are in the 'absolute of perception'; if you look at boys and girls of primary school age, they are in the 'absolute of action'. This means that any action gets hold of them, but it doesn't eliminate what has been gained previously. It simply puts stress on the quality of learning.

Rossner - How does your view of child development match Piaget's view?

Gattegno - In no way. His stages don't have anything to do with mine: mine are concerned with the universes that have to be conquered by people who know how to conquer them. Piaget says 'What we have to do is make you like me' (i.e. work out how you get from babyhood to adulthood). He saw things from his schema down, and did experiments to confirm his vision, not to find out what people are like. For instance he found that very young children don't have conservation, I say: it's the other way round; young children don't need conservation, so they don't develop it. When they need it, they develop it. I would like to study each baby, everything they do, from the moment I first come into contact with them until I leave them. That's the ideal. But if I go into primary schools to look at children, I can only observe them during their recess breaks. How can I claim to know all there is to know about children, if I only observe them for 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the afternoon. ? But no researcher is able to be with his subjects from beginning to end. Only parents can do this, and they could contribute a lot, but they don't.

Rossner - What areas do you think researchers should be concentrating on? Where do we really lack knowledge, which we could, maybe, get?

Gattegno - We do get more all the time as we abandon the view that we have to base research on the existing literature. We have to start on

new challenges, and the greatest number of new challenges is to be found in learning. Every researcher in education asks for more time to allow for its continuation, or asks other people to do the research again, so marking time is characteristic of this type of research, and therefore very little is discovered. Every researcher says 'This is not final'. No-one says 'I found this, and you'll find the same thing, whatever you do'.

Rossner - But that's the nature of research, isn't it?

Gattegno - No, not at all. Physics, mathematics, biology, and so on don't work that way. [...]

Rossner - Do you have any views on another approach to language teaching that has been grouped with the Silent Way, Community Language Learning (CLL), which seeks to implement some of the ideas of Charles Curran and Carl Rogers in the language classroom?

Gattegno - Well, I can tell you something that has been reported to me by people working with it: they have adopted the (Cuisenaire) rods, they have adopted my charts and my pointer, so they are using my techniques, because they haven't invented techniques of their own.

Rossner - But their emphasis is on relations in the classroom rather than on technique, isn't it?

Gattegno - Yes, because Curran was a counsellor. But, if you give me a class of twenty people who can't talk to each other, I can teach them English. You can't do that unless you have twenty teachers in CLL. As to Suggestopedia, it's probably a good method for developing memory. But there aren't sufficient people doing the sort of research I'm doing, either among CLL or among Suggestopedia experts. And I do research, not to please people or to be in the limelight, but because there is no other way.

As it can be easily seen Gattegno is rather critical of the language teaching methods originated by his contemporaries and even when he chooses to keep himself at a distance from Piaget's developmental cognitivism<sup>102</sup> and from Maria Montessori's *Scientific Pedagogy*<sup>103</sup>, he says very little (if anything at all) about the scientific basis for his Silent Way. His remarks are mostly of the kind we could find in a statement of a school's ethos, for example, Gattegno (1976:1): "The Silent Way is a philosophy of foreign language teaching which emphasizes the importance of allowing learners to use their natural learning resources"; but he fails to provide a broader theoretical framework inscribed in the field of Educational Psychology (or in General or Applied Linguistics, for that matter).

Ten years after this interview, Gattegno's wife, disciple, and successor, Shakti Gattegno (1992) keeps the same "healthy" distance from Behaviourism. She explains:

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<sup>102</sup> We are under the impression that there is a tinge of sarcasm in Gattegno's words when he refers to the data on which researchers base their conclusions "How can I claim to know all there is to know about children, if I only observe them for 15 minutes" (Rossner 1982:240). He might probably be harping on an old cord: criticism of Piaget's generalizations on the basis of the observation of his own children, As Baker and Mcenery (2006:1). point out "Originally he tested his own three children, Jacqueline, Lucienne and Laurent although these tests have been criticized for not being methodologically sound"

<sup>103</sup> In a eulogy of Montessori's work, Estrella (2006:141) expounds the basis of her pedagogy: "Maria Montessori, in her *Casa dei Bambini*", valued other aspects, such as a child's spontaneous activity and from there she would base her education intervention. But it was her concern for objectivity and conscientiousness, seen throughout her work, that most impressed me. The privileged instrument used to bring such concern to fruition: thorough observation of her students, of the situations, and the environments in which teachers and students interact. This then, was a new means of forming pedagogic intervention, based on detailed and precise descriptions of being and doing: a different understanding of the pupil and his/her relationship with the environment and the teacher, a dynamic interpretation of the classroom, founded on objective data, subject to observational control".

They develop ways of teaching that serve human learning rather than let it deteriorate into conditioning which is a different kind of activity, in that, whereas human learning is a self initiated and a self-propelled process through which human beings realize their potential and feel free to be more and more themselves, conditioning aims at having learners perform to the satisfaction of an external authority in control of the situation. Conditioning is what we make animals go through when we train them to perform according to our wishes, by means of reward and punishment and other such tactics.

Then, Shakti Gattegno (1992) goes on to elaborate on what she says is: “my understanding of Caleb Gattegno's contribution to humanizing language teaching, based on his life-long study of human learning”. Her description of The Silent Way (and her rejection of Behaviouristic procedures, as seen before) seems to bring Gattegno’s method closer to Constructivism:

The Silent Way is Gattegno's response to the question he asked himself, namely, "What is the nature of the process that human beings, guided from within, initiate, conduct and go through, in their willingness to transform an external reality unknown to them into their own existential reality and, in the course of it, knowingly transform themselves?"

Gattegno was concerned with the process because he recognized that anyone functioning in the language is with the know-how and not with one's knowledge about the language. In the Silent Way, the focus is on

the students' learning process and not on the arbitrarily projected goals and unrealistically expected results often emphasized in language teaching. The focus on the process, however, does not mean that the outcome is ignored. On the contrary, this shift in focus works as sound pedagogical practice, for the results it yields are of lasting good quality, just as they are in any other field when the details of the process are being meticulously attended to at every step of the way.

The author of the Silent Way studied human learning by going to the source. He observed babies and young children who, of all human beings, are naturally and spontaneously involved in the most human of all activities, namely, the acts of discovering themselves, of knowing and realizing their potential. These keen observers are interested in exploring that which is unknown to them. They respond to the unknown and interact with it. As they do this, they come to know their own potential, and themselves, as learners. And, they learn to evolve into being what they potentially are. Contrary to the commonly held belief that human beings are afraid of the 'unknown', these young energetic human beings approach the 'unknown' without fear. The absence of fear in them can be attributed to their natural human state, one of being-at-peace-with-not-knowing and, at the same time, being-aware-of-themselves-as-capable-of-learning. They meet the unknown with self-confidence and respond to it to the best of their ability. By doing their best each moment, they do better all the time.

[...]

But those who study this phenomenon not from an adult-centered but from a human perspective, see children's learning rooted in the human awareness and conducted with the energy of its dynamics with which children are endowed by the virtue of being human. Gattegno understood this. According to him, and I quote, "awareness is the condition as well as the dynamics of human learning". When this intimate relationship between human awareness and human learning becomes apparent, it is possible then to see that the fear is not of the 'unknown' out there that one faces.

[...]

In view of this, the purpose of teaching in the Silent Way is to bring learners in touch with themselves, their own potential for learning.

A Silent Way teacher fulfills this responsibility by asking students to do what they know they can, and, by stretching their ability to do more. The teacher presents to the students well thought out linguistic situations which challenge them to exercise their inner dynamics of learning. Teaching is guided by the fact that the students have learned to function in their first language and, therefore, are innerly well equipped to learn to do it in another language. The teacher knows that with their inner dynamics mobilized, students learn well and feel responsible for their learning. For instance, with the energy of their inner dynamics:

- they process the input from their senses and transform it into their own perceptions in order to make sense of what comes their way; and therefore, the teacher involves the students in activities in which their senses are creatively active;

- they actively look for and create mental connections among the various elements they perceive; and therefore, the teacher facilitates their learning by avoiding linear and fragmented teaching;
- they can recognize what they have met before; and therefore, the teacher refrains from telling them the same things over and over again;
- they take deliberate inner steps to reconstruct what they have internalized, and given enough time and practice, they can retain, recall, evoke and articulate it; and therefore, the teacher lets each student take his or her time to be innerly active and does not interfere with their learning by being anxious to teach;
- they make mistakes while learning and develop their own criteria for correctness which they use for self-correcting; and therefore, the teacher treats their mistakes as a springboard for further learning and, instead of correcting the mistakes, offers hints and clues that help refine their criteria;
- they can transfer their learning from one area to another related area; and therefore, the teacher does not teach them that which they can figure out and learn on their own;
- their process of learning continues inside and outside the classroom, in their waking hours and in sleep; and therefore, the teacher does not insist on perfect and instant successes, and does not hesitate to pose new related challenges while the students are still working on the earlier ones.

[...] Instead of depending on the teacher, the students learn to count on their own resources and tap the rich source of learning from one another's learning. The teacher introduces the challenge and steps back to observe how each student relates and responds to it. The teacher intervenes at the appropriate moments to offer a hint here and a clue there and withdraws into the background to let students sort matters out by and among themselves. The mistakes provide the occasion to sharpen the criteria for correctness, in teaching as well as learning.

So far we have considered how to teach guided by the students' learning. It is equally important to be clear as to what to teach guided by what it is that the students need to learn.

'What to teach' is largely determined by one's understanding of what the students need to learn. One teaches the language pertaining to social situations if the question is seen primarily as a social challenge. But if one understands the question to be a human challenge, as Gattegno did, then one 'teaches' the students to function in the language spontaneously and with sufficient fluency and accuracy so that they learn not to misrepresent their intent and not to confuse or mislead others when using the language in any given situation. The responsibility of the teacher, in this case, is:

one - to present to the students the reality of the language and involve them in exercises designed to help them develop their own criteria for the correctness of the way they function in it, so that they learn to function in the language without distorting its reality; and

two - to give the students enough practice essential for the facility in functioning in the language fluently and spontaneously, that is, without interference from their mother tongue.

[...]

Gattegno developed the teaching techniques and materials that serve this need.

[...]

The Silent Way materials for different languages include a Set of Charts with words on them which Gattegno selected, the complexity of the behavior of each language in mind. He called his selection "the functional vocabulary". It is functional because the phrases, sentences and idioms that can be generated with these words provide the learners with a solid basis for learning to function in the language with the precision and the accuracy the behavior of the language requires. [...]

With this functional vocabulary of about 400 words displayed on the Charts, it is possible, as Gattegno put it, "to teach a lot of language with little vocabulary". Students learn to function in all the aspects of the language even though teaching is carried on with a 'restricted vocabulary' at a time.

What evidently transpires from the text of Gattegno's conversation with Richard Rossner (1982) and from Shakti Gattegno's (1992) address is the

dogmatism of the proposal, epitomized in the need for the use of pre-defined techniques, procedures, and above, all instructional materials. In this respect, Richards (1992), who places Gattegno's method within the group of what he calls *theory-based approaches* states:

The conceptions underlying many teaching methods or proposals can be characterized as theory-based or rationalist in approach. This suggests that the theory underlying the method is ascertained through the use of reason or rational thought. Systematic and principled thinking is used to support the method, rather than empirical investigation. These conceptions of teaching hence tend not to draw support from classroom results as such (e.g. by showing pre and post test gains resulting from the use of a method), but defend themselves through logical argumentation.

Examples of 'theory' or 'rationally-based' approaches in TESOL are Communicative Language Teaching, and the Silent Way. Each of these is based on a set of carefully elaborated assumptions.

[...]

A method such as The Silent Way [...], is derived not so much from a linguistic theory but a learning theory. It is based on a set of claims and beliefs as to how learning takes place in adults. The classroom procedures which are distinctive to the method attempt to draw on the learning principles espoused by Gattegno, who attests (1982.203):

There are no really difficult forms which cannot be illustrated through the proper situation involving rods and actions on them about which one makes statements by introducing specific words whose associated meaning is obvious. What teachers must do is to arrange for practice so that students' minds are triggered to use these new words spontaneously

Gattegno takes the theory underlying the Silent Way as self-evident; neither the theory nor the method have been subject to any form of empirical verification.

[...]

Theory-Philosophy conceptions require teachers first to understand the theory underlying the methodology, and then to teach in such a way that the theory is realized in classroom practice [...] Gattegno's views on teaching which form the basis of The Silent Way lead to prescriptions as to what teachers should and should not do in the classroom. The essential skills the teacher needs to acquire are those that reflect the theory and spirit of the Silent Way Approach. There is little room for personal interpretations of the method (pp. 41 – 44).

### **Community Language Learning**

Community Language Learning, the third *designer method* of the 1970's that we will discuss, and probably the one that best embodies the humanistic ideals of this decade in ELT, has been characterized by Knight (2001) in the following way:

Community Language Learning (CLL) is the name given to a teaching methodology developed by Charles Curran in the 1970s based on psychological counseling techniques (Curran 1972, 1976). The teacher acts as the “counselor”, and the learners are the “clients”. In practice this means that the teacher provides a translation of what the learners wish to say from their L1 to the target language, thus allowing the learners to interact using the target language. Dialogues developed in this way then form the basis for further study.

It is a crucial part of the teacher’s job to create an understanding supporting atmosphere within the classroom as this is seen to be crucial for successful learning. In addition, teacher-learner interaction should not be limited to the exchange of “information” but should include the discussion of the learners’ feelings about the learning process. This relationship has been compared to that of a parent helping a child attain greater levels of independence (Richards and Rogers 1996)

The desired outcome of CLL is not only that the learner should be able to communicate in the target language, but also that he/she should learn about his/her own learning and take increasingly responsibility for it (Larsen-Freeman 1986).

Initially CLL was not based on any new theories of language; La Forge, Curran’s successor in promoting CLL, saw the learners’ job as being to master the sound and grammatical systems of the language (La Forge 1983), which suggests a traditional structural syllabus. However, he later went on to suggest a theory of language which sees language as a social

process. This seems more consistent with the wider foundations of CLL as it focuses on the interactional nature of language, something mentioned earlier by Curran but not expanded upon (p. 153).

Lally (1998) expands on the classroom procedure of Community Language Learning:

Curran (1982) describes five stages of his method (123) where students, or "clients" begin the first stage by speaking with one another in their native language and the teacher, or "counselor," translates all utterances into the target language. Throughout the second, third, and fourth stages, the students progressively speak more and more in the target language and reduce their dependence upon the counselor. In the fifth and final stage, the counselor only intervenes to add idioms and more elegant constructions. In this very brief description of Community Language Learning it would appear that grammar instruction plays no part in this method, and in part this is true. However, Curran (1983) adds that all class meetings should be tape-recorded so that students can reexamine their conversations with some attention given to grammar, although more emphasis is placed on the conversation itself (p.15).

Community Language Learning was born as an offshoot of Charles Curran's *Counselling Learning* which he introduced as a general model of education. Brown (2001) explains the psychological bases of Curran's model:

Charles Curran (1972) was inspired by Carl Rogers's view of education [...] in which learners in a classroom were regarded not as a "class" but as a "group"--- a group in need of certain therapy and counselling. The social dynamics of such a group were of primary importance. In order for any learning to take place, group members first needed to interact in an interpersonal relationship in which students and teacher joined together to facilitate learning in a context of valuing each individual in the group. In such a surrounding, each person lured the defenses that prevent open interpersonal communication. The anxiety caused by the educational context was lessened by means of a supportive community. The teacher's presence was not perceived as a threat, nor was it the teacher's purpose to impose limits and boundaries, but rather, as a true counselor, to center his or her attention on the clients (the students and their needs). "Defensive" learning was made unnecessary by the empathetic relationship between teacher and students. Curran's counselling-learning model of education thus capitalized on the primacy of the needs of the learners---clients---- who gathered together in the educational community to be counseled.

[...]

CLL reflected not only the principles of Carl Rodgers's view of education but also basic principles of the dynamics of counselling in which the counsellor, through careful attention to the client's needs, aids the client in moving from dependence and helplessness to independence and self-assurance (pp. 25-26).

Pencheva and Shopov (1999: 39) elaborate on the humanistic roots of Curran's approach and its implications for teaching and learning:

In Charles Curran's method (1976), *Community Language Learning*, learners become members of a community - their fellow learners and the teacher - and learn through interacting with the members of that community. The teacher considers learners as "whole persons" with intellect, feelings, instincts and a desire to learn. The teacher also recognizes that learning can be threatening. By understanding and accepting students' fears, the teacher helps students feel secure and overcome their fears. The syllabus used is learner-generated, in that students choose what they want to learn to say in the target language. Learning is linked to a set of practices granting "consensual validation" in which mutual warmth and a positive evaluation of the other person's worth develops between the teacher and the learner (Curran 1976).

Although as we have seen before, it is undisputable that Community Language Learning reckons no relation to either of the two main branches of Educational Psychology of the twentieth century (Behaviourism and Constructivism), Lally's citation of (1998: 15) Blair (1982) stating that Curran's approach "takes into account dimensions of both psychological and social phenomena that characterize human behavior and social interaction in learning and instruction" (10) and the kinds of classroom practices that this method entails, seem to make it more akin to

Constructivism (and within it to Social Interactionism) than to Behaviourism<sup>104</sup>.

### **Suggestopedia**

Suggestopedia<sup>105</sup>, developed by Bulgarian psychiatrist and physician Georgi Lozanov, is in all likelihood the most well-known<sup>106</sup> of the humanistic methods that we have briefly revisited in this section. This may be due to a number of reasons among which we cannot disregard the recondite and esoteric quality of its techniques that have positively aroused the curiosity of the ELT practitioners at large.

Larsen-Freeman (2000: 74-81) reviews the fundamental premises of Lozanov's contribution:

The originator of this method, Georgi Lozanov, believes [...] that language learning can occur at a much faster rate than ordinarily transpires. The reason for our inefficiency, Lozanov asserts, is that we set up psychological barriers to learn it: We fear that we will be unable to perform, that we will be limited in our ability to learn, that we will fail. One

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<sup>104</sup> Even when we have to acknowledge that our characterization is more of a tour de force than a deep conviction.

<sup>105</sup> Omaggio Hadley (2001:127) says "This method (is) also known as *Suggestive-Accelerative Learning and Teaching (SALT)* or the *Lozanov's Method*", and Larsen-Freeman (2000:74) explains that "*Suggestopedia* is now called *Desuggestopedia* to reflect the importance placed on desuggesting limitations on learning (Lozanov and Miller, Personal communication)"

<sup>106</sup> This does not mean to say that Suggestopedia is one of the most widely used methods (at least in our medium), although as Stern (1994:109) points out: "Various experimental programmes, for example, in the Canadian Public Service, gave the suggestopedic method a great deal of public attention and publicity in the newspapers and magazines under such sensational titles as 'superlearning'".

result is that we do not use the full mental powers that we have. According to Lozanov and others, we may be using only five to ten per cent of our mental capacity in order to make better use of our reserved capacity, the limitations we think we have need to be “desuggested”. Desuggestopedia, the application of the study of suggestion to pedagogy, has been developed to help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful or the negative association they may have toward studying and, thus to help them overcome the barriers to learning [...] to activate the “paraconscious” part of the mind, just below the fully-conscious mind.

Pencheva and Shopov (1999: 39) describe a typical classroom in Lozanov’s Method and some of its standard pedagogical practices<sup>107</sup>:

The learning environment is comfortable and subdued, with low lighting and soft slow music in the background. Students choose a name and character in the target language and culture and imagine being that person. Dialogues are presented to the accompaniment of Baroque concertos. Students are in a relaxed but focused state of “pseudo-passiveness”. They listen to the dialogues being read aloud with varying intonations and a coordination of sound and printed word or illustration. The students are expected to read the texts at home “cursorily once before going to bed and again before getting up in the morning” (Lozanov 1972).

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<sup>107</sup> Richards and Rodgers (2005:100) add to Pencheva’s and Shopov’s (1999) a crucial element related to the role of the teacher “The most conspicuous characteristics of Suggestopedia are the decoration, furniture and arrangement of the classroom, the use of music, and the authoritative behaviour of the teacher”

Richards and Rodgers (2005: 100) elaborate on the psychological core of Suggestopedia:

Suggestopedia is a specific set of learning recommendations derived from Suggestology, which Lozanov describes as a “science...concerned with the systematic study of the nonrational and/or nonconscious influences”

[...]

Lozanov acknowledges ties in tradition to yoga and Soviet psychology. From raja-yoga Lozanov has borrowed and modified techniques for altering states of consciousness and concentration, and the use of rhythmic breathing. From Soviet psychology Lozanov has taken the notion that all students can be taught a given subject matter at the same level of skill.

[...]

A most conspicuous feature of Suggestopedia is the centrality of music and musical rhythm to learning. Suggestopedia has a kinship with other functional uses of music, particularly therapy. Gaston (1968) defines three functions of music in therapy: to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of personal relations; to bring about increased self-esteem through increased self-satisfaction in musical performance; and to use the unique potential of rhythm to energize and bring order. This last function seems to be the one that Lozanov calls upon in his use of music to relax

learners as well as to structure, pace and punctuate the presentation of linguistic material.

In an attempt to ascertain the psychological underpinnings of Suggestopedia, Omaggio Hadley (2001) resorts to Chastain (1988) who identifies the following features:

Chastain (1988) describes Suggestopedia as a wholistic method that tries to direct learning to both the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Learning should involve both analysis and synthesis at the same time, using both the conscious and the subconscious mind. Because Lozanov sees anxiety as a hindrance that severely limits learning potential, two teaching principles are proposed to break down the sociopsychological constraints of traditional learning environments. The first principle is that of infantilization, which is designed to help students recapture the kind of learning capacities they had as children. The second is that of pseudopassivity, which refers to a relaxed physical state of heightened mental activity and concentration (Chastain 1988, p.104)<sup>108</sup>

## **Cognitive Psychology and Constructivism**

In chapter 1 we discussed *Behaviorism*, and in particular *Operant Conditioning*, as one of the most prominent theories of learning of the twentieth century. In this chapter, we will revisit *Cognitive Psychology* to complete our overview of the learning theories that have been most influential in the field of English Language Teaching. Bigge and Shermis

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<sup>108</sup> This child-like attitude required by Suggestopedia for optimal learning is also one of the distinctive characteristics of Gattegno's Silent Way.

(2004) point out the main difference and the similarities between these two leading theories:

The two most prominent families of contemporary learning theory are the *stimulus-response conditioning* theories of the *neobehaviourist* family and the *cognitive interactionist* theories of the *cognitive* family [...]

Although the two psychological approaches contrast in some respects, they also have an area of commonality; both are scientific approaches to the study of human beings, and both assume people's basic moral proclivity to be neutral --- neither innately bad nor innately good. Their great difference centers upon the behavioristic assumption that human beings are *passive* or *reactive* and the cognitive-interactionist assumption that people are *interactive* in relation with their environments (p. 44).

Comparing Behaviourism and Cognitive Psychology, Williams and Burden (1997) remark:

In contrast to behaviourism, cognitive psychology is concerned with the way in which the human mind thinks and learns. Cognitive psychologists are therefore interested in the mental processes that are involved in learning. This includes such aspects as how people build up and draw upon their memories and the ways in which they become involved in the process of learning. [...]

In direct contrast to the behaviourist approach, the cognitive school of psychologists perhaps best epitomizes George Miller's famous description of psychology as 'the science of mental life' (p.13)

Wadsworth (2005) characterizes Cognitive Psychology in the following way:

In [...] (this) conception of learning and development, both maturation and the environment are central (although the importance of the environment and maturation is construed entirely different from the constructions in the other two models). This is an interactionist viewpoint. Mental development is seen as the product of the interaction of the organism (the child) and the environment. This position was first elaborated by Plato, then nearly in this century by John Dewey and most recently by Heinz Werner, Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget. The child is viewed neither as a product of maturation nor as a machine completely controlled by external agents. The child is a scientist, an explorer, an inquirer; he or she is critically instrumental in constructing and organizing the world and his or her own development. Motivation for learning and development is primarily internal (p.4)<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> As distinct from Wadsworth (2005), Thansoulas (2002:1), places the origins of Constructivism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, says he: "As a philosophy of learning, constructivism can be traced to the eighteenth century and the work of the philosopher Giambattista Vico, who maintained that humans can understand only what they have themselves constructed".

In defining Constructivism, Williams and Burden (1997)<sup>110</sup> observe that “Psychologists taking this approach have been mainly concerned with ways in which individuals come to make their own sense of the world” (p. 14) and then add that an understanding of the workings of the human mind is not in itself adequate to explain what goes on when we learn something, and stress their point in favour of “a psychological approach that we consider provides a framework which encompasses the insights provided by cognitive and humanistic perspectives, and that to which we feel committed as educationists, that of social interactionism” (p.39)

Carretero<sup>111</sup> (2001: 21) defines Constructivism as that idea which posits that the individual, in its cognitive, social and affective aspects of behaviour is neither a mere product of the environment nor a result of its internal dispositions, but rather that it constructs itself on a day-to-day basis as a result of the interaction of these two factors: environment and internal dispositions. For Carretero (2001:21) “Knowledge is not a copy of reality but a *construction* of the human being” (Our translation)<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Within *Cognitive Psychology*, Williams and Burden (1997:13) also mention *Information Processing Theory* in the following terms: “Information theorists [...] have drawn the analogy of the brain as a highly complex computer and seek to explain its workings in terms of rules and models of how different aspects of learning take place”. For the purposes of this work, we will go into a consideration of *Information Processing* because, even when it has consolidated into a full-fledged learning theory, it has not yet found a direct application in language teaching.

<sup>111</sup> Probably the most respected authority in *Constructivism* in our medium.

<sup>112</sup> “El conocimiento no es una copia de la realidad, sino una *construcción* del ser humano”.

Carretero (2001: 30-31) goes on to classify the different kinds of Constructivism into three different categories<sup>113</sup>:

*(1) Learning is a solitary endeavour*

According to Carretero (2001), this description of learning is based on the idea that the individual will learn irrespective of his social context. He includes Piaget, Ausubel and the cognitive developmental psychologists within the proponents of this view.

*(2) Learning is enhanced by the social context*

Carretero (2001) says that advocates of this position believe that social interaction favours learning through the creation of cognitive conflicts that produce a conceptual change in the individual. He posits that this particular approach to Constructivism deals with the effects of the interaction and the social context on the mechanisms of personal change and learning. He construes this position as being halfway between Piaget and Vygotsky.

*(3) Social context is essential for learning*

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<sup>113</sup> Carretero (2001: 30-31) deals with this classification in a section of his work under the heading of *Three types of Constructivism and only one true God* and defines his categories in what, he himself advises us, is a rather colloquial fashion as: *(1) learning is a lonely activity (almost a solitary vice) (2) You learn better with friends, and (3) You cannot learn without friends.*(Our translation).

Carretero (2001) defines this as a radical Vygotskyan posture according to which knowledge is not an individual process but a social one. According to this tenet, acquiring information becomes a process of negotiation of meanings previously established by society.<sup>114</sup>

To sum up the main tenets of Constructivism, we will resort to Vazquez (1995):

- a) Knowledge is interaction, therefore a learning situation is more fruitful when the subject is active - not merely because of manipulation – and the situation affords him an opportunity to contrast his schemata with reality.
- b) The progress of knowledge implies that each new structure becomes integrated with the previous schemata that are not, therefore, bound to be suppressed or superseded but to be differentiated and integrated. Learning should promote these complementary mechanisms.
- c) In the genesis of knowledge there are privileged construction stages and paths that learning procedures can optimize within the limits of natural evolution (p.172<sup>115</sup> - Our translation).

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<sup>114</sup> Carretero (2001:31) says that this posture has led to what has come to be known as “situated cognition” (i.e. cognition situated in a social context).

<sup>115</sup> a) El conocimiento es interacción, por tanto una situación de aprendizaje es más fructuosa cuando el sujeto es activo - no meramente por la manipulación – y la situación le brinda ocasión de encuentro de sus esquemas con lo real.  
b) El progreso del conocimiento implica que toda nueva estructura se integra en los esquemas anteriores, que, por tanto no están destinados a ser cancelados o simplemente superados sino a su diferenciación e integración. El aprendizaje deberá promover estos mecanismos complementarios.  
c) En la génesis del conocimiento existen etapas y vías privilegiadas de construcción que los procedimientos de aprendizaje pueden optimizar, dentro de los límites de la evolución natural.

In her preface to Grennon Brookes and Brookes (1993), Fosnot (1993) presents these definitions of *knowledge* and *learning* from a constructivist standpoint:

Constructivism is not a theory about teaching. It's a theory about knowledge and learning. Drawing on a synthesis of current work in cognitive psychology, philosophy, and anthropology, the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective. Learning from this perspective is understood as a self-regulated process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experience, collaborative discourse, and reflection.

In our analysis of Constructivism and Cognitive Psychology we have taken *Constructivism* as our superordinate and we will concentrate basically on what we have understood to be the two most relevant perspectives within this school of thought: *cognitive developmental interactionism* and *social interactionism*.<sup>116</sup>

We have used the term *interactionism* to refer to these two mutually complementary views of Constructivism following Bigge and Shermis (2004) and Wadsworth (2005) among others. Wadsworth (2005) explains:

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<sup>116</sup> We are quite well aware that in concentrating on these two main currents of the constructivist movement, we are leaving aside remarkable contributions to twentieth century Psychology, like *Gestalt Theory* or *Configuralism* and its corresponding theory of learning that Bigge and Shermis (2004-8) define as *Goal insight* theory, but, again, it should be stressed that the criterion for selecting certain theories and discarding others has been that of specific relevance to the field of language teaching.

In the progressive-cognitive development conception of learning and development, both maturation and the environment are central [...] This is an interactionist viewpoint. Mental development is seen as the product of the interaction of the organism (the child) and the environment. This position was first elaborated by Plato, then nearly in this century by John Dewey and most recently by Heinz Werner, Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget. The child is viewed neither as a product of maturation nor as a machine completely controlled by external agents. The child is a scientist, an explorer, an inquirer; he or she is critically instrumental in constructing and organizing the world and his or her own development (p.4)

Caverly and Peterson (1996) further elaborate on the definition of Constructivism and the characterization of the two different perspectives it can be viewed from:

Within this interpretation, learning occurs when the individual logically constructs viable knowledge from the range of experiences with the world. Thus, all knowledge is constructed by the individual from information provided by the context. Here, the learner comes to understand how the world best fits his/her prior knowledge. [...]

Two psychologists in particular have interpreted phenomenologicalism to explain psychological learning and they have called it constructivism. Piaget goes beyond Kant to say that mental structures develop over time rather than existing a priori (Carmichael, 1970). External sense data must interact internally with these mental structures for learning to occur. Learning is therefore constructed through ordering and synthesizing

through the sense (Fabricius, 1983), resulting in the reality that we experience. Vygotsky (1978) argued that constructivism takes place primarily through social interaction rather than individually within the individual. Through collaboration in a meaningful social interaction, an individual constructs a group meaning of a complex idea which in turn is personalized to an individual meaning (p. 39).

On the similarities and dissimilarities between cognitive developmental interactionism and social interactionism, Wadsworth (2005:10-11) points out:

Both Piaget and Vygotsky believed in development and learning, although here, too, their views of the relationship between the two are different. Piaget believed that the level of development placed limits on what could be learned and the level of possible comprehension of that learning. Vygotsky, on the other hand, believed that learning of culturally modeled concepts led to development. Thus, for Vygotsky, learning is the driving force of intellectual development, whereas for Piaget, development is the driving force [...]

Piaget's view is that new construction is always built on prior construction and that, with desequilibration, advancing prior constructions is always possible. Both theorists agree that development and learning can be advanced. Their differences appear to be more with how learning and development occur rather than what is possible.

For Vygotsky, social factors play a fundamental role in intellectual development. When external knowledge, existing in the culture, is internalized by children, intellectual skills and functions are provoked to develop. Thus, learning leads development. Piaget, in turn, fully recognized the role of social factors in intellectual development. Social interactions were viewed as a source of cognitive conflict, thus desequilibration, and thus development. In addition, social interaction was viewed as necessary for construction of social knowledge.

The sharpest difference between the two is seen in their views of the role of language in intellectual development. For Vygotsky, acquisition of language from the social environment results in qualitatively improved thinking and reasoning, or intellectual development. Piaget viewed spoken language as one manifestation of the symbolic function (ability to use symbols to represent), which reflects intellectual development but does not produce it (Fowler 1994). At best, Piaget viewed language as facilitative of, but ultimately not necessary for, intellectual development. "For Piaget, language reflects, but does not produce, intelligence. The only way to advance to a higher intellectual level is not through language, but through action" (Fowler 1994, p.8)

Wadsworth (2005) sums up the main postulates of cognitive developmental interactionism and its epitome, Piaget's genetic epistemology, in these terms:

Piaget viewed intelligence as having an effective as well as a cognitive aspect. The cognitive aspect has three components: content, function and structure. [...]

Actions instrumental in development are those that generate disequilibrium and lead to efforts to establish equilibrium (equilibration). Assimilation and accommodation are the agents of equilibration, the self-regulator of development.

Four factors and their interaction are necessary for development: maturation, active experience, social interaction and equilibration (p.32).

Each new period is characterized by behaviors reflecting qualitatively superior cognitive and affective structures. In the development of intelligence during the first two years of life, it can be seen that each new period of development incorporates previous periods. The new periods do not displace the old, but improve on them. In the same way, each stage of development helps to explain stages that follow. So it is throughout the course of cognitive development. [...]

It is important to recognize that intellectual development is a self-regulatory process. The processes of assimilation and accommodation are internally controlled, not externally controlled. Affect plays a major role in this control through selection and energizing of behavior. It should also begin to become clear what Piaget meant when he said "all intellectual development is adaptation in the biological sense." In each period [...], new and more sophisticated capabilities and increasing self-control

emerge. Each bit of progress makes the individual child better equipped to deal with the demands of life. As such, intellectual development is adaptive (p 55).

Moll (1995) in his introduction to his *Vygotsky and Education*, expounds the fundamental contribution of Vygotsky's sociohistorical psychology to the Constructivist scene in the following way:

Vygotsky's primary contribution was in developing a general approach that brought education, as a fundamental human activity, fully into a theory of psychological development. Human pedagogy, in all its forms, is the defining characteristic of his approach, the central concept in his system. And as a part of his approach he provided the necessary theoretical concepts, the instruments with which to apply and elaborate his insights in practice.

[T]he zone of proximal development [...] (is) a "connecting" concept in Vygotsky's theory, it embodies or integrates key elements of the theory: the emphasis on social activity and cultural practice as sources of thinking, the importance of mediation in human psychological functioning, the centrality of pedagogy in development, and the inseparability of the individual from the social. The concept of the zone posits active individuals as the object of study, with all the complexities that such a unit of study implies. [...]

The power of Vygotsky's ideas is that they represent a theory of possibilities. The construct of the zone of proximal development reminds

us that there is nothing “natural” about educational settings (and about educational practices such as ability groupings, tracking and other forms of stratification). These settings are social creations; they are socially constituted, and they can be socially changed. It warns us how easy it is to underestimate children’s and teacher’s abilities when we analyze them in isolation, in highly constrained environments, or in less than favorable circumstances.

And it points to the use of social and cultural resources that represent our primary tools, as human beings, for mediating and promoting change (p 15).

A number of theoreticians have seen in Constructivism much more than a theory of learning. Dougiamas (1998) states:

Constructivism has been said to be post-epistemological, meaning that it is not another epistemology, or a way of knowing. [...] Rather, constructivism is a way of thinking about knowing, a referent for building models of teaching, learning and curriculum (Tobin and Tippin, 1993). In this sense it is a philosophy (p.18).

Thansoulas (2002) elaborates on the way in which Constructivism influences our views on knowledge, by citing Hein (1991). Thanasoulas (2002) says:

For Hein, constructivism, although it appears radical on an everyday level, is a position which has been frequently adopted ever since people began to ponder epistemology' (ibid.). According to him, if we align ourselves with constructivist theory, which means we are willing to follow in the footsteps of Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky, among others, then we have to run counter to Platonic views of epistemology. We have to recognize that knowledge is not "out there," independent of the knower, but knowledge is what we construct for ourselves as we learn. Besides, we have to concede that learning is not tantamount to understanding the "true" nature of things, nor is it (as Plato suggested) akin to remembering perfect ideas, 'but rather a personal and social construction of meaning out of the bewildering array of sensations which have no order or structure besides the explanations...which we fabricate for them' (ibid.) (p.3).

Wilson (2007) also sees Constructivism as a *weltanschauung* and assigns philosophical status to it:

Constructivism is more a philosophy, not a strategy. [...] Constructivism is not an instructional strategy to be deployed under appropriate conditions. Rather, constructivism is an underlying philosophy or way of seeing the world. This way of seeing the world includes notions about:

--the nature of *reality* (mental representations have "real" ontological status just as the "world out there" does)

--the nature of *knowledge* (it's individually constructed; it is inside people's minds, not "out there")

--the nature of *human interaction* (we rely on shared or "negotiated" meanings, better thought of as cooperative than authoritative or manipulative in nature)

--the nature of *science* (it is a meaning-making activity with the biases and filters accompanying any human activity) (p.4).

Dougiamas (1998) views the application of Constructivist ideas in teaching and learning by considering:

Some of the tenets of constructivism in pedagogical terms:

--Students come to class with an established world-view, formed by years of prior experience and learning.

--Even as it evolves, a student's world-view filters all experiences and affects their interpretation of observations.

--For students to change their world-view requires work.

--Students learn from each other as well as the teacher.

--Students learn better by doing.

--Allowing and creating opportunities for all to have a voice promotes the construction of new ideas.

A constructivist perspective views learners as actively engaged in making meaning, and teaching with that approach looks for what students can analyse, investigate, collaborate, share, build and generate based on what they already know, rather than what facts, skills, and processes they can parrot. To do this effectively, a teacher needs to be a learner and a researcher, to strive for greater awareness of the environments and the participants in a given teaching situation in order to continually adjust their

actions to engage students in learning, using constructivism as a referent (pp.18-19).

Thansoulas (2002) explains why Constructivism should be understood as much more than a tool to be used with the limited pedagogical intent of establishing a new kind of classroom:

It goes without saying that learners represent a rich array of different backgrounds and ways of thinking and feeling. If the classroom can become a neutral zone where students can exchange their personal views and critically evaluate those of others, each student can build understanding based on empirical evidence. We have no intention of positing methods and techniques for creating a "constructivist classroom." After all, classrooms are, and should be; amenable and sensitive to a whole lot of approaches to teaching and learning, and a slavish adherence to the letter rather than the spirit of education is bound to prove detrimental. It should be borne in mind that the theory of constructivism, with which we have been concerned, is not yet another "educational decree." Like philosophy, constructivism can lead to its own deconstruction, in the sense that it forges the very structures and associations that could possibly demolish it. It is a meta-theory, in that it fosters a meta-critical awareness. A constructivist orientation to learning is unique because at its heart lies the individual learner in toto, rather than dimly perceived "apparitions" of her essence. Constructivism is a modern version of human anatomy, in the sense that it is based on, and provides insights into, brain mechanisms, mental structures, and willingness to learn (p. 3).

## **The Communicative Approach**

Howatt (2004) provides a comprehensive account of the circumstances that surrounded the birth of the communicative revolution:

[...] the notion at the heart of the 'communicative movement' in applied linguistics and language pedagogy after 1970 was the conviction that language teaching should take greater account of the way that language worked in the real world and try to be more responsive to the needs of learners in their efforts to acquire it. There were many influences that contributed to the strength of this conviction, some practical, others more theoretical, and others still that derived from the general 'Zeitgeist' of the late 1960s. For instance, the shift of focus in Communicative Language teaching away from arguments over methods of teaching and towards a new emphasis on arranging the appropriate conditions for learning was in line with much of the progressive educational thinking of the time, and the success of the new approach in a relatively short time was due, in part at least, to the fact that its ideas were generally in harmony with those of the contemporary educational establishment. [...]

Most critical of all, however, was the need to re-think the underlying assumptions of the pedagogical enterprise itself in order to identify a rationale for relating form and meaning in the real world of language use. This was a task tailor-made for applied linguistics which took the opportunity of extending its interests well beyond the narrow concerns of 'core linguistics' (phonology, syntax, etc.) which had tended to dominate

its work in the early stages, to cover a much broader spectrum of language-related studies.

The re-think, and the revolution it precipitated, took ten years to run its course. In 1970 expressions like 'the communicative approach' were virtually unknown, by 1980 they were commonplace (pp. 326 -327).

No doubt that two (in the 1970's) novel factors in the language teaching scene played a critical role in the development of the ideas of teaching languages for communication. They were: the emancipation of pedagogical linguistics (Stern: 1994) and the reconceptualization of language (Nunan: 1999)

Stern (1994) explains that during the 1970's and the 1980's a new generation of educational linguists

[...] no longer waited for the pronouncements of theoretical linguists; instead they used their own judgment and initiative in giving language pedagogy the linguistic direction they regarded as necessary. They were linguists in their own right but at the same time experienced practitioners or closely in touch with practice [...] In some instances a team approach between a theoretically oriented linguist and a practically experienced language educator created the right conditions and led to productive co-operation (p.177)<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> In this last sense of co-operation highlighted by Stern (1994), a typical case a scholar like Stephen Krashen, who enjoyed a well deserved reputation for his theoretical models, and who joined forces with the celebrated practitioner and textbook writer Tracy Terrell to produce their widely known *Natural Approach* at the beginning of the eighties. In this

Stern goes on to mention, among others, the names of such prominent scholars as Widdowson, Oller, Candlin, Allen, van Ek, Wilkins, Coulthard, Brumfit and Littlewood, all of whom at different points in the continuum from theory to practice, were aware that “the demands of language pedagogy [...] may run ahead of linguistic theory” (p.179).

As regards the concept of *reconceptualization of language*, Nunan (1999) recounts how the concept of language changed from that purported by the dominant linguistic theories of the 1950’s and 1960’s and a change of paradigm was produced in the 1970’s and what effects this new outlook had on ELT pedagogy:

An important stimulus for changing the way we teach language came in the 1970s when linguists and language educators began a reappraisal of language itself. Up to, and including the 1960s, language was generally seen as a system of rules, and the task for language learning was to internalize these rules by whatever means were at their disposal [...]

The priority for learners was to master the structures of the language, and, in this process, considerations of meaning were seen almost as peripheral. In fact, some language specialists argued that instruction should focus almost exclusively on teaching basic syntactic patterns, ignoring, or at least minimizing, the development of vocabulary and semantic systems [...]

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respect, Lally (1998: 12) asserts that: “The Natural Approach, developed by Terrell (1977), is based entirely on Krashen’s Monitor Model”.

However, during the 1970s, a much richer conceptualization of language began to emerge. Language was seen as a system for the expression of meaning, and linguists began to analyze language as a system for the expression of meanings, rather than a system of abstract syntactic rules

[...]

The realization that language could be analyzed, described, and taught as a system for expressing meanings had a profound effect on language teaching. At least it had a profound effect at the levels of syllabus design and textbook writing

[...]

In terms of methodology, this new view of language also had an important effect. If the aim of the language teaching is to help learners develop skills for expressing different communicative meanings, then surely these ought to be reflected in classroom tasks and activities (pp.9-10)

About *reconceptualizing language* and its effect on Communicative Language Teaching, Stern (1994) clarifies:

From the mid seventies the key concept that has epitomized the practical, theoretical, and research preoccupations in educational linguistics and language pedagogy is that of communication or communicative competence. The term 'communicative competence', first used by Hymes

(for example, 1972) in deliberate contrast to Chomsky's 'linguistic competence', reflects the social view of language which has found increasing acceptance since the middle of the sixties. [...] the idea of communicative language teaching (is the) central focus for new thought and fresh approaches in language pedagogy in the early eighties. [...] Towards 1980, the concept of communication was a rallying point for these different strands. But this does not mean that this concept has given us a genuine synthesis. In any case it may not be desirable to attempt to build a language teaching theory around a single concept (pp.111-112)<sup>118</sup>

The concept of communicative competence is *la pièce de résistance* of the communicative approach. Dell Hymes (1972), as has been said before, was the first one to put forward this notion. A number of proposals by different theoreticians followed, of which Savignon (1998), in what she calls *a classroom model of communicative competence* (p.35), chooses Canale (1983)'s proposition. Savignon (1998) says:

Canale and Swain (1980) conducted an extensive survey of communicative approaches to language teaching. Their purpose was to develop a theoretical framework for subsequent curriculum design and evaluation in L2 programs. The framework they have proposed and

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<sup>118</sup> In this last respect, in a juicy footnote to page 111 (Stern: 1994) explains: "Breen and Candlin (1980, forthcoming) have interpreted language pedagogy in its entirety---- curriculum, classroom activities, teacher training---- in communicative terms. Several other theorists reject the idea of a single concept becoming once again the overriding preoccupation of language pedagogy. The advocacy of an eclectic approach (for example, Gritner 1977; Rivers 1981) or a multidimensional theory, suggested by the present work, counteracts this tendency while recognizing the contribution of the cognitive component" (p.115)

subsequently refined (Canale, forthcoming) merits attention because it brings together the various views of communicative competence we have considered and places linguistic competence, or sentence-level grammatical competence, into a proper perspective within the larger construct of communicative competence. The four components of communicative competence that this framework identifies are *grammatical competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, *discourse competence* and *strategic competence* (p. 35)<sup>119</sup>.

Adamson (2004) reflects on the principles of the Communicative Approach and roles of teachers and learners in the Communicative classroom. As it can easily be noticed there is almost a one to one correspondence between what he characterizes as the main tenets of this method and those of social interactionism.

An alternative starting point for the development of language teaching methods is to view language essentially as social practice, and the goal of language teaching as engendering the learner's competence to communicate in the target language. Communication is viewed as social interaction and therefore dynamic and influenced by the cultural context, rather than being a fixed linguistic system existing in a vacuum. Toward the end of the twentieth century, great attention was given to the

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<sup>119</sup> Ohno (2006:29) reminds us that "Grammatical competence includes knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology [...]."

Sociolinguistic competence is made up of two sets of rules: sociolinguistic rules of use and rules of discourse. They believe that knowledge of these rules will be crucial in interpreting utterances for social meaning, particularly when there is a low level of transparency between the literal meaning of an utterance and the speaker's intention. Finally, strategic competence is made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient grammatical competence.

“Communicative Approach,” or “Communicative Language Teaching,” although in reality these are more an umbrella term for a range of curriculum design principles and teaching methods all sharing the underlying philosophy than a single, specific method.

Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001, p. 2) argue that the Communicative Approach “was explicitly a post-method approach to language teaching ... in which the principles underlying the use of different classroom procedures were of paramount importance, rather than a package of teaching materials.” The pluralism of the Communicative Approach could be seen as united by common principles, which include a view of language as principally serving as an expression of meaning at the discourse level (not just the word or sentence level), where appropriacy is as important as accuracy; a view of language learning as best brought about by involving learners actively in communication related to real-life contexts; and a view of the teacher as a facilitator and motivator, as well as source of knowledge (pp.608-609).

Concepts like “*language essentially as social practice*”, “*communication viewed as social interaction and influenced by the cultural context*”, “*a view of language as principally serving as an expression of meaning at the discourse level*”, “*a view of language learning as best brought about by involving learners actively in communication related to real-life contexts*”, and “*a view of the teacher as a facilitator and motivator*” are at the heart of Vygotsky’s sociohistorical psychology and are recurrent themes in his *Thought and Language* (1992) and in the rest of his work. As regards the nature of communication, Vygotsky (1992) points out:

The primary function of speech is communication, social intercourse. When language was studied through analysis into elements, this function, too, was dissociated from the intellectual function of speech. The two were treated as though they were separate, if parallel, functions, without attention to their structural and developmental interrelation. [...] That understanding between minds is impossible without some mediating expression is an axiom for scientific psychology. In the absence of a system of signs, linguistic or other, only the most primitive and limited type of communication is possible [...]

The rationale, intentional conveyance of experience and thought to others requires a mediating system, the prototype of which is human speech born of the need of communication during work. In accordance with the dominant trend, psychology has until recently depicted the matter in an oversimplified way. It was assumed that the means of communication was the sign (the word or sound); that through simultaneous occurrence a sound could become associated with the content of any experience and then serve to convey the same content to other human beings.

Closer study of the development of understanding and communication in childhood, however, has led to the conclusion that real communication requires meaning---that is, generalization---as much as signs. In order to convey one's experience or thought, it is imperative to refer them to some known class or group of phenomena. Such reference, however, already requires generalization. Therefore, communication presupposes generalization and development of word meaning; generalization, thus, becomes possible in the course of communication. The higher, specifically

human forms of psychological communication are possible because man's reflection of reality is carried out in generalized concepts (pp. 6-8)<sup>120</sup>.

Along the same cognitive developmental and social interactionist lines, Breen and Candlin (2001) define the shape of a communicative curriculum along the lines of a theory of communication:

The communicative curriculum defines language learning as learning how to communicate as a member of a particular socio-cultural group. The social conventions governing language form and behaviour within the group are, therefore, central to the process of language learning. In any communicative event, individual participants bring with them prior knowledge of meaning and prior knowledge of how such meaning can be realized through the conventions of language form and behaviour. Since communication is primarily interpersonal, these conventions are subject to variation while they are being used. In exploring shared knowledge, participants will be modifying that knowledge. They typically exploit a tension between the conventions that are established and the opportunity to modify these conventions for their particular communicative purposes. Communicating is not merely a matter of following conventions but also of negotiating through and about the conventions themselves. It is a convention-creating as well as a convention-following activity.

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<sup>120</sup> Was Vygotsky an advocate of the Communicative revolution of the 70's? Was he bashing the Grammar and Translation Method or the Audiolingualism for their failure to see the forest for the tree? Hardly so. Vygotsky's *Thought and Language*, from which the citation has been excerpted, was published in Russia in 1934 (the year of his death). But, as it often happens with masterpieces, they never become stale and, in this sense, Vygotsky's ideas about language and communication are as relevant today as they were more than seventy years ago.

In communication, speakers and hearers (and writers and readers) are most often engaged in the work of sharing meanings which are both dependent on the conventions of interpersonal behaviour and created by such behaviour. Similarly, the ideas or concepts which are communicated about contain different potential meanings, and such potential meanings are expressed through and derived from the formal system of text during the process of communication. To understand the conventions which underlie communication, therefore we not only have to understand a system of ideas or concepts and a system of interpersonal behaviour, we have to understand these ideas and this interpersonal behaviour can be realized in language –in connected texts. Mastering this unit of ideational, interpersonal and textual knowledge allows us to participate in a creative meaning-making process and to express or interpret the potential meanings within spoken or written text (Halliday, 1973)

There is an additional characteristic of this unified system of knowledge. The social or interpersonal nature of communication guarantees that it is permeated by personal and socio-cultural attitudes, values and emotions. These different *affects* will determine what we choose to communicate about and how we choose to communicate, the conventions governing ideas or concepts, interpersonal behaviour, and their realization in texts all serve and create attitudes, judgments and feelings. Just as communication cannot be affectively neutral, learning to communicate implies that the learner will come to terms with the new learning to the extent that his own affects will be engaged, at that point, the learner's affects become further involved in a process of negotiation with those affects which are embodied within the communicative performance of the

target community. So, affective involvement is both the driving-force for learning, and also the motivation behind much everyday communication and the inspiration for the recreation of the conventions which govern such communication.

Communication in everyday life synthesizes ideational, interpersonal and textual knowledge—and the affects which are part of such knowledge. But it is also related to and integrated with other forms of human behaviour. In learning how to communicate in a new language, the learner is not confronted by a task which is easily separable from his other psychological and social experiences. The sharing and negotiating of potential meanings in a new language implies the use and refinement of perceptions, concepts and affects. Furthermore, learning the conventions governing communication within a new social group involves the refinement and use of the social roles and the social identity expected by that group of its members. Thus, learning to communicate is a socialization process [...]. Therefore, it makes sense for the teacher to see the overall purpose of language teaching as the *development* of the learner's communicative knowledge in the context of personal and social development (pp.10-11).

Ohno (2006)<sup>121</sup> presents a rather differing view with a more pedagogical intent in mind:

Canale and Swain believe that the sociolinguistic work of Hymes is important to the development of a communicative approach to language

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<sup>121</sup> Resting on the shoulders of two giants like Canale and Swain.

learning. Their work focuses on the interaction of social context, grammar, and meaning (more precisely, social meaning).

However, just as Hymes says that there are values of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use; Canale and Swain maintain that there are rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar. For example, one may have an adequate level of sociolinguistic competence in Canadian French just from having developed such a competence in Canadian English; but without some minimal level of grammatical competence in French, it is unlikely that one could communicate effectively with a monolingual speaker of Canadian French. (Canale & Swain, 1980). They strongly believe that the study of grammatical competence is as essential to the study of communicative competence as is the study of sociolinguistic competence.

As for integrative theories such as Widdowson's work, Canale and Swain point out that there is an overemphasis in many integrative theories on the role of communicative functions and social behavior options in the selection of grammatical forms, and a lack of emphasis on the role of factors such as grammatical complexity and transparency. They believe that at some point prior to the final selection of grammatical options, semantic options and social behavior options, grammatical forms must be screened for the following criteria :(Canale & Swain, 1980)

- (1) grammatical complexity;
- (2) transparency with respect to the communicative function of the sentence;
- (3) generalizability to other communicative functions;
- (4) the role of a given form in facilitating acquisition of another form;

(5) acceptability in terms of perceptual strategies;

(6) degree of markedness in terms of social geographical dialects (p.28)

This section in Ohno (2006)'s paper can be interpreted as mild denunciation of Communicative Language Teaching, but this method was not without, sometimes harsh, criticism from a number of different quarters, among them O'Neill (2000) who, in his article *The Appeal and Poverty of CLT*, refers to, what he calls, the *triviality* of the postulates of Communicative Language Teaching. Says O'Neill (2000):

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has enormous intuitive appeal. Despite this, I have come to believe that at the heart of CLT - especially in fundamentalist versions of it - we find a naive, even impoverished view of language. To demonstrate what I mean, let me examine six propositions upon which I think CLT is based. I am going to argue that if these propositions are true at all, they are only superficially and trivially true - and true only in essentially uninteresting ways. In other words, they are just as true as statements like "When people speak, they use words". Such a statement tells us nothing about what kinds of relationships there may be between words, how people learn to assemble them into larger units, or what else they do to construct or interpret meaning.

Then O'Neill (2000) passes on to enumerate what he believes are *the six fundamentally "trivial" propositions*<sup>122</sup> of Communicative Language Teaching in these terms:

1. Language is primarily a tool of communication. Learning a language means learning to perform communicative speech acts with it. [...]
2. There is something called a "communicative syllabus" which replaces and is superior to a structural syllabus". [...]
3. Communicative goals can be specified. We can accurately describe what learners should have learned and be able to do with language at the end of the lesson. [...]
4. Good communicative teaching is learner-centred, not teacher-centred. [...]
5. What matters most is not whether learners learn to use the language accurately. What matters is that they learn to get their message across. [...]
6. The classroom and the behaviour of teachers and learners in the classroom should be as similar as possible to the behaviour of people in the "real world" outside the classroom. [...]<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> In our opinion, these axioms, like almost any other proposition, can be disputed but are far from being "trivial". Probably the proof that this article of O'Neill (2000)'s is definitely biased against the Communicative Approach is evident in the way O'Neill (2000) closes his article: after his references, we can read: "[My quarrel with CLT 28/03/00 Robert O'Neill]"

<sup>123</sup> In all due justice, it should be said that O'Neill (2000) presents *six opposing propositions* to counterattack the Communicative "triviality". As an alternative to CLT, O'Neill (2000) advocates a *narrative* approach to language teaching. O'Neill (2000), a textbook writer himself, writes as a conclusion to his article: "What EFL needs today is writers capable of developing skills that writers in other genres regard as essential: they must be able to develop the kinds of story, plot and character that can keep groups of very different learners interested in the language. The texts and conversations they write must exemplify as naturally as possible how people speak and write outside the classroom. However, the texts and dialogues must also serve [...] distinct pedagogic purposes [...]"

But perhaps the strongest objection against Communicative Language Teaching comes from Howatt (2004):

[...] CLT has made learning foreign languages for professional or educational reasons a very much more efficient and worthwhile process than it used to be twenty years ago.

Despite this progress, however, the questions that were raised when it began remain largely unresolved, the most serious being the absence of a coherent theory of learning. In practice this has meant that courses in the communicative mould have been free to adopt any pedagogical model they choose without fear of infringing any acceptable principles of procedure (p.28).

Richards and Rodgers (2005) acknowledge the same reality:

In contrast to the amount that has been written in Communicative Language Teaching literature about communicative dimensions of language, little has been written about learning theory. Neither Brumfit and Johnson (1979) nor Littlewood (1981), for example, offers any discussion of learning theory (p.161).

Unfortunately, and in what we understand as an effort to find a theoretical basis for CLT, Richards and Rodgers (2005) go on to state:

Elements of an underlying learning theory can be discerned in some CLT practices [...]. One such element can be described as the communication

principle: Activities that involve real communication promote learning. A second element is the task principle: Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning (Johnson 1982) Another element is the meaningfulness principle: Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process [...] These principles [...] address the conditions needed to promote second language learning, rather than the processes of language acquisition (p.161).

As can be easily observed, none of these three principles enunciated by Richards and Rodgers (2005) in relation to Communicative Language Teaching is tantamount to a theory of learning<sup>124</sup>. Again we are left with the same impression that we pointed out in Chapter 1, Richards and Rodgers (2005), among many other theoreticians, in their treatment of learning theories refer to *theories of language learning* and fail to address the issue of the *more general* theories of learning that underlie the methods that they discuss.

### **The Communicative Methods**

*Communicative Language Teaching* has frequently been used as an umbrella term to engulf a number of, more often than not, very diverse pedagogical realities. In this respect, Nunan (1996) points out:

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<sup>124</sup> To add to the epistemological pandemonium, Richards and Rodgers (2005: 162) make reference to “an alternative learning theory” that their proponents Johnson (1984) and Littlewood (1984) “see as compatible with CTL”. This *novel* and very little known theory, that Johnson (1984) calls “*Skill Psychology*” and that Richards and Rodgers (2005:12) define as “*skill-learning model of learning*” (sic), allegedly integrates aspects of Cognitivism and Behaviourism.

[...] It is something of a misnomer to talk about 'the communicative approach' as there is a family of approaches, each member of which claims to be 'communicative' (in fact it is difficult to find approaches which claim not to be communicative!). There is also frequent disagreement between different members of the communicative family (p.12).

Our discussion will be centred on the *Notional - Functional Approach*, the *Natural Approach*, *Whole Language*, and *Task Based Learning* , all of which we have construed as being manifestations of the Constructivist ideal. The criterion for grouping them under this label has been their (more or less devout) adherence to the principles of Cognitive Psychology.<sup>125</sup>

A brief presentation of each one of these methods follows, again as we had pointed out in Chapter 1, not with the pedagogical intention of expounding the particular tenets of each one but of discussing in what way they relate to Constructivism.

### **The Notional Functional Approach**

According to Adamson (2004: 610):

One development that spurred the acceptance of the Communicative Approach principles was the Functional-Notional Approach, which

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<sup>125</sup> We refer to Cognitive Psychology in either of its two streams: cognitive developmental interactionism or social interactionism, although a predominance of the latter can be felt more strongly, especially in the case of *Whole Language* and *Task based Learning*.

organized the syllabus according to language functions (everyday interactions, such as buying food, giving directions, or offering advice) and notions (concepts, such as time, quantity, and location), but offered little explicit advice on appropriate teaching methods. A method known variously<sup>126</sup> as the presentation-practice-production (P-P-P) method or the Five Steps method (adding Revision as the first step before Presentation, and Consolidation as the fifth step) was promoted in curriculum documents, teacher education courses, and handbooks (e.g. Hubbard et al., 1983).

Stern (1992: 165) explains the genesis and the basis of the notional functional<sup>127</sup> approach:

The widespread questioning of grammatical syllabuses which occurred during the 1970s prompted the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project to search for a new and more satisfactory basis for European language courses for adults. A number of ideas were explored, and eventually Wilkins (1976) came up with a firm proposal for a semantically-based syllabus design in his book *Notional Syllabuses*. In this well known work Wilkins proposed three sets of organizers: semantico-grammatical categories, categories of modal meaning, and categories of communicative function. Semantico-grammatical categories are basic concepts or propositional meanings which in European languages are

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<sup>126</sup> Shei (2002: 159) says: "This type of syllabus has various names: notional syllabus (Wilkins, 1976), functional-notional syllabus (Crawford-Lange, 1987), or notional-functional syllabus (Markee, 1997)."

<sup>127</sup> "Function and notion are both concepts having to do with the use of language. Crawford-Lange (1987) explains, 'Function is a matter of purpose.... Notion concerns the content of the purpose. For example, a person may ask (function) for a pen (notion)...' Shei (2002:159)

often expressed in grammatical form, such as time through the tense system, or quantity through singular and plural. Wilkins' list of such categories include the following concepts: time, quantity, space, relations (agent, object, instrument), and deixis. Categories of modal meaning are modifications of language use through which speakers express degrees of certainty (for example, probability, doubt), or commitment (for example, intention or obligation). Finally categories of communicative functions, the largest of the three sets of categories, list speech acts under six main headings and numerous subheadings.

Van Ek (1987: 79-80) characterizes the different constituents of the *Threshold Level* in the following way:

Our model for the definition of language-learning objectives specifies the following components:

1. The situations in which the foreign language will be used, including the topics which will be dealt with;
2. The language activities in which the learner will engage;
3. The language functions that the learner will fulfill;
4. What the learner will be able to do with respect to each topic;
5. The general notions which the learner will be able to handle;
6. The specific (topic-related) notions which the learner will be able to handle;
7. The language forms that the learner will be able to use;
8. The degree of skill with which the learner will be able to perform.

Howatt (2004) clarifies how Wilkins' (1976) model differed from Van Ek's (1975)<sup>128</sup>

In 1976 Wilkins published the definite account of the theory behind the T-level in *Notional Syllabuses* in which his semantico-grammatical categories and categories of communicative function have been joined by categories of modality ---- and all of them count as 'notions' of different kinds. In van Ek, on the other hand, notions and functions are kept separate, giving a three part model consisting of: (i) general notions (essentially grammar), (ii) specific notions (vocabulary), and (iii) language functions. To teachers, the package as a whole became known as 'the notional/functional approach' and for many of them, it became synonymous with 'communicative language teaching'.

(p.339)

Criticism was soon to come from very influential figures in the field, Stern (1992) cites Paulston's (1981) who criticized Wilkins' notional functional syllabus on the grounds that: "Language forms are generative while notions are not, and since one cannot in fact divorce function from form in language, it makes more sense to me to organize a syllabus along linguistic forms which can generate infinite meanings and many functions, rather than to organize content along a finite list of functions" (Paulston 1981:93). Stern (1992: 165-166) then goes on to state:

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<sup>128</sup> van Ek's work *The Threshold Level in a European Unit/Credit System for Modern Language Learning by Adults. Systems Development in Adult Language Learning* (or *The Threshold Level*, as it is often cited for short) published in 1975 was a full account of the work of the *Modern Languages Project*, later known as the *Threshold Level Project* or the *T-Level*. Wilkins' *Notional Syllabuses* published in 1976 was an exposition of the theoretical rationale behind the T-Level.

Similar objections were raised by Brumfit (1980b, 1981) who argued that grammatical items can be arranged in a logical order but speech acts can only be enumerated, without any ground for a particular order. This argument led to Brumfit's proposal that language syllabuses continue to be mainly grammar-based, with speech acts and other functional categories loosely woven around the grammatical core.

More recently and comparing Wilkins' proposal of a notional functional syllabus that had come to replace the structural or grammatical syllabuses of the Audio lingual era, Shei (2002: 159-160) explains:

According to Wilkins (1976: 2), the grammatical syllabus is a kind of synthetic syllabus, where "the learner's task is to re-synthesize the language that has been broken down into a large number of smaller pieces with the aim of making his learning easier". One of the complaints about this approach, according to Wilkins, is that "the motivation of learners is hard to sustain when success is measured in terms of the proportion of the grammatical system known" (ibid: 13). The notional syllabus, on the other hand, claims to take the analytical approach, which is "organized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes" (ibid.). In the analytical approach, Since we are inviting the learner ... to recognize the linguistic components of the language behaviour he is acquiring, we are in effect basing our approach on the learner's analytic capacities" (ibid: 14)

However, when one looks at the components of a notional syllabus as proposed by Wilkins, they are not very different from the units specified in a structural syllabus. The specifications of semantico-grammatical categories in Wilkins (1976: 25) such as time, quantity, space, etc., cannot really guarantee that the language learner will associate these with the use of language more readily than they do with grammatical categories. What's more, the categories of modal meaning (ibid: 38) look almost exactly like the section on modal auxiliaries in a structural syllabus. Indeed, as Markee (1997: 17) observes, "Nonetheless, notions and functions are still linguistic units of analysis. Using preselected linguistic units and linguistic criteria to select, grade, and sequence pedagogical content leads us back to synthetic syllabus design solutions."

### **The Natural Approach**

Krashen's innatist Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory and the subsequent methodological development of his views, the Natural Approach, have been the focus of heated debate among theoreticians in the last two decades of the twentieth century<sup>129</sup>

Lally (1998) discusses the five hypotheses of the Natural Approach and their implications for the classroom:

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<sup>129</sup> Brown (2000: 277) explains that "Krashen's hypotheses have had a number of different names. In the earlier years the "Monitor Model" and the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis" were more popular terms; in recent years the "Input Hypothesis" has come to identify what is really a set of interrelated hypotheses". Whereas, The Natural Approach is seldom referred to by any other name with the sole exception, probably, of Stern (1994: 475) that calls it "The Natural Method (Terrell 1977)" and credits Terrell alone with it.

One of the most well-known and, by some accounts, controversial language learning theories of the 1970s and 1980s is Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model. The Monitor Model has had considerable influence on language instruction, provoking strong reactions, both positive and negative, from researchers in second language acquisition and learning (Barasch and James, 1995). Krashen's theoretical model is composed of five hypotheses (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). The first hypothesis, the acquisition-learning hypothesis, asserts that humans have two ways of "becoming competent" (Krashen and Terrell 26) in a second language. The first way of becoming competent is by acquisition, that is, by subconsciously using language for real communication. The second way of becoming competent in a second language is via learning. For Krashen and Terrell, learning implies a conscious knowledge of grammatical structures, and the ability to apply and verbalize explicit language rules. The second hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, states that grammatical structures are acquired in a specific and predictable order. The third hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, states that learning, or the conscious knowledge and manipulation of grammatical rules, acts as a monitor or editor of utterances initiated by acquisition. However, the monitor can only be evoked when certain conditions are met. For example, the performer needs to have enough time to access grammar rules; the performer must be focusing on form, rather than on content; and the performer must know the rule in question. The fourth hypothesis, the input hypothesis, states that in order for students to move to higher stages of acquisition, they need to be exposed to structures slightly beyond their current level of competence. These unacquired structures ( $i + 1$ ) can become comprehensible through context and other extra-linguistic information. The final hypothesis is the affective filter hypothesis. The

affective filter hypothesis states that acquisition can only occur when the performer has low anxiety, self-confidence, and is motivated.

Krashen's theoretical model has done more than generate dialogue and incite intellectual debate; it has also given form to a method of language instruction.

The Natural Approach, developed by Terrell (1977), is based entirely on Krashen's Monitor Model. According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), the "five simple principles of the Natural Approach are completely consistent with the hypotheses" of Krashen's Monitor theory (59). For example, the acquisition-learning hypothesis affects the organization of the natural approach classroom by assuring that "most of the classroom time is spent on activities which foster acquisition [whereas] learning exercises [. . .] always play a more peripheral role" (59). In addition, an instructor using the Natural Approach does not correct student errors. The lack of in-class correction is a direct reflection of both the affective filter hypothesis, which suggests creating a low-anxiety learning environment, and the natural order hypothesis, which purports that by allowing student errors to occur without undue emphasis on error correction, the Natural Approach teacher allows the natural order to take its course. Finally, the input hypothesis is reflected in the Natural Approach's emphasis on exposing students to large amounts of comprehensible input. In spite of the strict adherence of the Natural Approach to the theories of the Monitor model, the Natural Approach is nevertheless flexible concerning the types of teaching techniques used in the classroom (pp. 10-12)

Hedge (2005) refers to the nature of input, and of the acquisition and learning processes that, as has been said before, are two of the central motifs of the Natural Approach:

A significant idea that has emerged in recent years is that of comprehensible input. Krashen's input hypothesis posits that language is picked up, or acquired, when learners receive input from "messages" which contain language a little above their existing understanding and from which they can infer meaning. The hypothesis makes a distinction between acquiring a language and learning it through conscious attention to language study. The acquisition process, often called a "creative construction process", is parallel to that of a child learning its first language. A study of children's errors suggests that they use operating strategies, such as paying attention to the ends of words, to formulate hypotheses about rules in the language, and that these hypotheses are tested out in their own attempts to produce language and gradually revised as they receive feedback on their attempts.

[... ] It is through the process of hypothesis making and testing that learners make sense of language input and impose a structure on it. They create a developing system known as "interlanguage" which passes through a number of stages until it eventually approximates to the rules of the target language or until it stabilizes, or fossilizes, in ways that deviate from these rules.

[...] The notion of comprehensible input has been taken up with enthusiasm for a number of reasons:

It confirms the need for meaningful input which will engage learners in working with language at a level which is slightly above their competence. "Meaningful" has been variously interpreted by materials writers and teachers as relevant and topical to learners and their interests and realistic in terms of simulating the authentic texts and speaking situations learners may eventually have to handle. This implies a need for varied classroom materials, and many current coursebooks demonstrate a motivating range of situations and of texts, for example, newspaper articles, posters, advertisements, guides, maps and invitations.

It suggests the value of providing input through out-of-class resources such as readers and listening cassettes for self-across learning, or encouraging students to make use of whatever resources might be available to increase input opportunities.

It seems to confirm the usefulness of teachers adjusting their own classroom language, in line with students' proficiency, to simpler vocabulary and slower speech while retaining natural rhythm and intonation (pp. 10-12)<sup>130</sup>.

Lally (1998) elaborates on the role of the Monitor and the role of grammar in Krashen's and Terrell's approach:

Krashen's Monitor Model makes a pronounced distinction between acquisition, the unconscious picking-up of a language, a certain "feel for

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<sup>130</sup> Hedge (2005:121) goes on to add: "Cognitive psychologists (for example Craik and Lockhart 1972; Craik and Tulvig 1975) have suggested that learners are more likely to remember a word if they worked on its meaning actively; in other words, input becomes "intake" if there is depth of processing."

correctness" (Krashen and Terrell 58), and learning, which requires the conscious application of rules of grammar to language production. In both theory and practice, Krashen and Terrell stress the categorical superiority of acquisition over learning. Implications of this preference manifest themselves in the classroom by the "limited function" (Krashen and Terrell 18) of conscious grammar rules. Indeed, Terrell (1977) suggests that all grammatical instruction and practice activities should be done outside of class "so that classroom time is not wasted in grammatical lectures or manipulative exercises" (330). With grammar instruction and drills banned from the classroom, more time can be spent on communication activities and exposure to comprehensible input. Focusing class time and students' attention on communication instead of grammar rules allows for more exposure to comprehensible input and encourages more language acquisition (Krashen and Terrell, 1983).

Krashen and Terrell recommend that the monitor (the use of rules) be avoided in normal interaction and in classroom conversations because there is not enough time to comprehend input, to think an appropriate response, to generate the response, and to self-correct under the time constraints of natural conversation (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Nevertheless, both Krashen and Terrell do concede that rules and grammar instruction play a role, albeit very limited, in language acquisition. For example, Terrell (1977) believes that a conscious manipulation of grammar rules should be applied when writing or in prepared speech. In addition, if grammar explanations must be done in the classroom, Krashen and Terrell recommend that they be short, simple, and in the target language.

In spite of the clear aversion of grammar of the Monitor Model and the Natural Approach (Krashen, 1981; 1982; Krashen and Terrell, 1983; Terrell, 1977), it seems as though Terrell later modified his strict aversion of form-focused instruction. For example, Terrell (1991) describes explicit language instruction as an aid or tool for the learner in the acquisition process and discusses the role of grammar as an advance organizer. Terrell's 1991 revisions do not negate his initial position on the role of grammar in language acquisition-Terrell still preferred communication to grammar. Rather, this modified attitude places more emphasis on the subordinate function of grammar that Terrell initially maintained (pp. 12-13).

Omaggio Hadley (2001) examines the question of form-focused instruction in the Natural Approach:

One aspect of Natural Approach methodology that may not be congruent with proficiency goals is the lack of form-focused instruction or corrective feedback in classroom interaction. This issue has been a source of controversy in recent years, with some scholars claiming that explicit instruction in grammar is not helpful in the classroom and that errors should never be corrected during oral activities. It is important to remember, however, that Terrell did suggest that was a role for corrective feedback in written work, although he maintained that the study of grammatical principles and the correction of errors should be the students' responsibility. In his last writings, however, Terrell (1991) seemed to be amending his point of view of form-focused instruction. He suggested that explicit instruction in grammar might have some benefits for learners

acquiring the language in the classroom, including its use as an advance organizer and as a means of establishing form-meaning relationships in communicative activities. In addition, he hypothesized that learners who are able to monitor their speech may produce more grammatical utterances that they will then “acquire”. This acknowledgement of a potentially positive role for explicit grammar instruction marks an important modification in the Natural Approach, as described by Terrell in his earlier work (p. 123)<sup>131</sup>.

Stern (1994) explains what he calls “the explicit-implicit option” (p.505) as regards teaching strategies and dualism of the Natural Approach in that respect:

The explicit-implicit dimension relates to techniques which encourage the learner either to adopt vis-à-vis the new language a cognitive or reasoning approach, that is, in Krashen’s terms, to bring the Monitor into play, or alternatively, to employ techniques which encourage more intuitive absorption and automaticity, in Krashen’s terms to develop ‘acquisition’ processes. We can hypothesize that explicit-implicit techniques are not irreconcilable. But presumably their applicability varies

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<sup>131</sup> Terrell certainly moves away from the *zero option* purported by Krashen. In this regard, Brown (2000: 280) states that the work of a considerable number of specialists “have all shown, in a number of empirical research studies that Krashen’s “zero option” (don’t ever teach grammar) (see Ellis 1997:47) is not supported in the literature”. Instruction in conscious rule learning and other types of form focused instruction [...] can indeed aid in the attainment of successful communicative competence in a second language”

according to learner characteristics, stages of the learning process, and conditions of learning (pp. 506-507)<sup>132</sup>

As we had stated above, Krashen's Theory suffered the onslaught of a number of prominent contemporary specialists, namely because of his oversimplified assumptions about how language is learned (or in his own terms; either learned or acquired) and the weakness of the empirical basis he produced to sustain those, very often, exaggerated claims. Brown (2000) summarizes the main criticism against Krashen's views:

The first two of Krashen's hypotheses have intuitive appeal to teachers in the field. Who can deny that we should have less "learning" in our classrooms than traditional language programmes offer? Who in their right mind would refute the importance of learners engaging in somewhat unmonitored communication in the classroom? And the natural Audio hypothesis is after all supported in some research (Larson-Freeman & Long, 1991). Finally the effectiveness of providing a reasonable challenge (I+1) to students in a supportive, low-anxiety environment can hardly be denied by any teacher.

It is unfortunate that SLA is not as simply defined as Krashen would claim, and therefore his assumptions have been hotly disputed [...] McLaughlin (1978, 1990a), a psychologist, sharply criticized Krashen's rather fuzzy distinction between subconscious (acquisition) and conscious (learning) processes. Psychologists are still in wide disagreement in their definitions

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<sup>132</sup> An interesting topic for further study would be to attempt to compare Krashen's notions of learned language (explicitly) and acquired language (implicitly) with Skehan's (1998: 88-89) concepts of a *rule-based system* and an *exemplar-based system*.

of “the notoriously slippery notion” (Odlin 1986: 138) of consciousness. McLaughlin (1990a:627) commented:

My own bias... is to avoid use of the terms conscious and unconscious in second language theory. I believe that these terms are too laden with surplus meaning and too difficult to define empirically to be useful theoretically. Hence, my critique of Krashen’s distinction between learning and acquisition--- a distinction that assumes that it is possible to differentiate what is conscious from what is unconscious.

[...] A second criticism of Krashen’s view arose out of the claim that there is no interface--- no overlap--- between acquisition and learning [...] (those) so-called dichotomies in human behaviour almost always define the end points of a continuum and not mutually exclusive categories. As Gregg (1984:82) pointed out,

Krashen plays fast and loose with his definitions...if unconscious knowledge is capable of being brought to consciousness and if conscious knowledge is capable of becoming unconscious--- and this seems to be a reasonable assumption---then there is no reason whatever to accept Krashen’s claim in the absence of evidence. And there is an absence of evidence...

A third difficulty in Krashen’s Input Hypothesis is found in his explicit claim (1986:62) that “comprehensible is the only causative variable in second language acquisition. In other words, success in a foreign language can be attributed to input alone. Such a theory

ascribes little credit to learners and their own active engagement in the process.

[...]

While Krashen (1997:7) staunchly maintained that in the language classroom “output is too scarce to make an important impact on language development, Swain and Lapkin (1995) offered convincing evidence that the Output Hypothesis was at least as significant as input, if not more so, in explaining learner success [...] de Bot (1996:529) argued that “output serves an important role in second language acquisition... because it generates highly specific input the cognitive system needs to build up a coherent set of knowledge”.

Finally, it is important to note that the notion of  $i + 1$  is nothing new. It is a reiteration of a general principle of learning [...] Meaningfulness, or “subsumability” in Ausubel’s terms, is that which is relatable to existing cognitive structures, neither too far beyond the structures ( $i + 2$ ), nor the existing structures themselves. ( $i+0$ ) but Krashen presents the  $i + 1$  formula as if we are actually able to define  $i$  and  $1$ , and we are not (pp. 279-281).

But, at the same time, Brown (2000) acknowledges that it was the utter simplicity of Krashen’s theory and its apparent foundation on what are accepted principles of SLA, what lured so many teachers to embrace it, and goes on to commend Krashen for his (albeit indirect) contribution to the advancement of SLA:

Nevertheless, oddly enough, I feel we owe a debt of gratitude to Krashen for his bold, if brash, insights. They have spurred many a researcher to look carefully at what we do know, what the research evidence is, and then in the process of refutation to propose plausible alternatives (p. 281).

## **Whole Language**

Whole Language is a typical American development of the 1980's that was originally intended for the teaching of reading and writing in the native language. Although it can be said that it had little repercussion in the field of the teaching of English to speakers of other languages outside the United States, a number of allied (and more or less closely-related movements) developed at the same time in other parts of the world<sup>133</sup>. The main intent of those "movements" was not the teaching of foreign languages; but, as has been said, the development of the literacy in the first language, extending later to a purported change of paradigm in education in general. Goodman and Goodman (1995) explain that:

Though the term *whole language* is not used widely in Great Britain, the integrated day, language across the curriculum, and other school movements have led to widespread holistic school practices. [...] In Australia, drawing on European and North American sources, whole-language policies, methods, and materials have become dominant. New

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<sup>133</sup> In our country Whole Language had its heyday from the mid 1980's and to the mid 1990's in the bilingual schools where an integrated curriculum could be afforded, basically on account of the contact hours that were devoted to the teaching of English (and of content areas in English). At present it has mostly been replaced by an "integrated literacy" approach (phonics plus whole language) in the early stages of primary school and by Content-based Language Teaching in the higher forms.

Zealand, however, has the longest continuous tradition of progressive, holistic education (p. 223-224).

Goodman (1997: 94) illustrates: “In Britain, since the term, whole language was not widely known by the British public, the critics used the term ‘the real books approach’ instead of whole language as a label for what they were attacking”.

But what exactly Whole Language is does not seem so easy to ascertain. Goodman and Goodman (1995) say that: “Whole language is more than anything else a philosophy of education” and then they add that it is “a holistic, dynamic, grass-roots movement among teachers” (p.223)<sup>134</sup>.

In his seminal work *What's Whole in Whole Language*, Goodman (1986) asserts:

Whole language is clearly a lot of things to a lot of people; it's not a dogma to be narrowly practiced. It's a way of bringing together a view of language, a view of learning, and a view of people, in particular two special groups of people: kids and teachers. Nothing [...] should discourage any teacher or group of teachers from developing their own version of whole language (p.5).

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<sup>134</sup> Goodman (1997: 87) states: “About 1978 the term, whole language, emerged from its incidental use to describe aspects of teaching, learning and curriculum to become a name for a pedagogy, a belief system and a movement among teachers”.

Goodman (1997) clarifies some popular misconceptions about Whole Language and defines what basic elements Whole Language comprises:

Whole Language has often been represented, particularly in the popular press, as a method of teaching reading that contrasts with phonics, which is also represented as a method of teaching reading. It has also been equated with literature-based reading instruction and with a laissez-faire approach to written language development. It is none of those and much more than any of them. Whole language has emerged among teachers as a term for an inclusive pedagogy, a philosophy of curriculum and teaching, which puts language at the center of learning. It is whole in the sense that language is treated as an integral whole and it is whole in the sense that language is viewed as only existing in the context of its purposeful and functional use- integrated in literacy events and speech acts that are authentic within cultural practices. Whole language teachers, at all levels, build on existing strengths of the learners, developing literacy in the context of using literacy to learn. The term has also come to be an umbrella that subsumes process writing, integrated curriculum, use of literature in reading instruction, writing across the curriculum, inquiry and problem solving curricula and the use of theme cycles, and invented spelling and punctuation (p. 87).

As can be easily noticed from a quick inspection of the list of components that Goodman (1997) provides, the emphasis seems to lie, in great part if not exclusively, on literacy instruction and on the development of reading

and writing skills<sup>135</sup>. Goodman (1997) then passes on to explain what he calls the *Scientific and Humanistic bases for Whole Language*:

Whole language surely extends the humanistic ideas in education of Rousseau, Comenius and the 19<sup>th</sup> century reformers [...]. In this view, children are viewed as essentially good, eager and able to learn. Education is viewed as an expansion of natural development. Children are to be cherished and loved. Inquiry and problem solving are key aspects of education capitalizing on the universal thirst for knowledge among children and young people. As Dewey said, education is life, not the preparation for life; children learn by doing. Schools adjust to learners, building on their strengths rather than requiring learners to adjust to an unyielding and inflexible school. Whole language is thus a democratic pedagogy that emphasizes empowered and self-directed learners with empowered teachers.

Whole language, however, is also based in science. In this it brings together scientific understandings of language, learning, teaching, curriculum and community. It draws on the functional linguistics of Halliday, viewing language as social semiotics and recognizing that language learning is, as Halliday puts it, learning how to mean (1978). Language is seen as both personal and social and so language learning is viewed as developing through a dialectic in which personal invention and social convention shape personal and social language and move the language learner toward the conventions of the language community.

Eventually these processes also lead to learner's control over written

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<sup>135</sup> Though, other terms that Goodman (1997:87) uses like, *integrated curriculum, inquiry and problem solving curricula* and the *use of theme cycles* can hardly be confined to the realm of literacy and reading and writing.

language and the genres and literacy practices of the community. Whole language bases its view of learning on the psychogenesis of Piaget (1969), the social constructionism and mediation of Vygotsky (1978) and the cognitive views of Bruner (1983). And it builds on the holistic views of Kurt Lewin (1951) and gestalt psychology. It recognizes the unique role that language plays in human learning. In humans, language is the medium of thought, of learning and communication. So language must be central to school curriculum and learning as well. Like the emerging discursive psychology, whole language views learners as individuals who are always embedded in different sociocultural discourses. Corson, in explaining the central focus of discursive psychology, says: "...so each individual stands at a unique intersection of discourses and relationships: a 'position' embedded in historical, political, cultural, social, and interpersonal contexts..." (Corson,1995). In whole language, language development and its use are not removed from the sociocultural contexts that students bring with them to school. Neither is language or knowledge development in school separated from each other, divided usefully into separate disciplines, or arranged in skill hierarchies.

The curriculum in whole language classrooms starts where the learners are, to quote Dewey again. It uses inquiry and problem solving involving the learners in choosing what they will study and how they will go about the study. In this, whole language draws on the old progressive traditions of curriculum and new traditions that come of new rationales for integrating language and learning. Language is learned best in its use and therefore the language and literacy curriculum is integrated with the

science, social studies and mathematics and humanities curriculum (pp. 90-92) <sup>136</sup>.

Referring specifically to Vygotsky and his concept of the *Zone of Proximal Development*, Goodman and Goodman (1995) affirm:

Whole language represents a major departure from the kind of education that even Vygotsky seems to take for granted. Schools have traditionally been regarded as places for inculcating conservative societal values and knowledge. The whole-language movement has historic roots in a continuous attempt since the beginning of formal schooling to move away from simplistic views of teaching and learning. In choosing to make school fit learners, whole language draws on the best scientific knowledge of how learning and teaching work and how language relates to learning and teaching.

[...] When schools implement a whole-language philosophy, teachers are initiators, kid watchers, liberators, and professional mediators who support the pupils through their zones of proximal development. (p. 248)

By reading the very words of two of the founders (and biggest figures) of the movement, there is, then, no doubt as to what theory of learning Whole Language is ascribed to. Cognitive Psychology, and in particular the kind of Constructivism that we have called *social interactionism*, constitute the bases of this approach.

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<sup>136</sup> Freeman and Freeman (1992:4) also mention the work of James Cummins's (1981, 1989a) and Paulo Freire's (1970) as sources of the Whole Language movement. From Cummins, they take the concepts of *BICS* (Basic interpersonal communication skills) and *CALP* (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) and his celebrated four quadrant framework; and from Freire, the notion of *banking education*.

In their work *Whole Language for Second Language Learners*, Freeman and Freeman (1992) expand the basic assumptions of Whole Language to apply the approach to the teaching of English to non-English speakers:

For those students whose first language is not English, whole language is not only good teaching, it is essential. Whole language may be the only road to success for bilingual learners. The instruction that many bilingual learners have received in schools has been for the most part fragmented and disempowering [...] Teachers and administrators want to do what is best for all children, but frequently they are unprepared for students who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and do not speak English (p. 5).

It is self-evident that Freeman and Freeman (1992) make reference to *immersion programmes* carried out in the United States for immigrant children who learn English as a second language with the benefit of being immersed in an English speaking community. Freeman and Freeman (1992) say nothing about the case of foreign students learning English in non-English speaking countries.<sup>137</sup> Freeman and Freeman (1992: 7-9) review the principles of Whole Language and relate them to the teaching of English to bilingual students:

1. – “Lessons should proceed from whole to part”.

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<sup>137</sup> Notice also the pervasive reference to *bilingual learners* and *multicultural* and *multilingual* classrooms, obviously, a far cry from the reality of the Argentinian foreign language classroom.

They advocate the need for organizing curriculum around themes (so that learners see “the big picture first”) and of affording preview and review in the native language of the students<sup>138</sup> (so that learners “know where they are going as they learn their new language”).

2. – “Lessons should be learner centered because learning is the active construction of knowledge by students”.

They stress the importance of starting “with what the student knows” and from that basis to provide contexts that facilitate the construction of knowledge.

3. – “Lessons should have meaning and purpose for the students now”

They advocate that learners should be “given choices in what they study” because they know what they need to meet their present needs for their life inside and outside the school setting.

4. – “Lessons should engage groups of students in social interaction”

They maintain that by working in groups in the classroom, students not only learn the “life skill of collaboration” but are also able to develop individual concepts.

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<sup>138</sup> They refer to the native language of the learner as his *primary language*.

5. – “Lessons should develop both oral and written language”

As distinct from the precept of Audiolingualism<sup>139</sup> of the primacy of the skills in the oral medium, Freeman and Freeman (1992) favour, as in the rest of the Communicative methods, the teaching of the four macroskills simultaneously.

6. - “Learning should take place in the first language to build concepts and facilitate the acquisition of English”

Freeman and Freeman (1992 promote the use of the native language of the learners because, as they say,” full development of the primary language facilitates the acquisition of English, and recognition of the first language and culture builds self-esteem” (p.8)

7. - “Lessons that show faith in the learner expand student’s potential”<sup>140</sup>

They contend that teachers should plan and engage their students in meaningful activities “that show faith in the learner” by following each of the other six premises.

Probably, it is precisely the fact that, as we cited Goodman (1986:5) above, “Whole language is clearly a lot of things to a lot of people”, what

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<sup>139</sup> This is our personal interpretation, since Freeman and Freeman (1992) never mention *Audiolingualism* or *Communicative Methods* at all (terms which are very common in the ELT jargon but completely alien to Bilingual Education). The work of Stephen Krashen seems to be the only link between these two distant worlds.

<sup>140</sup> Contrary-wise Asher (1965) had termed *the student’s faith in the teacher* as critical for learning.

has finally proved its undoing and stretching it to fulfil a purpose for which it was never intended (i.e. the teaching of foreign languages) can be a case in question. As Brown (2001:48) points out: “Whole Language has been so widely and divergently interpreted that it unfortunately is on the verge of losing the impact it once had”.

### **Task- based Learning**

Although Task-based Learning (TBL) can be considered a *fin de siècle* innovation, the interest in incorporating into Communicative Language Teaching, activities that moved beyond the traditional scheme of *functional communication* and *social interaction*<sup>141</sup> is not new. The origins of Task-based Learning can be traced back to the publication of Prabhu’s *Second Language Pedagogy* in 1987<sup>142</sup> but a considerable part of the research into Task-based instruction and the debate over the implementation of the approach took place during the 1990’s.

Any consideration of Task-based Learning would be incomplete without addressing the question of what we should understand by task. Bruton (2002:228) admits that “the definition of task is an issue in itself”<sup>143</sup> and

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<sup>141</sup> Littlewood (1981) had classified communicative activities into *functional communication activities* and *social interaction activities*.

<sup>142</sup> Littlewood (2004) hardly mentions Prabhu at all but instead gives credit to Breen as one of the originators of the approach and cites what he terms: “his seminal article of 1986” (p.320)

<sup>143</sup> Cited by Littlewood (2004) p. 320.

Littlewood (2004: 320) asserts that “the initial problem is one of the definition”.

We will succinctly refer to a small number of definitions:

Nunan (1996) cites Long’s (1985:89) which he does not hesitate to term “non-technical, non-linguistic”: “By task is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between.”

Littlewood (2004) quotes a definition from the 1989 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary in the sense that is “a piece of work imposed, exacted or undertaken as a duty or the like” or “a portion of study imposed by a teacher”, and protests that “‘task’ seems an unlikely candidate to form the basis of a learner-centred pedagogy which aims to motivate lifelong learning.”

Nunan (1989) gives his own definition of task as:

a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right (p. 10).

Willis (1996) warns us that “the word ‘task’ has been used as a label for various activities including grammar exercises, practice activities and role plays” and then states that “tasks are always activities where the target

language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome” (p.23)

Although rivers of ink have been used to discuss this issue, we will use Skehan’s (1998) definition to summarize, without the intention of being conclusive, the different stances regarding this topic:

As a definition of tasks within task-based instruction, I propose [...] that a task is an activity in which:

- meaning is primary;
- there is some communication problem to solve
- there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities
- task completion has some priority;
- the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome (p. 95).

As an interesting additional exercise, Skehan (1998) invites us to examine what tasks are not. He explains:

A complementary approach is to show what tasks are not, since it is often just as clarifying to specify what an alternative position represents. In this respect, and following Willis (1996), tasks:

- do not give learners other people’s meanings to regurgitate;
- are not concerned with language display;
- are not conformity-oriented;
- are not practice-oriented;
- do not embed language into materials so that specific structures can be focused upon (p.95).

Howatt (2004) voices his concern about the need for activities in the foreign language classroom to serve the two-fold purpose of affording an opportunity for learners to *experience language* in the course of natural communication and to *notice language* as an example which is in itself rich and explicit enough to trigger off processes of acquisition of the target language without obliterating the *naturalness* of the communication. Howatt (2004) seems to question whether TBL<sup>144</sup> (which is purported by its advocates to function in these two planes) actually serves those purposes. He says:

How generalizations can be made from particulars, how example can be inferred from sample, has always been the crucial question in language pedagogy. In the most recent phase of ELT history, we can see a continuation of these attempts to get learners to engage in this process. Both pedagogic experience and the findings of SLA research seemed to indicate fairly conclusively that such inference is not after all a direct corollary of realizing meaning, so that it does not follow as a necessary consequence of the learners' sampling of language. It needed to be deliberately induced by teacher intervention. It was not enough, it was suggested, that the language is experienced as communicative behaviour, it had also to be noticed. But the noticing had to be such as not to undermine the normal functioning of language as purposeful communicative activity. It could not just be the provision of examples after the manner of structuralist language teaching. Activities had to be devised

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<sup>144</sup> Task-based Learning is referred to as TBI (Task-based Instruction), TBLT (Task-based Language Teaching) and other allied terms by different authors. In the quotations, we have kept the original terms used by the different authors.

that met the two requirements that were referred to earlier: on the one hand they had to be such as to have some appeal or purpose which made them real for the learner, and on the other hand they had to be such as to induce noticing. In short, language associated with these activities needed at the same time to have point as realization, and be pointed out as exemplification.

An approach to ELT consisting of such activities has become prominent over the recent past under the name of task-based instruction (TBI) [...]. A distinction has long been made between exercises, which involve the solution of language problems (and are therefore focused on examples) and tasks, which involve the solution of problems by means of language. Such activities were widely promoted in CLT and are the staple of many an ESP course. What is distinctive about TBI is that tasks are central and not supportive activities: they are not just useful techniques, but constitutive principles of a new approach [...]. As such, the defining features of tasks have been subject to a much more exact pedagogic specification than existed hitherto. Furthermore, they are represented as having the theoretical and empirical sanction of psycholinguistic and SLA research. In view of the fact that TBI seems to have the credentials of both practical effectiveness and theoretical validity, it is not surprising that it has become the new ELT orthodoxy.

That is not to say that it is not open to criticism. One difficulty is that in spite of the considerable literature published in the promotion of the approach, what actually constitutes a task, as distinct from other pedagogic activities, remains unclear. One distinctive feature that is regularly given is that tasks focus on meaning rather than form, whereas

exercises do not. But exercises, even of the most traditional structuralist cut, do generally focus on meaning, but on semantic meaning, that which is encoded in the language. The meaning that the proponents of TBI have in mind is pragmatic meaning, that which is dependent on context. But this, of course, can be achieved without paying much attention to the semantic specifics of the language, so the outcome of the task may actually not involve much in the way of the noticing that TBI is designed to promote. That hardly perennial of pedagogic problems remains unresolved: how to get learners engaged in natural communication while getting them at the same time to attend, unnaturally, to the linguistic resources that enable them to do so (p. 366-367).

Willis and Willis (2007) examine the characteristics of a Task-based Approach and the pedagogical implications of this model:

A task-based approach focuses sharply on language as a meaning system. So as a starting point for task-based syllabus we should ask the question “What will learners want to mean?” or “What will learners want to do with the language?” If we take this starting point, it will first oblige us to acknowledge the importance of vocabulary in language learning. In specifying what learners want to mean we will be very much concerned with specifying the topics they want to handle in English. Secondly we need to ask questions about what learners will want to do with the language and in what circumstances. Will they be concerned mainly with the written or the spoken form? Will they want language for instruction or will they be mainly concerned with the social uses of language? How tolerant will people be of any failings, in other words what degree of

accuracy will be expected of them; For example, there will probably be a high level of tolerance if a learner is acting in the role of a hotel guest, but a relatively low level of tolerance if the learner is in the role of hotel receptionist (p. 179).

It is interesting to notice that Richards (1992) classifies Task Based Learning within the group of methods which, he posits, are the fruit of research:

Science-Research conceptions of language teaching are derived from research and are supported by experimentation and empirical investigation. Zahorik includes operationalizing learning principles, following a tested model, and doing what effective teachers do, as examples of Science-Research conceptions.

[...] A more recent example of attempts to develop a teaching methodology from learning research is referred to as Task-Based Language Teaching. Proponents of Task-Based Language Teaching point out that second language acquisition research shows that successful language learning involves learners in negotiation of meaning. In the process of negotiating with a speaker of the target language, the learner receives the kind of input needed to facilitate learning. It is proposed that classroom tasks which involve negotiation of meaning should form the basis of the language teaching curriculum, and that tasks can be used to facilitate practice of both language forms and communicative functions. Research is intended to enable designers to know what kinds of tasks can

best facilitate acquisition of specific target language structures and functions (p. 39)<sup>145</sup>.

As it happened before with Communicate Language Teaching, Task-based Learning seems to have become a matrix from which a number of other allied methodologies have developed. Some of them can be considered *variations upon a theme*, but others, like Long's and Crookes' (1992) with its focus on form (without disregarding 'meaning') stand out as interesting transmutation. In this regard Willis and Willis (2007) point out:

Proponents of task-based teaching (TBT) argue that the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom. This is done by designing tasks -discussions, problems, games, and so on- which require learners to use the language for themselves. But TBT is not the same the whole world over. Teachers who begin with the notion that tasks should be central to teaching then go on to refine an approach which fits their own classrooms and their own students (p. 1).

Knight (2001) presents three different models within the TBL Approach:

The definition of this methodology is not fixed. In general though it can be said that TBL methodologies: share a common idea: giving learners tasks

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<sup>145</sup> Richards (1992:39) explains that operationalizing learning principles "involves developing teaching principles from research on memory, transfer, motivation, and other factors believed to be important in learning" and affirms that "Audiolingualism, Task-Based Language Teaching, and Learner Training represent applications of learning research to language teaching".

to transact, rather than items to learn, provides an environment which best promotes the natural learning process (Foster 1999).

Long and Crookes have identified three approaches to TBL, including their own: Prabhu's, which they regard as a *procedural syllabus*; Breen and Candlin's, which they regard as *process syllabus*, and their own, which they regard as a true *task based syllabus* (Long and Crookes 1992).

Until recently most classroom teachers were only likely to have encountered TBL in reference to the Bangalore Project, the name by which the Bangalore/Madras Communicational Teaching Project (CTP) in India is commonly known. This project was established by N.S. Prabhu in 1979 and formed the basis of his Second Language Pedagogy (Prabhu 1987). It was a conscious attempt to compare different methodological approaches to the teaching of English.

Prabhu's version of TBL was built around a syllabus which contained no linguistic specifications but 'instead contained a series of tasks in the form of problem-solving activities' (Beretta & Davies 1985).

Prabhu's approach focuses on the input the students receive and the cognitive processing which they are required to carry out...it does not focus on interaction as a facilitator of acquisition [...] Prabhu outlined suitable types of tasks and a procedure for their use... He found that the best activities were 'reasoning-gap activities', which 'involved deriving some new information from the given information through processes of

inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns' (Prabhu 1987: 469).

[...] During the 1980s Breen and Candlin started outlining their own TBL proposals [...] They argued for a negotiated syllabus with both teachers and learners selecting the content of the course built upon social and problem-solving interaction.

TBL (...) is not just limited to those models [...] other models are being proposed and specific questions of task definition and design are also being examined (Skehan 1996, 1998; Nunan 1989, etc).

Having used Long's and Crookes' analysis of TBL, we now come to the model that they propose, known as task based language teaching (TBLT). They argue that this model is soundly based on SLA research, on classroom-centred research and on principles of syllabus and course design (Long and Crookes 1992; 41). A distinctive feature of this model is that it encourages a "focus on the form". This is not a traditional structural syllabus approach, but an acknowledgement that acquisition can be accelerated if learners' attention is drawn to specific linguistic features of the target language (Long 1991). In developing the model of TBLT further, Long has outlined those features which should characterise a "task" and attempted to provide a solid theoretical framework for an approach based on them (Long 1996, et al.).

However, there are still questions TBLT needs to address. Long and Crookes acknowledge this when they compare it to other TBL approaches (Long and Crookes 1992; 46). Its research base is still small and no complete programmes have yet been undertaken to access it. The

question of sequencing tasks is still an issue, as is the question of producing a taxonomy of tasks. Finally, the degree of reduced learner autonomy could invite criticism. Long and Crookes' model has also never actually been realised in terms of materials development or classroom practice, in contrast to Prabhu's model or Breen and Candlin's.

Overall, TBL looks like a very exciting area and one which is already strongly influencing thinking in the field of language teaching methodology. It is not just limited to those models described here; other models are being proposed and specific questions of task definition and design are also being examined (Skehan 1996, 1998; Nunan 1989, etc) (p. 159-162)<sup>146</sup>.

Knight (2001:162) calls our attention to "the question of producing a taxonomy of tasks" as one of the pending issues in TBL<sup>147</sup>. Richards and Rodgers (2005: 234) say in this respect: "In the literature of TBLT, several attempts have been made to group tasks into categories, as a basis for

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<sup>146</sup> About Prabhu's *Procedural Syllabus*, Brumfit (1984:233) warns us: The 'procedural syllabus' is frequently talked about in teacher training circles, but it is rare for such a syllabus to be described in any detail. This is partly because there are problems with both elements of the concept. The term 'syllabus' is often used metaphorically: as in the phrase 'learner's syllabus', where it refers not to a conscious plan, but to some in-built mechanism or series of abilities developed unconsciously as learners have contact with language. If it is procedures arising out of these that are being referred to, then a clear sequencing of procedures for teaching purposes is made almost impossible. This is because few psychologists would be willing to argue that learners adopt, in the process of acquisition, a series of specifiable procedures which can be identified for teaching purposes.

Nor is it clear what exactly a 'procedure' is. Is it a learning strategy, a process of thinking, the expression of a particular kind of logical relationship? Is it any activity which is not specifically aimed at language? In practice, N. S. Prabhu, the originator of the Bangalore communicational ELT project, has tacitly accepted the third of these possibilities, for his syllabus indicates 'what is to be done in the classroom rather than what parts of the content are to be learnt' (Prabhu and Carroll 1980:2).

<sup>147</sup> Richards (1992:39) asserts that "Prabhu (1983) initiated a large-scale application of this approach in schools in India, developing a syllabus and associated teaching materials around three major types of tasks: information-gap tasks, opinion-gap tasks, and reasoning-gap tasks".

task design and description” and then they pass on to describe three different taxonomies:

Willis (1996)

1. - Listing
2. – Ordering and sorting
3. - Comparing
4. – Problem-solving
5. – Sharing personal experiences
6. – Creative Tasks

Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993)

1. - Jigsaw Tasks (e.g. piecing different parts of a story together).
2. - Information-gap tasks (e.g. negotiating information between different partners or groups).
3. – Problem-solving tasks
4. – Decision- making tasks
5. – Opinion exchange tasks (the exchange of ideas without a need to reach an agreement).

Finally, Richards and Rodgers (2005) make reference to one last classification, (although they do not mention who originated it). They describe the different categories in this group in this way:

1. one-way or two-way: whether the task involves a one-way exchange of information or a two-way exchange
2. convergent or divergent: whether the students achieve a common goal or several different goals
3. collaborative or competitive: whether the students collaborate to carry out a task or compete with each other on a task
4. single or multiple outcomes: whether there is a single outcome or many different outcomes are possible
5. concrete or abstract language: whether the task involves the use of concrete or abstract language
6. simple or complex processing: whether the task requires relatively simple or complex processing
7. simple or complex language: whether the linguistic demands of the task are relatively simple or complex
8. reality-based or not reality-based: whether the task mirrors a real world activity or a pedagogical activity not found in the real world (pp. 234-235)-

Nunan (1999) offers still another categorization based on discourse considerations:

Another line of research has focused on the question of the types of language and discourse patterns stimulated by the different task types. Berwick (1993) investigated the different types of language stimulated by *transactional* and *interpersonal tasks* ( a *transactional task* is one in which communication occurs principally to bring about the exchange of goods and services, whereas an *interpersonal task* is one in which

communication occurs largely for social purposes). He found that the different functional purposes stimulated different morphosyntactic realizations.

In a similarly motivated study, I studied the different interactional patterns stimulated by open and closed tasks. An open task is one in which there is no single correct answer, while a closed task is one in which there is a single correct answer or a restricted number of correct answers. I found that the different task types stimulated very different interactional patterns, and that this is needed to be taken into consideration by curriculum developers and discourse analysts (p. 53).

With the emphasis that Task-based Learning places on group interaction for the accomplishment of tasks and the insistence that these tasks should approximate real-life problems and situations that are meaningful to the learners; it can be asserted beyond any reasonable doubt, that this approach (as much as it had been pointed out about the rest of what we called Communicative Methods) has a definite, Constructivist imprint to it. In Task based Learning, as Vygotsky would have it, meaning is constructed in a social context with learners negotiating meaning and testing their understandings and their hypotheses with teachers and peers. Moreover, it is through this interaction with the environment and by *noticing language*<sup>148</sup> that in the process of meaning-making/ meaning-negotiation, learners construct knowledge of the language. By *noticing language* while trying to accomplish the tasks, the learners, as Piaget

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<sup>148</sup> See Howatt (2004) mentioned above.

posited, construct schemata (or mental models) to “accommodate” the new experiences, linguistic or otherwise.

### **Theories of Learning in the curricula of the Colleges of Education**

The perusal of the table below reveals the present state-of.-affairs as regards the teaching of Theories of Learning in the area to which we have confined our study: the City of Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires<sup>149</sup>. The corpus of knowledge that we have identified as *Theories of Learning* is taught as a separate discipline in all the private Colleges of Education of the City of Buenos Aires and at the College of Education of Universidad Tecnológica Nacional. In all the other educational institutions in the area surveyed<sup>150</sup>, the theories of learning are dealt with within the framework of a more comprehensive subject with different denominations, namely *Psychology of Evolution and of Learning*.

Invariably, a Psychologist or a B.A. in Education is in charge of the subject and he delivers his course in Spanish, with the sole exception of the College of Education of Universidad Tecnológica Nacional, where the

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<sup>149</sup> For the sake of further exemplification we have included the cases of the Universities of La Plata and Mar del Plata which fall outside the geographical area being considered.

<sup>150</sup> In this sense, it must be noticed that the table is exhaustive since it encompasses all the Colleges of Education and Universities with sections for the education of EFL teachers.

subject is taught in English by an English teacher who must concurrently have a degree in Education or Psychology.<sup>151</sup>

Again, as can be easily noticed by examining the table, *Theories of Learning* as a separate subject or as part of another subject is explicitly mentioned as part of the curricula of a number of Colleges of Education in the City of Buenos Aires, the whole of the private and state-run Colleges of Education in the province of Buenos Aires or of Universidad de La Plata. This does not, in any way, mean that the treatment of the theories of learning is dispensed with altogether. In these cases the learning theories are dealt with as an appendix of a subject in the area of Psychology or Pedagogy and unfortunately, and since the final selection of contents is exclusively in the hands of the respective Chairs, the learning theories are very often relegated to a negligible position<sup>152</sup>.

Moreover, in all cases (with the sole exception mentioned before) since the subject is taught by a non-ELT specialist, it is not viable for those professionals to offer the trainee teachers a clear reference of the relationship between the theories of learning and the teaching of a foreign language or how the theories of learning impinge on EFL classroom practices.

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<sup>151</sup> The subject was introduced (or rather, re-introduced, as we shall see later) when the Curriculum Design for the Training of Teachers of English in that College of Education was changed by the present one in 1997.

<sup>152</sup> Very particularly so when the lecturer in charge of the course is a Psychologist, and not an Educational Psychologist (Psicopedagogo) or a B.A. in Education.

But the status of the subject *Theories of Learning* in the education of teachers of English has seen better days. In January 1970, a symposium on the training of teachers of English organized by the then Secretaría de Estado de Cultura y Educación with the cooperation of the British Council was held in the province of Córdoba. About the symposium<sup>153</sup>, Blanco (1970) says:

The principal aim of the symposium was to discuss and propose the objectives to be pursued in Departments of English at colleges and universities [...] Another goal set for the symposium was the determination of the subjects for the different courses and the level of achievement to be reached in each of these (p. 88).

As a result of the symposium, a 'minimum curriculum' was drafted. It included two periods of *Psychology of Education* (which we have construed to mean *Psychology of Learning*) in the third year of studies, as distinct from *Psychology of Evolution* which was to be offered in the second year and *Pedagogy* that was recommended for the first year. In all likelihood the representatives that took part in the symposium, following established tradition, included this, so-called, Psychology of Education within the "psycho-pedagogical subjects" to be taught by non -ELT professionals, reserving *Methodics* and *Teaching Practice* to the area of "special methodics" (a subgroup of what they termed "basic subjects").

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<sup>153</sup> Blanco (1970:89) recounts that the symposium consisted of 23 members representing 16 colleges and universities and that N.A.R. Mackay, W.R. Oldfield and Donn Byrne from the British Council advised on different matters.

In March 1971, the Ministry of Education approved the Curriculum for a Course of Studies for the Training of Teachers for Primary Schools<sup>154</sup> which had been designed by the then Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas “Juan R. Fernández”. This two-year plan for Profesorado de Nivel Elemental<sup>155</sup> included three periods of “Teoría del Aprendizaje” in the first year of studies and the subject was for many years taught in English.

In 1974 the then Consejo Nacional de Educación Técnica created the English Department at its Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado Técnico. The curriculum for the new course of studies included three periods of *Teoría del Aprendizaje (Psicología Educacional) (en castellano)*<sup>156</sup> in the first year of studies. Subsequently, the subject disappeared from the curriculum of that institution in 1980<sup>157</sup>, to be reinstalled 17 years later with a new curriculum change but this time, as has been said, within the area of Foreign Language Pedagogy.

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<sup>154</sup> A transcript of the Ministerial approval was published in *The English Language Journal*. Vol. 2, No. 2 (June 1971) (pp. 183-184) from which the information cited has been excerpted.

<sup>155</sup> In those days the present Primary and Secondary School system was divided into *Nivel Elemental*, *Nivel Intermedio* and *Nivel Medio*.

<sup>156</sup> This section in italics a verbatim reproduction from the official information published in *The English Language Journal*. Vol. 5, No.1 (March 1974) (pp. 45-47).

<sup>157</sup> It was in fact subsumed into a “more comprehensive” subject that went by the name of *Psychology of Adolescence and Educational Psychology* (Psicología del Adolescente y Educacional)

**Table 3**      *The subject 'Theories of Learning' in Universities and Colleges in the City and the Province of Buenos Aires*

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Subject in the curriculum</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Semesters</b>	<b>Periods</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>CITY OF BUENOS AIRES</b>					
Universidad Católica Argentina	Psicología General y del Aprendizaje	3rd	1	5	Spanish
Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado Técnico - Universidad Tecnológica Nacional	Teorías del Aprendizaje y Corrientes Pedagógicas Contemporáneas	2nd	2	3	English
Instituto de Enseñanza Superior en Lenguas Vivas "Juan R. Fernández"					
Instituto Superior del Profesorado "Joaquín V. González"	Psicología del Desarrollo y del Aprendizaje en la Niñez/ o / del Adolescente	1st	2	4	Spanish
Escuela Normal Superior en Lenguas Vivas "Sofía E. Broquen de Spangenberg"					
Instituto del Profesorado del CONSUDEC					
Profesorado de la Asociación Argentina de Cultura Inglesa					
Profesorado a Distancia CIBADIST					
All other private accredited Colleges	Teoría del Aprendizaje	1st	2	3	Spanish

<b>PROVINCE OF BUENOS AIRES</b>					
Universidad Nacional de La Plata					
Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata	Teorías del Sujeto y del Aprendizaje	2nd	1	6	Spanish
All state-run and private Colleges of Education					

## CHAPTER 3

### THE QUESTIONNAIRE: PRE-TEST AND FINAL VERSION

#### Characteristics of the Survey

The methodology for field work was quantitative and the research design was descriptive. A final version of the questionnaire with a total of 24 questions<sup>158</sup> was administered, of which, in general terms, 9 were open items (open-ended questions) while the remaining were closed or structured items (closed questions which required the choice from one or more options).

The question formats<sup>159</sup> used in the questionnaire were the following:

- 1.- Factual Questions: questions 1 to 11 and questions 22 and 24.
- 2.- Indirect Questions:<sup>160</sup> the series of questions 18 to 21.
- 3.- Specific Questions<sup>161</sup>: questions 13, 14, 15, and 17.
- 4.- Opinion Questions: questions 12 and 16.

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<sup>158</sup> The original questionnaire in the pre-test consisted of 27 questions.

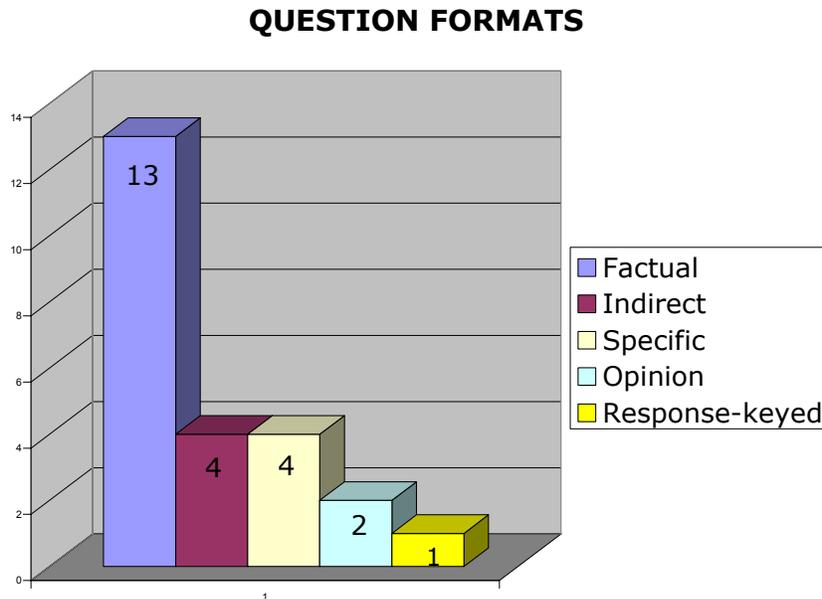
<sup>159</sup> For this classification and the classification of response modes we followed Tuckman (1994:216-225)

<sup>160</sup> These were construed to be questions on whose answers the researcher could draw inferences about, in this particular case, the knowledge that the respondents had about Behaviourism and Constructivism. It is for this reason that they appear labelled as "knowledge questions" in Chapter 4.

<sup>161</sup> In these specific questions the respondents had to react to one specific object. In questions 13 and 17 respondents had to choose one option from a number given and in questions 14 and 15 they were asked to make statements about their lessons.

5.- Response- keyed Questions<sup>162</sup>: question 23

Graph 1 Question Formats



The modes of elicitation of responses used in the questionnaire fell into the following categories:

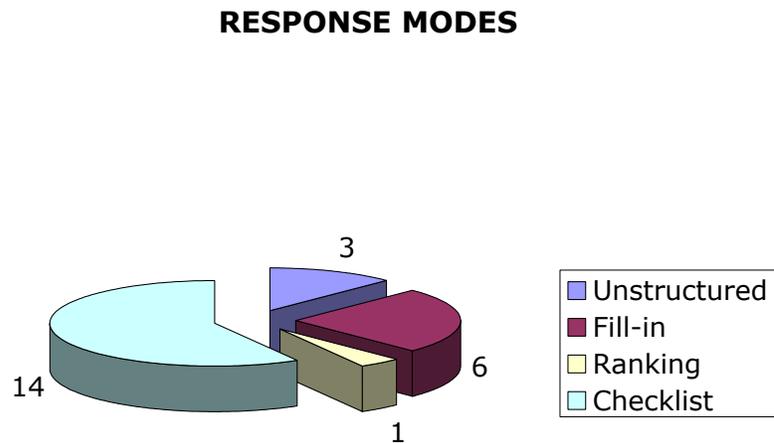
- 1.- Unstructured Answers: questions 14, 15 and 16.
- 2.- Fill-in Answers: questions 1,2,3,6,8 and 9.
- 3.- Ranking Answers: question 12
- 4.- Checklist Answers: questions 4,5,7,10,11,13, and from 17 to 24.

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<sup>162</sup> Answering this question depended on whether the respondent had chosen options (a), (b) or (f) in question 22.

Graph 2

Response Modes



The questionnaire was anonymous and was to be administered to 80 to 100 randomly chosen volunteer respondents (non-probabilistic random convenience or accidental sampling)<sup>163</sup>. The final number of respondents was finally set at 100 because of the relative ease with which the data<sup>164</sup> were collected and, because the round figure 100 was thought, to facilitate the processing and subsequent visualization and analysis of the answers.

The universe of respondents included only in-service teachers of Primary and Secondary schools in the City of Buenos Aires and in the Greater

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<sup>163</sup> The characterization of the sample was made on the basis of Cohen and Manion (1994: 86-90).

<sup>164</sup> This was partly due to the data collection procedure selected but mostly to the devotion with which the administrators applied to the task for which we cannot be indebted enough.

Buenos Aires, which for the purposes of the administration of the questionnaire was divided into three geographical areas: North, South and West.

The mode of administration of the questionnaire was that of direct answer (self-administered questionnaire).

The administrators handed in the questionnaires to the respondents<sup>165</sup> in their workplaces and collected them in the same places a week later.

A total number of 8 administrators was engaged. It was arranged for each administrator to hand in 14 questionnaires in a minimum of 4 different Primary and Secondary schools.

A total of 109 questionnaires were collected (3 short of the 112 expected) of which 9 were randomly discarded to keep the sample to the desired 100. Eventually respondents from 37 different schools were surveyed.

### **Aims of the Questionnaire and Questions used**

The questionnaire was intended to show:

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<sup>165</sup> In cases to the heads of the schools visited who in turn handed them in to the teachers of English in their schools and later collected them.

(1) The profile of the respondent through questions such as age, seniority in the teaching profession, type of school where he worked and the degree he held.

(2) What knowledge the respondents had about the specific methods for the teaching of English through a closed question which called for the identification of the method they favoured and three open questions to identify whether the strategies and activities he used in his classroom practice were in keeping with the method he had chosen.

(3) What knowledge the respondents had about the theories of learning through a closed question which required the identification of the theory of learning which underlay the methodology he had chosen and 4 closed answer questions organized in a series which were intended to elicit the identification of the typical teacher activities practitioners carried out in their classrooms according to whether they advocated one or the other of the two theories that were construed to be more prevalent in the teaching of English in our classrooms: Behaviourism and Constructivism.

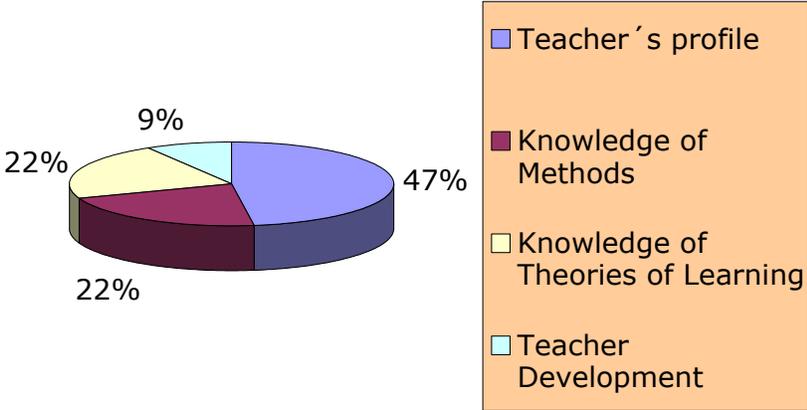
(4) In what areas the respondents believed their students evidenced the best and the poorest performance. This was done by means of a closed question that required respondents to rank a number of five options given (the four skills and grammar).

(5) What kinds of problems the teacher often encountered in his classroom and what solutions he suggested for those problems. This was surveyed by means of an open question.

(6) What attitude the respondents evidenced as regards Teacher Development through three closed questions.

Graph 3 Information Elicited

**INFORMATION ELICITED**



The data collected were quantified in tables and the results were subsequently analyzed in detail. In cases where it was deemed necessary, software for graphics was used to enable clearer visualization of the results. The treatment of data and their analysis can be found in Chapter 3.

## **The Pre-test**

### **Participants and Characteristics**

In order to ensure the inter-rater reliability of the pre-test, four different administrators-assessors were called in to administer it. These administrators-assessors as well as the eight respondents of the pre-test belonged to each of the four geographical areas which had been predefined for the survey. Although the pre-test was administered to two randomly chosen subjects by geographical area, instructions had been given to the administrators to choose one respondent per each one of the two school levels selected (primary and secondary). The respondents who participated in the pre-test were not later included among the group of respondents to the final version of the questionnaire.

The administrators-assessors of the pre-test were chosen on the basis of their training in research techniques or their experience in the collection of data for their own courses of postgraduate studies. There was no formal induction session for the four assessors but a set of written instructions were given to them and e-mail consultation was made available.

The assessors were instructed to administer the questionnaire face-to-face, that is to say, respondents were to complete it in the presence of the administrators-assessors. This was to be done individually so as not to

unduly influence one respondents' reactions and feedback with the reactions and feedback of another.

The assessors were also instructed not to provide any sort of clarification or explanation before or during the administration of the pre-test, even if this was required of them by the respondents or to make any comments in case the questionnaire was returned to them with incomplete or unanswered sections.

The administrators were to take down notes of the questions that the respondents put to them or the reactions that they voiced or that the administrators noticed during the administration of the pre-test.

Once the administration of the pre-test was over administrators were to enquire the respondents if they had found any difficulty in the questionnaire or if they wished to make any comment to improve it. The questions and comments of the administrator were to be kept to a minimum so as not to induce comments from the respondents.

Because the foreseen difficulty of the questions in the series 18 to 21, the administrators were required to specifically ask the respondents about their opinion on the degree of complexity of those questions and about the clarity of their *syntax* (the way the questions had been framed).

Finally, the administrators were asked to write a brief report on aspects of administration of the questionnaires they had given and the comments made by the respondents. Their reports have been excerpted and are reproduced below.

The exchanges between administrators and respondents before, during and after the administration of the questionnaires were conducted in Spanish but when quoted in the reports that follow they have been translated into English.

The numbers used for reference in the reports are those of the final version of the questionnaire<sup>166</sup>. When reference is made to questions that were eventually discarded in the final version of the questionnaire, the numbers of those questions in the original questionnaire have been kept, but for the sake of clarity the words *in the original questionnaire* have been added between brackets next to the relevant number.

### **The Original Questionnaire**

The following document is the questionnaire in the original form in which it was administered in the pre-test. The greyed areas are the ones in which difficulties were encountered during the pre-test.

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<sup>166</sup> That is to say, the questionnaire that resulted after revision of the one administered in the pre-test.

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Before starting to answer these questions, please take a minute to read the following INSTRUCTIONS

A.- **This questionnaire is anonymous and personal.** We are interested in your own answers. Please do not consult other colleagues to answer it.

B.- In the multiple choice or true and false questions, draw a tick inside the relevant box/es to show which option/s you have chosen. Leave the rest of the boxes blank (Do not draw crosses in them).

C.- In case you change your mind once you have answered one particular question, please erase or paint with correcting fluid the answer you have discarded.

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1 Age (years)\_\_\_\_\_

2 How long have you been teaching English? (years)\_\_\_\_\_

3 Geographical area where you teach (indicate that area where you teach the most periods). In case of an area that has been categorized ZONA DESFAVORABLE, please add those words next to the name of the area.

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4 School level you teach (in case you teach more than one level, indicate that where you teach the most periods). YOU CAN ONLY TICK ONE OPTION.

- Primary
- Secondary
- Higher Education

5 What degree or certificate for the teaching of English have you got?

YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE OPTION.

- Profesor Nacional en Inglés (Plan 4 – 5 años)
- Profesor Nacional en Inglés para la Enseñanza Primaria (plan 2 – 3 años)
- Licenciado en Inglés
- Traductor Público
- Traductor Técnico-Científico y Literario
- Intérprete de Conferencias
- Certificado de Capacidad (for example. AACI or similar ones)
- First Certificate or similar ones

6 Year of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

7 Institution that granted your degree:

- University
- College of Education (*Instituto del Profesorado*)
- Private institute (NOT officially accredited (for example, *Asociaciones*, "*Culturales Inglesas*", *Academias de Inglés*)
- International certificates (for example, UCLES)

8 Have you got any other degree in the field of Education, the Humanities or the Social Sciences? Please state the name of the degree and institution that granted it. If you possess several degrees, please state that of the highest academic standard.

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9 Incomplete studies or studies you are currently undertaking (specify the name of the course of studies and the degree you expected / expect to attain)

---

10 In the case of incomplete studies, state the highest level attained:

- First Year
- Second Year
- Third Year
- Fourth Year
- Fifth Year

11 In the case of studies you are currently undertaking, state what level you are taking this year

- First Year
- Second Year
- Third Year
- Fourth Year
- Fifth Year

12 How much information about methodologies for teaching English do you think you received in the course of your teacher education? YOU CAN ONLY TICK ONE OPTION.

- Enough
- Not enough
- Quite a lot
- Very little

13 How much information about Educational Psychology /theories of learning (in general, not necessarily English) do you think you received

in the course of your teacher education? YOU CAN ONLY TICK ONE OPTION.

- Enough
- Not enough
- Quite a lot
- Very little

14 In which of the following areas do you think you obtain the best results with your students? Number the boxes from 1 to 5. Give number (1) to the area in which you believe you get the best results.

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking
- Grammar

15 If you had to choose one and **ONLY ONE** of the following words or phrases to identify the methodology that you have adopted to teach English, which one would you choose?

- The Communicative Approach
- The Natural Approach
- The Grammatical Approach
- The Grammar-Translation Method
- Whole Language
- The Structural Approach
- Cognitive Code Learning
- The Cognitive Method
- Task- based Learning
- The Audiovisual Approach
- The Audiolingual Approach
- The Eclectic Method
- Content- based Learning
- Any other (state which) -----
- I do not use any methodology

16 What steps do you follow in a typical lesson that you teach? If you consider it necessary, write a very brief characterization of one or more of the steps you have listed.

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17 State the **THREE** kinds of learning activities that your students do more frequently in your lessons.

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18 What are the **THREE** major problems that you frequently have to face in your lessons? Suggest one possible solution for **ONE** of them.

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-----  
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19 I believe that the aspects of language performance that my students are more deficient at are:

- Accuracy
- Fluency
- Both Accuracy and Fluency

20 I use different methodologies depending on whether I am focusing on accuracy or on fluency. CHOOSE ONE OPTION AND EXPLAIN VERY BRIEFLY

- True
- False

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21 If you had to choose one and **ONLY ONE** of the following words or phrases to identify the theory of learning underlying the methodology that you have adopted to teach English, which one would you choose?

- The Scientific Method
- Realism
- Rationalism
- Behaviourism
- Structuralism
- Constructivism
- Information Processing
- "Psicogénesis"
- Any other (state which) -----
- None
- I do not know
- I have never thought of this

22 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **BEHAVIORIST** teacher (not necessarily a teacher of English) carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- a) Provides rich contexts that enable his students to discover concepts and procedures on their own.
- b) Helps his students to internalize certain behaviours through the successive repetition of certain actions with positive and observable results
- c) Is always on the alert to provide immediate positive reinforcements to facilitate the internalization of correct answers.
- d) Promotes in his students automatic answers to stimuli that he himself chooses in order to get better learning outcomes.

23 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **CONSTRUCTIVIST** teacher (not necessarily a teacher of English) carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- a) Helps students to acquire new knowledge and skills through his interaction with other students or with himself as a teacher.
- b) Plans his lessons so as to induce in his students a state of cognitive disequilibrium as a springboard for further learning.
- c) Concentrates on his students' observable behaviours to evaluate the results of their learning.
- d) Promotes in his students the operations of analysis, comprehension and prediction of information.

24 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **BEHAVIORIST TEACHER OF ENGLISH** carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- a) Induces his students to reflect consciously on a grammatical rule before passing on to the practice stage.
- b) In order to help his students understand a text, he asks them to start by analyzing the smallest elements (words and phrases) to finally arrive at a global understanding of the meaning of the text.
- c) Insists on mechanical repetition, memorization and automatic answers without much cognitive mediation (i.e. without stopping much to think) to facilitate the development of fluency.
- d) Tries to avoid mistakes on the part of his students at all costs since they can easily fix anomalous language behaviour.

25 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHER OF ENGLISH** carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- a) Encourages his students to relate isolated vocabulary items to wider contexts to help them to successfully complete their processes of accommodation and assimilation.
- b) Provides his students with words or short phrases in English as they require them as a way to scaffold them and facilitate the organization of their free expression.
- c) Helps his students to discover strategies to use in the processes of listening and reading comprehension
- d) Makes his students memorize model dialogues to build up a repertoire of prefabricated routines (for example, phrases and expressions) for later use in free expression

26 How do you keep yourself updated? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- a) I take teacher development courses of four or more sessions
- b) I listen to tapes or watch films in English
- c) I read novels, magazines, newspapers and other kinds of "literature" in English.
- d) I read material on learning, teaching methods and education in general.
- e) I take part in conversation groups
- f) I take part in study/discussion groups (for example, SIGS)
- g) I attend seminars, congresses, conferences and conventions
- h) I read material connected with teaching on the Internet
- i) I read material of general interest (news, film reviews, etc) on the Internet

27 How many courses, workshops, seminars or lectures have you attended over the last five years?

- None
- Between one and five
- Between six and ten
- More than ten

## **Reports on the Results of the Pre-test**

Only those aspects of the administrators' reports which were thought to be more relevant for the purposes of the pre-test are reproduced here. The words of the administrators have been kept as in the original reports<sup>167</sup> insofar as this did not conflict with the need to summarize the content.

### **Case 1 GBA-S**

Administrator: Lic. Marina Kirac

Geographical Area: Southern Greater Buenos Aires

Respondent: A primary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of Questions 18 - 21: The respondent stated that he had not answered Question 17 because "I do not follow any theory of learning". When his attention was drawn to the fact that he could have chosen the option *None* (provided in that question) he replied that he "had not seen it" and suggested that the spacing between lines should be made larger to facilitate reading.

The respondent also stated that he had found Questions 18 and 19 more difficult to answer than Questions 20 and 21 and that he believed

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<sup>167</sup> The first person singular as it had originally been used by the administrators in their reports has been kept throughout.

“teachers of Spanish (sic) should be asked about those things because they know better”. He also hinted that those questions (18 and 19) had no relevance for teachers of English.

General comments: The respondent did not evidence any difficulty answering the questions and he completed the questionnaire in 12 minutes. When asked about the degree of difficulty and the readability of the questions, he answered that he had found them clear enough with the exception of the questions related to *accuracy* and *fluency* (19 and 20 in the original questionnaire) which he had left unanswered because, he said, he did not see the point of the question and was not sure what exactly was meant by *accuracy* since, to his ken, “anyone who is fluent has got to be accurate”.

The respondent asked for clarification in two instances, one in Question 13 (identification of a methodology) about the meaning of *Cognitive Code* and another in Question 22 (teacher development activities) about whether conferences which consisted of several different sessions could be considered *teacher development courses of four or more sessions*. As instructed the administrator did not provide an explanation.

## **Case 2 GBA-S**

Administrator: Lic. Marina Kirac

Geographical Area: Southern Greater Buenos Aires

Respondent: A secondary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of questions 18 - 21: The respondent said he had found them “difficult” and that it had taken him longer to answer those four questions than the rest of the questionnaire.

General comments: Enquired about why he had used Spanish in all the answers, he said “I thought it was quicker and I feel more comfortable using Spanish”. He said that he had answered question 3 “automatically” quoting his place of residence (Barracas) and that he had not noticed he was being asked about his place of work (Lanús). Asked about the readability of the questionnaire, he stated that he felt that in all those questions that contained lists, the options should be spaced out more generously to make reading easier. He answered Question 19 (in the original questionnaire) about *accuracy* and *fluency* but stated that he had failed to answer Question 20 (in the original questionnaire) because “I do not understand it. It is not clear” and went on to explain that he was not sure whether the question referred to accuracy and fluency “in the whole course or just in one exercise, because I do not change my methodology for just one exercise”.

He also said that he had not answered the questions labeled 12 and 13 in the original questionnaire because “I graduated from the Cultura a long time ago and they did not teach us those things there in those times”. The respondent took 17 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### Case 3 GBA-W

Administrator: Lic. Andrea Coviella

Geographical Area: Western Greater Buenos Aires

Respondent: A primary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of Questions 18 - 21: When asked about this series, the respondent said that he had found them “too sophisticated” and that they required specialized knowledge of a psychological kind, and that “they have nothing to do with the teaching of English”. He also added, “I do not think teachers of English know about these topics.” Enquired about the readability of the questions, he answered “I understand them, they are clear but I am not sure of the answers. I answered them the best way I could”.

General comments: The respondent took 14 minutes to answer the questionnaire. Asked about why he had not answered Questions 19 and 20 (in the original questionnaire), he explained that he did not understand the use of the word *accuracy* and enquired whether it was related “only to tenses (sic)” or included *vocabulary* as well “...because I believe *vocabulary* is more related to *fluency* and this made me doubt.”

This respondent also failed to answer Question 13 (in the original questionnaire) and elaborated he had not done so because “We did not have those subjects at Profesorado”. He suggested that an option like “did not study those subjects” should be included or that the question should be done away with on the grounds that “you are going to get all negative answers because we do not have those subjects at Profesorado, at least in province de Buenos Aires”.

As to the graphic presentation of the questionnaire, he said “it is all right” but immediately passed on to suggest that double spacing would make reading friendlier.

#### **Case 4 GBA-W**

Administrator: Lic. Andrea Coviella

Geographical Area: Western Greater Buenos Aires

Respondent: A secondary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of Questions 18 - 21: The respondent said that he had found the questions clear and easy to understand but not so easy to answer. He commented: “It makes you think a lot, but that is all right”.

General comments: The respondent took considerable time (27 minutes) to finish the questionnaire but enquired about whether he had found any of the questions difficult to understand or complex to answer, he stated that

the questions were easy to understand but that he had left a few of them unanswered because “I did not know the answers and I wanted to take this seriously”. Enquired in particular about the questions he had not answered, he pointed out that:

Question 13 in the original questionnaire (information about theories of learning received in the course of teacher education) The respondent said that he believed that that question had already been answered in Question 12 (in the original questionnaire). When asked to re-read the question, he replied that he had overlooked the section of the question which read: *in general, not necessarily English*, and if that was the case, he did not understand what the question aimed at and he would rather keep it unanswered.

Question 13 (identification of a methodology): The respondent said that he did not know the difference between *The Grammatical Approach* and the *Grammar-Translation Method*(he explained that “I had always thought they were the same thing”) and that he had never heard the terms *The Cognitive Method* or *Cognitive Code Learning* or *Content-based Learning* (he excused himself by saying “maybe, these are all very new”).

Question 20 (methodology to deal with accuracy and fluency): He stated that he had not answered the question because he did not see the connection between methodology and these two aspects of language use.

He elaborated: “I thought you meant different techniques and that that was a misprint”.

The respondent interrupted his answer to the questionnaire only once to ask whether his degree of *Social Psychologist*<sup>168</sup> could be included within the areas considered in Question 8. The administrator reminded him that she could not expand or clarify the questions and eventually the respondent did not include this degree/certificate in his answer.

### **Case 5 GBA- N**

Administrator: Lic. Andrea Casareski

Geographical Area: Northern Greater Buenos Aires

Respondent: A primary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of Questions 18 - 21: The respondent stated that he had not found any problems understanding the questions but that he was somewhat surprised to find that most of the questions seemed to be

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<sup>168</sup> The course of studies of Social Psychology used to be part of the offer of non-accredited schools in our country (the entrance requirement being simply a primary school certificate).

Over the last decade many of these schools have become accredited and offer tertiary education courses in this area. The degree they grant is, nevertheless, that of *Operador Grupal o Profesor en Psicología Social*, not that of *Social Psychologist*. We have included this note here to signal the potential problems we envisaged we could be faced with when it came to deciding what was to be accepted (or could be quoted by the prospective respondents) as “any other degree in the field of Education, the Humanities or the Social Sciences”. Paradoxically enough, it is precisely the professionals in the field of Education the ones that very often fall prey to the wrongdoings of unscrupulous institutions which, without any official supervision, seem to offer a shortcut to a degree, as a further example, consider the case of the “certificate” of *Maestra Jardinera* as compared to the official degree of *Profesora de Educación Inicial*.

true and this fact had prompted him to give the questions a second more thorough reading (which, he said, he had not done in the case of the rest of the questions in the questionnaire).

He added that he thought a psychologist or an educational psychologist or a specialist in Education <sup>169</sup> would be in a much better position to answer Questions 18 and 19 and that he thought that “teachers of English do not need to know much about what teachers in the other subjects do in the classroom, the same way as they do not know how we teach English”.

General comments: The respondent answered all the questions and he made a point of this fact when he returned the question paper to the administrator adding that in many cases he had “used my common sense more than what I knew”. Asked to give examples of those instances he mentioned Question 17 ( identification of a theory of learning) in which he said that he had heard about *Rationalism* and *Structuralism* but did not know what they stood for and that he was certain that the term *Realism* had been made up to be used as a distractor. He used a similar rationale to explain the inclusion of some of the terms in Question 13 as he explained that, to his understanding, the pairs *The Grammatical Approach* and *The Grammar-Translation Method* and *Cognitive Code Learning* and *The Cognitive Method* were distractors as each component of the pair meant exactly the same as the other component (though he admitted he had never heard of a method called *Cognitive Code Learning*).

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<sup>169</sup> “alguien de ciencias de la educación” in the original rendering which was in Spanish.

He objected to Questions 12 and 13 (in the original questionnaire) on the grounds that words like “enough” had to be qualified in order to elicit more precise answers. He said “It can be enough for teaching well or enough for my general knowledge and culture”. The respondent took 19 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### **Case 6 GBA- N**

Administrator: Lic. Andrea Casareski

Geographical Area: Northern Greater Buenos Aires

Respondent: A secondary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of Questions 18 - 21: The respondent said that the questions were clear enough although he found some of them to be “repetitive” (sic). He commented that he had found the “psychological questions” (which he identified as being numbers 18 and 19) to be harder to answer but that “the other two questions were really very easy” (he was referring to Questions 20 and 21).

General comments: The respondent suggested that in the case of some options (he mentioned the cases of Questions 13 (identification of a methodology) and 17 (identification of a theory of learning), a glossary explaining briefly each theory or method should be provided as “teachers cannot be expected to remember all those names and what they mean”.

He objected to Question 19 (in the original questionnaire) as he thought that it presupposed that the students were deficient and he said “I cannot say that my students are deficient. They might not all be outstanding but most of them are more than acceptable”. He also objected to the allied Question 20 (in the original questionnaire) but this time on the grounds that he used “different methods depending on whether we are talking about writing or speaking here”.

He also pointed out that in Question 22, the use of the terms *seminars*, *congresses*, *conferences*, and *conventions* was misleading because, as he explained, “many people might not know the real difference between one and the other”<sup>170</sup>

Finally, he suggested that double spacing and larger print be used in the questionnaire since at times “reading has not been all that easy to me”

### **Case 7 CBA**

Administrator: Lic. Viviana Casoutto

Geographical Area: City of Buenos Aires

Respondent: A primary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of Questions 18 - 21: The respondent said that the questions could be easily understood and that the situations depicted

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<sup>170</sup> A distinction that was irrelevant for the purposes of the question.

were “very typical” but that he had found it difficult to relate the different options to either one or the other theory of learning and this he attributed to the very poor training he had received “in the Spanish subjects back at College”<sup>171</sup>. He offered this as a reason for failing to answer Questions 18 and 19, however he answered Questions 20 and 21 which demanded the same kind of discrimination.

General comments: The respondent completed the questionnaire in 15 minutes. When he reached Question 13, he paused to ask the administrator to clarify the terms: *Cognitive Code Learning* and *Content-based Learning* and to ask whether *The Grammatical Approach* and the *Grammar-Translation Method* did not refer to the same methodology. As instructed, the administrator reminded him that she could not answer any questions. In spite of this, a few minutes later the respondent enquired what was exactly meant by *accuracy* as this, he said, was essential to answer that question and following one (Question 20). No clarification was provided in this case either.

The respondent left the following questions unanswered: 13, 19 and 20 (of the original questionnaire), 17, 18 and 19.

As regards Question 22, the respondent pointed out that he had once attended a two-day international congress which consisted of five or six

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<sup>171</sup> It is customary for students in and graduates from College to refer to subjects such as “Theory of Education”, “Philosophy”, “Psychology” or “Pedagogy” as Spanish subjects because they are normally taught in that language and do not form part of the *hard core* of the subjects taught in English. We believe there might also be a hint of disregard in this categorization.

sessions each day and that he thought this counted as a *teacher development course of four or more sessions*. He suggested that this question be reframed for future administrations of the questionnaire.

### **Case 8 CBA**

Administrator: Lic. Viviana Casoutto

Geographical Area: City of Buenos Aires

Respondent: A secondary school teacher of English

Comments to the series of Questions 18 - 21: The respondent said that he had found the questions quite challenging because, he explained, “these are things that you do automatically in the classroom and you never think about them or why you do them.”

He pointed out that the questions were clear and that he had not had any problems understanding them with the exception of the word “scaffold” in Question 21 option (b)<sup>172</sup> but that he had derived it from the context and he thought it meant something like “protect” or “avoid wrong expression.”

General comments: The respondent objected to Questions 14 and 15 because, he explained, “ I cannot see a real difference between one and the other. What I typically do in a lesson coincides with the most frequent

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<sup>172</sup> b) Provides his students with words or short phrases in English as they require them as a way to scaffold them and facilitate the organization of their free expression.

activities of the students". He suggested that these two questions be subsumed into only one but he failed to answer either of the questions.

He also objected to Question 19 (in the original questionnaire) since he believed one could not over generalize about *accuracy* and *fluency* and that the question should specify *accuracy* and *fluency* in reference to what particular skills. Consequently, he said, this would affect the choice of a methodology to deal with accuracy and fluency, a definition that was requested in Question 20 (in the original questionnaire).<sup>173</sup>

Enquired about what aspects of the questionnaire he felt were in need of improvement, he said that in Questions 13 and 17, only the most widely known methods and theories should be kept, discarding the least common ones among which he listed *Cognitive Code Learning*, *Task based Learning*, *The Eclectic Method* and *Content based Learning* for question 12 and *Realism*, *Rationalism*, and *Structuralism* for Question 17. The respondent took 14 minutes to answer the questions.

### **Decisions taken on the basis of the administration of the pre-test**

Most of the decisions were made on the basis of the comments of the respondents reported by the administrators and others upon the suggestions made by the administrators themselves. The changes

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<sup>173</sup> He answered these two questions by reference to Speaking which, as he explained in writing in the question paper, he considered to be the most important skill.

introduced in the original questionnaire are listed in the order in which they appear in the questionnaire:

1.- Question 4

The option *Higher Education* was deleted since the questionnaire was to be administered only to primary and secondary school teachers.

The number of options was expanded to take due notice of the organizational (and hence, terminological) differences between the two jurisdictions considered in the universe: the Province of Buenos Aires and the City of Buenos Aires.

2.- Question 5

The option *Profesor en Inglés para la EGB 1 y EGB 2 (Provincia- Plan 3 años)* was added, again because of the differences of nomenclature between the two jurisdictions.

3. - Question 7

The original wording for the third option: *Private institute (NOT officially accredited (for example, Asociaciones, "Culturales Inglesas", Academias de Inglés)* was changed because of a mistake in the use of brackets.

The word *Asociaciones* was omitted from the final questionnaire because it was felt to be unnecessary since it did not add to the characterization of non-accredited English language schools.

The original fourth option *International certificates* (for example, *UCLES*) was replaced by *International certificates* (for example, *University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate*) as it was felt that many prospective respondents might not be familiar with the acronym for the now defunct UCLES. The use of the new name of this examining body (Cambridge ESOL) was also disregarded because of the same reason.

#### 4. - Question 8

*Letters* was added among the list of possible field of related disciplines because it was felt to be an undue omission in the original questionnaire.

#### 5. - Questions 12 and 13 (in the original questionnaire)

These two questions were left out of the final version of the questionnaire partly because of the problems detected in the pre-test (albeit minor) but basically, because on re-assessment they were found to be innocuous or redundant since what knowledge the respondents had about methods and theories of learning (and consequently what information about these they had been provided with at College), it was felt, could be retrieved by

means of other questions elsewhere in the questionnaire (especially the ones in the series 18-21).

6. - Question 12

It was decided to use capitals and bold type for the words *Number the boxes from 1 to 5* as it was thought that this might simplify understanding of the task.

7. - Question 13

On account of the problems and objections evidenced in the pre-test, the original number of choices was reduced to:

- The Communicative Approach
- The Natural Approach
- The Grammatical Approach
- Whole Language
- The Structural Approach
- The Cognitive Method
- Task- based Learning
- The Audiovisual Approach
- The Audiolingual Approach
- The Eclectic Method
- Any other (state which) -----
- I do not use any methodology

*The Grammatical Approach* and *The Grammar-Translation Method* were subsumed into *The Grammatical Approach* since a number of the respondents in the pre-test had thought of them to be different terms to

refer to identical concepts. The administrators, in turn, suggested that *The Grammatical Approach* might be a more attractive option since, it was assumed, some prospective respondents might shy away from admitting that they used *Grammar-Translation* as a main methodology.

The option *Cognitive Code Learning* was discarded because of its low level of acceptance among respondents to the pre-test who, for the most part, claimed not to know this method.<sup>174</sup> The same rationale was used for the exclusion of the option Content based Learning.

8. - Questions 19 and 20 (in the original questionnaire)

It was decided to remove these two questions from the final questionnaire because the difficulties related to the interpretation of the questions detected in the pre-test (very particularly the definition of *accuracy*) far outnumbered the benefits that we expected to derive from the answers of the prospective respondents to these questions.

9. - Question 21

In option (b) it was felt necessary to include the word *help* between brackets next to the word *scaffold* to clarify its meaning. The word *scaffold*

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<sup>174</sup> *Cognitive Code Learning* was scarcely known in our country even in its heyday (the mid seventies), although it enjoyed a certain degree of popularity in the more academic circles (ELT professionals at Colleges of Education and Universities). The late nineties and very especially after the publication of Skehan (1998), which again has become quite widespread among academe in our country, have seen a renaissance of the cognitive ideal for teaching languages.

was retained because it is a part of the jargon of Constructivism and it was thought this might help proper recognition of the option on the part of prospective respondents.

#### 10.- Question 22

Based on the feedback collected during the pre-test, the question was reframed to include fewer but more comprehensive categories. Aligning *seminars, congresses, conventions* and *conferences* with *teacher development courses of four or more sessions*, it was deemed, did not alter the aim of the question and simplified its interpretation.

By the same token the options that isolated the use of the Internet were subsumed within the other options that pointed to the use of more conventional sources of information, such as magazines and newspapers.

The question in the final questionnaire now reads:

- I attend courses, seminars, congresses, conferences and conventions.
- I listen to tapes or watch films in English
- I read novels, magazines, newspapers and other kinds of "literature" in English and material of general interest on the Internet.
- I read material on learning, teaching methods and education in general in magazines, journals or on the Internet.
- I take part in conversation groups
- I take part in study/discussion groups (for example, SIGS)

#### 11. - Question 23

This question was added on reappraisal of the original questionnaire as it was felt that Question 22 failed to sufficiently discriminate between respondents who favoured courses and teacher development material that focused on either teaching methods or theories of learning.<sup>175</sup>

23 If you chose options (a), (b) or (f) above, TICK ONLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO CHOICES.

- I prefer material and courses that deal with theories of learning, learning and thinking processes, learning strategies and styles, or cognitive and affective factors in learning.
- I prefer material and courses that deal with teaching methods, the teaching of the skills, classroom management, or materials selection and design.

## 12. - General

A few decisions as regards the graphic presentation of the questionnaire were made on the basis of the feedback of the pre-test. The font was changed from *Tahoma 11* to *Verdana 11* as the latter was thought to be more reader friendly. A more generous spacing between the lines was also adopted ( from 1 to 1 ½ ) and more extensive use of double spacing between the rubrics and the options provided and in between questions was made for the same purposes of increasing readability.

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<sup>175</sup> Even when question 22 in fact succeeded in discriminating between those who favoured courses and material related to language development and those who preferred reading material and courses related with their professional practice.

## The Final Version of the Questionnaire

The following document is the text of the final version of the questionnaire as it was eventually administered to the respondents:

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Before starting to answer these questions, please take a minute to read the following INSTRUCTIONS

- A.- **This questionnaire is anonymous and personal.** We are interested in your own answers. Please do not consult other colleagues to answer it.
- B.- In the multiple choice or true and false questions, draw a tick inside the relevant box/es to show which option/s you have chosen. Leave the rest of the boxes blank (Do not draw crosses in them).
- C.- In case you change your mind once you have answered one particular question, please erase or paint with correcting fluid the answer you have discarded.

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1 Age (years)\_\_\_\_\_

2 How long have you been teaching English? (years)\_\_\_\_\_

3 Geographical area where you teach (indicate that area where you teach the most periods). In case of an area that has been categorized *ZONA DESFAVORABLE*, please add those words next to the name of the area.

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4 School level you teach (in case you teach more than one level, indicate that where you teach the most periods). YOU CAN ONLY TICK ONE OPTION.

- EPB in the province of Buenos Aires
- ESB in the province of Buenos Aires
- Polimodal in the province of Buenos Aires
  
- Primary in the City of Buenos Aires
- Secondary in the City of Buenos Aires

5 What degree or certificate for the teaching of English have you got? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE OPTION.

- Profesor Nacional en Inglés (Plan 4 – 5 años)
- Profesor Nacional en Inglés para la Enseñanza Primaria (Plan 2 – 3 años)
- Profesor en Inglés para la EGB 1 y EGB 2 (Provincia- Plan 3 años)
- Licenciado en Inglés
- Traductor Público
- Traductor Técnico-Científico y Literario
- Intérprete de Conferencias
- Certificado de Capacidad (for example, AACI or similar ones)
- First Certificate or similar ones

6 Year of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

7 Institution that granted your degree:

- University
- College of Education (*Instituto del Profesorado*)
- Private institute (NOT officially accredited (for example, *Asociaciones, "Culturales Inglesas", Academias de Inglés*)
- International certificates (for example, *UCLES*)

8 Have you got any other degree in the field of Education, Letters, the Humanities or the Social Sciences? Please state the name of the degree and institution that granted it. If you possess several degrees, please state that of the highest academic standard.

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9 Incomplete studies or studies you are currently undertaking (specify the name of the course of studies and the degree you expected / expect to attain)

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10 In the case of incomplete studies, state the highest level attained:

- First Year
- Second Year
- Third Year
- Fourth Year
- Fifth Year

11 In the case of studies you are currently undertaking, state what level you are taking this year

- First Year
- Second Year
- Third Year
- Fourth Year
- Fifth Year

12 In which of the following areas do you think you obtain the best results with your students? **NUMBER THE BOXES FROM 1 TO 5.** Give number (1) to the area in which you believe you get the best results.

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking
- Grammar

13 If you had to choose one and **ONLY ONE** of the following words or phrases to identify the methodology that you have adopted to teach English, which one would you choose?

- The Communicative Approach
- The Natural Approach
- The Grammatical Approach
- Whole Language
- The Structural Approach
- The Cognitive Method
- Task-based Learning
- The Audiovisual Approach
- The Audiolingual Approach
- The Eclectic Method
- Any other (state which) -----
- I do not use any methodology

14 What steps do you follow in a typical lesson that you teach? If you consider it necessary, write a very brief characterization of one or more of the steps you have listed.

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15 State the **THREE** kinds of learning activities that your students do more frequently in your lessons.

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16 What are the **THREE** major problems that you frequently have to face in your lessons? Suggest one possible solution for **ONE** of them.

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17 If you had to choose one and **ONLY ONE** of the following words or phrases to identify the theory of learning underlying the methodology that you have adopted to teach English, which one would you choose?

- The Scientific Method
- Realism
- Rationalism
- Behaviourism
- Structuralism
- Constructivism
- Information Processing
- "*Psicogénesis*"
- Any other (state which)-----

- None
- I do not know
- I have never thought of this

18 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **BEHAVIOURIST** teacher ( not necessarily a teacher of English) carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Provides rich contexts that enable his students to discover concepts and procedures on their own.

b) Helps his students to internalize certain behaviours through the successive repetition of certain actions with positive and observable results

c) Is always on the alert to provide immediate positive reinforcements to facilitate the internalization of correct answers.

d) Promotes in his students automatic answers to stimuli that he himself chooses in order to get better learning outcomes.

19 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **CONSTRUCTIVIST** teacher (not necessarily a teacher of English) carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Helps students to acquire new knowledge and skills through his interaction with other students or with himself as a teacher.

b) Plans his lessons so as to induce in his students a state of cognitive disequilibrium as a springboard for further learning.

c) Concentrates on his students' observable behaviours to evaluate the results of their learning.

d) Promotes in his students the operations of analysis, comprehension and prediction of information.

20 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **BEHAVIOURIST TEACHER OF ENGLISH** carries out in his lessons?  
YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Induces his students to reflect consciously on a grammatical rule before passing on to the practice stage.

b) In order to help his students understand a text, he asks them to start by analyzing the smallest elements (words and phrases) to finally arrive at a global understanding of the meaning of the text.

c) Insists on mechanical repetition, memorization and automatic answers without much cognitive mediation (i.e. without stopping much to think) to facilitate the development of fluency.

d) Tries to avoid mistakes on the part of his students at all costs since they can easily fix anomalous language behaviour.

21 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHER OF ENGLISH** carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Encourages his students to relate isolated vocabulary items to wider contexts to help them to successfully complete their processes of accommodation and assimilation.

- b) Provides his students with words or short phrases in English as they require them as a way to scaffold (help) them and facilitate the organization of their free expression.
- c) Helps his students to discover strategies to use in the processes of listening and reading comprehension
- d) Makes his students memorize model dialogues to build up a repertoire of prefabricated routines (for example, phrases and expressions) for later use in free expression.

22 How do you keep yourself updated? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

- I attend courses, seminars, congresses, conferences and conventions.
- I listen to tapes or watch films in English
- I read novels, magazines, newspapers and other kinds of "literature" in English and material of general interest on the Internet.
- I read material on learning, teaching methods and education in general in magazines, journals or on the Internet.
- I take part in conversation groups
- I take part in study/discussion groups (for example, SIGS)

23 If you chose options (a), (b) or (f) above, TICK **ONLY ONE** OF THE FOLLOWING TWO CHOICES

- I prefer material and courses that deal with theories of learning, learning and thinking processes, learning strategies and styles, or cognitive and affective factors in learning.

- I prefer material and courses that deal with teaching methods, the teaching of the skills, classroom management, or materials selection and design.
- 24 How many courses, workshops, seminars or lectures have you attended over the last five years?
- None
  - Between one and five
  - Between six and ten
  - More than ten

### **The series of questions 18 to 21: key to expected answers**

In the next section we have included the series of questions 18 to 21 and the quotation *False* next to those answers that were deemed unacceptable according to the characterization that was required of the respondents in each one of the cases.

It is worth pointing out that in the design of the questionnaire, special attention was paid to eradicate any kind of ambiguity in the descriptors of the behaviour of the “paradigmatic teachers” the respondents were asked to consider and that in cases terms that are commonly associated with the specific vocabulary of the theories of learning being assessed were used in order to create weak distractors<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> For example, in question 18, terms and phrases like “successive repetition of certain actions with positive and observable results”, “reinforcements” and “automatic answers” were used. All of these were construed to be *weak distractors* as they clearly pointed out to the typical activities of a behaviourist teacher, which was precisely what was to be elicited.

18 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **BEHAVIORIST** teacher (not necessarily a teacher of English) carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Provides rich contexts that enable his students to discover concepts and procedures on their own. **FALSE**

b) Helps his students to internalize certain behaviours through the successive repetition of certain actions with positive and observable results

c) Is always on the alert to provide immediate positive reinforcements to facilitate the internalization of correct answers.

d) Promotes in his students automatic answers to stimuli that he himself chooses in order to get better learning outcomes.

19 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **CONSTRUCTIVIST** teacher (not necessarily a teacher of English) carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Helps students to acquire new knowledge and skills through his interaction with other students or with himself as a teacher.

b) Plans his lessons so as to induce in his students a state of cognitive disequilibrium as a springboard for further learning.

c) Concentrates on his students' observable behaviours to evaluate the results of their learning. **FALSE**

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d) Promotes in his students the operations of analysis, comprehension and prediction of information.

20 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **BEHAVIORIST TEACHER OF ENGLISH** carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Induces his students to reflect consciously on a grammatical rule before passing on to the practice stage. **FALSE**

b) In order to help his students understand a text, he asks them to start by analyzing the smallest elements (words and phrases) to finally arrive at a global understanding of the meaning of the text.

c) Insists on mechanical repetition, memorization and automatic answers without much cognitive mediation (i.e. without stopping much to think) to facilitate the development of fluency.

d) Tries to avoid mistakes on the part of his students at all costs since they can easily fix anomalous language behaviour.

21 Which of the following actions, would you say, a **CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHER OF ENGLISH** carries out in his lessons? YOU CAN TICK MORE THAN ONE CHOICE

a) Encourages his students to relate isolated vocabulary items to wider contexts to help them to successfully complete their processes of accommodation and assimilation.

b) Provides his students with words or short phrases in English as they require them as a way to scaffold (help) them and facilitate the organization of their free expression.

c) Helps his students to discover strategies to use in the processes of listening and reading comprehension

d) Makes his students memorize model dialogues to build up a repertoire of prefabricated routines (for example, phrases and expressions) for later use in free expression. **FALSE**

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This section incorporates a detailed analysis of the results of the questionnaire administered to teachers and which has been presented in Chapter 3. For ease of reference we have kept the same numbers of the 24 questions in the questionnaire for each one of the subtitles in this section, under which a discussion of the results and further notes on the methods and theories considered follow.

A number of tables and graphs have been included to facilitate comprehension, comparison, interpretation and evaluation of the data collected.

#### 1 Age Groups

*Table 4 Age groups of respondents*

<b>Group</b>	<b>f</b>
between 20 and 30 years of age	50
between 31 and 40 years of age	30
between 41 and 50 years of age	18
between 51 and 60 years of age	2

The fact that 80 % of the respondents are between the ages of 20 and 40 years is a piece of information that should not be overlooked since it clearly signals that the respondents can be said to be, in one way or another, direct offspring of the “communicative revolution”.

If we consider the case of the oldest respondent in this band, a subject of 40 years of age in 2007 and we assume that he started his teacher education in 1985 and graduated in 1989 or later (between the ages of 18 and 23 or over), we could presume that his Methods and Didactics teachers might have educated him into the Communicative and Constructivist tradition.

Whereas, the remaining 20 % conversely, have probably had a teacher education rooted in the principles of Behaviourism and the Audiolingual Method.

Up to a certain extent, this latter characterization could be expanded to engulf those subjects who have not attended College but whose language instruction took place between the ages of 8 and 18 years (between the years 1975 and 1985<sup>177</sup> for subjects who are 40 years old in 2007), it would not be wrong to presuppose that the oldest respondents in this band might have been taught English in the Audiolingual fashion, whereas the

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<sup>177</sup> 1975 was too early for the Communicative Approach to have established a firm foothold in our country, but the time was ripe for the teaching of English for Communication in 1985 when our idealized respondent was presumably finishing his language instruction. However, it is not easy for methodological changes to find their way uncontestedly into most English Language Schools (ELS's) in Argentina, except the very central ones, as was the case with the binational centres (e.g. ICANA) and their role of promoters of Krashen's Natural Approach in the mid eighties.

respondents at the lowest extreme of the band (those who are 20 years of age in 2007) might have probably received language instruction following the tenets of the Communicative Approach. This latter age group (respondents between the ages of 20 and 30 years) constitute 50 % of of our sample.

## 2 Seniority in the Teaching Profession

*Table 5 Groups arranged by teaching seniority*

<b><i>between 1 and 5 years</i></b>	<b><i>between 6 and 10 years</i></b>	<b><i>between 11 and 15 years</i></b>	<b><i>between 16 and 20 years</i></b>	<b><i>between 21 and 25 years</i></b>
46	26	20	6	2

72 % of the respondents have been teaching English for 10 or fewer years, this implies that our universe is mainly made up of teachers in the first stint of their professional life (if the average teaching career is to be estimated at a rate of 25 to 30 years of active service). Nevertheless, seniority was not felt to be (as we shall see later) a determining factor in the evaluation of the answers provided by the subjects.

### 3 Geographical Area

Table 6 Respondents by geographical area

<b>Greater Buenos Aires North</b>	<b>Greater Buenos Aires South</b>	<b>Greater Buenos Aires West</b>	<b>City of Buenos Aires</b>
24	28	24	24

The same principles that had been followed in the Pre-test for the geographical distribution of the sample, have been followed for the distribution of the final questionnaires, therefore, the collection of data was made among teachers in Greater Buenos Aires (Northern, Southern and Western areas) and in the City of Buenos Aires. The number of respondents for each of the four geographical areas was kept constant at 24 with the exception of Southern Greater Buenos Aires with 28 respondents. Eight out of the one hundred respondents stated that they taught in “unfavourable conditions”.<sup>178</sup> Six of these taught in Southern Greater Buenos Aires while two belonged to the Western area. The number of respondents within this category was believed to be negligible given the size of the sample and this condition was not used for further analysis.

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<sup>178</sup> “Zona desfavorable” is a bureaucratic term used in our country to officially categorize schools according to their location, population and availability of resources. It is normally reserved for depressed suburban areas in Greater Buenos Aires and rural areas in the province of Buenos Aires.

#### 4 Educational level at which respondents work

Table 7 Professional practice of respondents: levels and cycles

<b>EPB (Primary)</b>	<b>ESB or Ciclo Básico (Secondary)</b>	<b>Polimodal or Ciclo Superior (Secondary)</b>
42	15	14

A considerable degree of intersectional convergence or overlap was observed in the answers to this question with teachers working at more than one level. Even when the instructions in the questionnaire were clear in the sense that only one option had to be chosen (that level at which respondents taught the most periods), there were a number of subjects that chose two options and added remarks to the effect that they taught the same number of periods at one level than at another. In those cases, a decision was made to include as a valid option the highest educational level at which the subjects worked.

72% of the respondents worked in Primary and (Lower) Secondary schools (*Escuela Primaria Básica* or EPB and *Escuela Secundaria Básica* or ESB). The remaining 28% worked at Higher Secondary schools (*Educación Polimodal*)<sup>179</sup>.

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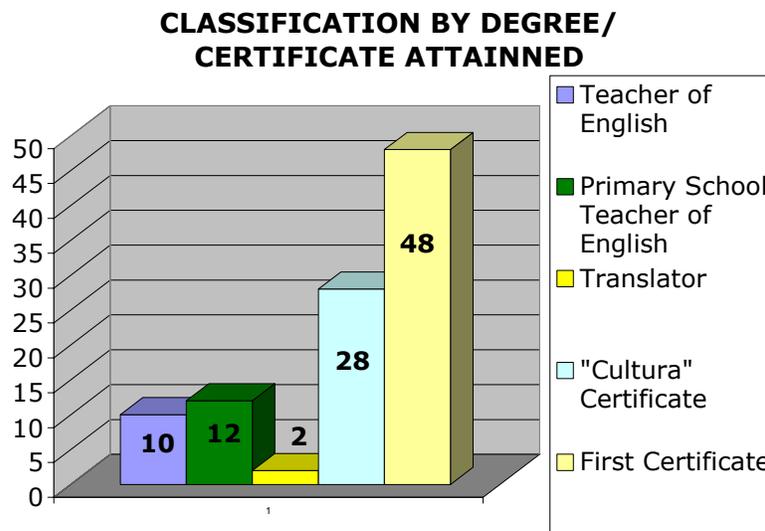
<sup>179</sup> This terminology (and organizational model) is effective at the time of writing this work, though it is bound to be changed in the near future under the effects of the new Education Act of the province de Buenos Aires (2007). A point is, nevertheless, worth noticing: in the city of Buenos Aires, Primary Schools comprise seven years or “grades” and Secondary Schools, five years. In the province of Buenos Aires Primary Schools comprise six years and Secondary Schools two cycles of three years each: *Escuela Secundaria Básica* and *Educación Polimodal*.

## 5 Degree or certificate for the teaching of English

Table 8 Classification of respondents by highest degree attained

<b>Teacher of English 4-5 years course</b>	<b>Primary School Teacher of English 2- 3 years course</b>	<b>Translator</b>	<b>Certificate of Attainment in English (Certificado de Capacidad)</b>	<b>First Certificate</b>
10	12	2	28	48

Graph 1 Classification of respondents by degree / certificate attained



Since the choice of more than option was given in the questionnaire, some respondents quoted more than one degree or certificate, but for the purposes of this work, the data presented in table 5 have been processed taking into consideration only the highest degree that the respondents held. From the analysis of the data the prominence of non-official certificates over official degrees is self-evident. 76 % of the respondents are holders of certificates issued by non-accredited private institutions,

whereas only the remaining 24% hold an official degree. Of that 76 % per cent, 63.16 % hold an international certificate of the kind of Cambridge ESOL's First Certificate<sup>180</sup> which attests to a language instruction up to what is commonly accepted according to international standards as an intermediate level.

The remaining 36.84 % (of the total number of 76 respondents) are holders of certificates issued by Argentinian English language schools (which can be counted by the thousands but of which AACI - Asociación Argentina de Cultura Inglesa – is probably the most widely known and accepted) and have attained a level of communicative competence roughly equivalent to a pre-intermediate level after six to seven years of study.<sup>181</sup> This is not a minor detail since neither the various certificates of attainment in English nor the First Certificate or similar international certificates are evidence of any pedagogical training in the teaching of English, since, as it has been stated before they only attest to a level of linguistic competence<sup>182</sup>. The categorization in this table shows that only 12% of the respondents have received some kind of teacher education befitting the requirements of the different levels of our educational

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<sup>180</sup> Cambridge ESOL is more popularly known in our country by its former name: UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate).

<sup>181</sup> It is not uncommon for many learners to start that course of language instruction at an early age in such a way that they finish it while still in secondary school.

<sup>182</sup> Of late a few international examining boards have introduced a number of certificates that provide a testimonial of the teaching skills of the test-takers, among them, most notably, Cambridge ESOL's *TKT* (Teaching Knowledge Test). It is still too early to assess what sort of influence these certificates will have on the language teaching scene in our country.

system.<sup>183</sup> This figure will be substantially modified (as we shall see later) when other categories of teachers (not necessarily teachers of English) are brought into play.

## 6 Year of Graduation

Table 9 *Classification of respondents by year of graduation or end of language studies*

<b><i>between 1973 and 1979</i></b>	<b><i>between 1980 and 1984</i></b>	<b><i>between 1985 and 1989</i></b>	<b><i>between 1990 and 1994</i></b>	<b><i>between 1995 and 1999</i></b>	<b><i>between 2000 and 2006</i></b>
4	12	6	8	52	18

The frequency distribution presented in this table is not of particular relevance to the purposes of this study unless we take into consideration the year of graduation of those respondents with a teaching degree (as we shall see in table 10). It could be argued that in the case of respondents without specific teacher education, the year when they finished their language instruction (here taken as *year of graduation* for the sake of simplicity of analysis) could be indicative of the kind of methodology that their teachers were likely to use to teach them English. Even if that were the case, those subjects might find it hard to identify what particular method was used by their teachers in their language lessons.

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<sup>183</sup> The two respondents with an official degree of translator (both of them were Sworn Translators) have not been counted to the total number of “teachers” for the obvious reason that they also lack training for the teaching of languages.

Table 10 *Frequency of graduates with an official degree (between 1995 and 2006)*

<b><i>between 1995 and 1999</i></b>	<b><i>between 2000 and 2006</i></b>
4	18

81% of those respondents with an official degree (teachers of English who have completed the 4 or 5 year course at an accredited institution) have graduated over the last six years. At first sight, this would be evidence enough that they have been trained in the principles of Constructivism and that from the more specific point of view of the Didactics of foreign languages, they have come in contact with more flexible paradigms such as the ARC Model or the TBL Framework ( to which we will refer later) and that would logically be inclined to choose methodologies of the kind of the Natural Approach, Whole Language or Task-based Learning. This presupposition cannot be easily verified since the year of graduation does not necessarily imply the graduate completed his course of studies over a span of time of four to five years.

But what can be ascertained, beyond any doubt, is that 100% of the graduates with an official teaching degree in our study have received pedagogical training along the lines of the Communicative Approach, since this has been the method used par excellence in Practicum and in metalinguistic reflection at College since the end of the seventies.

## 7 Teacher Education and Language Education Institutions

The information about the institution that granted the degrees is quite relevant to the purposes of our study, since it is not unusual to find practitioners in our country that believe themselves to be *teachers of English* simply because they have gone through a more or less extended course of studies at an ELS or because they have passed an international exam, like the First Certificate in English (FCE) or, in the best of cases, the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) or the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE). Neither is it uncommon for these make-shift teachers to have gained tenure for the lack of graduate teachers (a situation which is dramatically repeated in the Greater Buenos Aires) with the predictable consequences for the quality of the language education imparted in our classrooms.

Degrees granted by a University or a College of Education (Instituto del Profesorado) do not necessarily guarantee excellence in teaching but at least presuppose some kind of pedagogical and didactic training.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> That explains the reason why in the items offered as options in question (5) of the questionnaire, we have used the term “Profesor Nacional” to stress the official character of the course of studies. It should be said in passing that the nomenclature “Profesor Nacional” and “Maestro Nacional” were historically used for the degrees of teachers of Physical Education but never in the case of teachers of foreign languages.

Table 11 Types of institutions that granted the degrees (English)

<b>University</b>	<b>College of Education <sup>185</sup></b>	<b>Language School (non accredited)<sup>186</sup></b>	<b>Internacional Certificate</b>
4	18	46	32

The data in this table have been processed taking into consideration the highest degree of the respondents in each case and only one degree per subject has been considered.

We could verify that there is consistency between the official degrees that the respondents purported to hold and the institution that had granted them. However some discrepancies can be found in the case of certificates issued by non accredited institutions as mentioned in table 8 and the type of institution mentioned in this question. While in table 8 we had recorded 48 holders of international certificates, in table 11 we only find 32 subjects that state that those certificates have been issued by an international examining body (e.g. Cambridge ESOL).

The remaining 16 quote that their international certificates have been issued by institutions that in the questionnaire were labelled as “Private institute (NOT officially accredited, for example, *Asociaciones*, “*Culturales Inglesas*”, *Academias de Inglés*)”.

<sup>185</sup> “Instituto Superior del Profesorado” in Spanish. A post-secondary (tertiary level) institution with teacher education courses ranging from three to four years of instruction.

<sup>186</sup> “Instituto no incorporado a la Enseñanza oficial – enseñanza parasistemática” in Spanish.

This can partly be due to the ignorance on the part of the certificate holders that a foreign institution, because of its very nature, cannot be a part of the state-controlled educational system of our country<sup>187</sup>. Moreover; those international examining boards can hardly fit the characterization of “Institutos (Asociaciones, “Culturales Inglesas”, Academias de Inglés)” as outlined in question 7. This can also be partly explained by the confusion purposefully induced by some ELS’s that very often use terms like, “International Certificate” or “International Diploma”<sup>188</sup> or at times, the words “First Certificate” preceded by the name of the private institution (e.g. “Nottingham Institute First Certificate in English”).

## 8 Another degree related to the field of Education, Letters, the Humanities or the Social Sciences

Table 12 Other degrees added to the degree / certificate of the respondents

<b>Degree</b>	<b>f</b>
Primary School Teacher	16
Kindergarten teacher	3
Teacher of Spanish	1
Teacher of History	2
Social Worker	1
B.A. in Art History	1
B.A. in Philosophy	1
Composer (UCA)	1
TOTAL	26

<sup>187</sup> Hence, “incorporada o no incorporada a la enseñanza oficial”.

<sup>188</sup> There is even a *Certificate for International Teachers of English* being currently offered in our country at two levels: Basic training and Young Learners, which is offered as a “specialization” course. Both are offered in the distance training mode. It is needless to say that this “international” certificate lacks any sort of official recognition in our country or abroad.

Table 13 Types of institutions that granted the degree added

<b>Institution</b>	<b>f</b>
University	4
College of Education	22

26 of the total number of 100 respondents have got another degree related to the field of Education, Letters, the Humanities or the Social Sciences. Four of the 26 that hold the degree of Teacher of English, either for Primary or Secondary schools, also hold the degree of Primary School teachers<sup>189</sup>. For the purposes of this study this number of 4 graduates as Primary School teachers will not be taken into consideration since they are ,at the same time, holders of a specific degree for the teaching of English.

Within the group of remaining subjects (a total of 78) that we had characterized as *lacking teacher education*, there are 12 who have the official degree of Primary School Teachers together with a certificate of attainment in English from an ELS<sup>190</sup>. To these, 3 Kindergarten teachers, 2 teachers of History and 1 teacher of Spanish should be added (the four of these with an official degree in their own particular area of expertise and a certificate in English).

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<sup>189</sup> Three of them are teachers from the City of Buenos Aires and have got the dual degree of Teacher of English for Primary Schools and Primary School Teacher that "Sofía de Sprangenberg" College of Education used to grant. The other from the Southern Greater Buenos Aires took both courses of studies separately.

<sup>190</sup> This is not an unusual situation in the province of Buenos Aires where it is easier for a certified Primary School Teacher (of Spanish) to gain tenure to teach English if he can produce a certificate from any private non-accredited institution (provided teachers with an official degree in English are unavailable). The twelve respondents that we made reference to are all teaching in districts of Greater Buenos Aires.

Even when these 18 respondents lack specialized training in the teaching of foreign languages, they can be assimilated to the group of respondents *with teacher education* since it must be acknowledged that they must be conversant with general educational and pedagogical principles as well as with the tools for effective didactic performance. The addition of this new group would in turn raise the percentage of respondents with teacher education from 22% to 40%.

## 9 Incomplete courses of studies or courses of studies in progress

Table 14 *Incomplete courses of studies of respondents. Degrees attempted*

<b>Degrees</b>	<b>f</b>
Teacher of English	44
Translator	4
Teacher of Spanish	3
B.A. in Letters	2
Lawyer	2
Teacher of Biology	1
B.A. in Public Relations	1
B.A. in Information Systems	1
B.A. in Political Science	1
Electrical Engineer	1
Fashion Designer	1
Veterinarian	1
Biochemist	1
Architect	1
Optician	1
Radiologist	1
B.A. in Psychology	1
B.A. in Education	1

For the purposes of this study we will only consider those respondents with incomplete studies in the following courses (out of those mentioned by the respondents): Teacher of English (44), Teacher of Biology (1), Teacher of Spanish (3), Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (1) and Bachelor of Arts in Education (1), a total of 50 subjects, and we will deem them *with teacher education* only in the cases in which they dropped out in the second year of their courses of studies (or at a later date) or are currently attending the second year of their courses (or beyond).

From the total number of 44 respondents with incomplete courses of studies in English (Profesor en Inglés – 4 to 5 year courses) we will subtract the number of 12 respondents that have already attained their intermediate degree of Teacher of English for Primary Schools, which makes a total of 32 respondents with incomplete specific studies in the teaching of English.

**10 and 11 Incomplete studies or studies in progress - Highest level attained**

*Table 15 Respondents who dropped out in second year or currently attending second year*

<b>Course of Studies</b>	<b>total</b>	<b>Dropout in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year or currently attending 2<sup>nd</sup> year (or beyond)</b>
Teacher of English	44	32
Teacher of Spanish	3	2
Teacher of Biology	1	0
B.A. in Psychology	1	1
B.A. in Education	1	1
Total	50	36

Even when we would have to study each case in particular and request further clarification in many cases (which is impossible in a self-administered questionnaire like ours), we have decided to construe this new group of 36 subjects as *with teacher education* bearing in mind that most of them are currently attending their courses of studies and that they might have already received the basic elements of Pedagogy, Psychology or, in cases, Didactics.

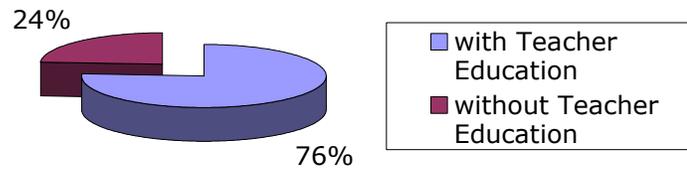
If we add this new group of 36 subjects to the original group of 22 subjects with an official teaching degree and to the 18 that we had added in item (8) due to the fact that they had received teacher education in other disciplines, this takes the percentage of respondents *with teacher education* up to 76 %. This point will be especially relevant when the time comes to assess how much these teachers<sup>191</sup> know and what we can expect them to know about teaching in general and teaching foreign languages in particular.

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<sup>191</sup> All of the respondents are, it should be remembered, teachers in active service.

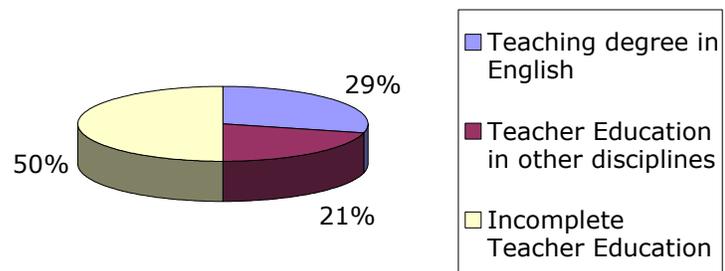
Graph 2 *Percentage of respondents with and without teacher education*

**RESPONDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT TEACHER EDUCATION**



Graph 3 *Type of teacher education of respondents*

**RESPONDENTS WITH TEACHER EDUCATION**



**12 Areas at which respondents' students evidence higher degree of achievement**

Two polar criteria have been adopted for the analysis of these data: highest and lowest degree of achievement. The universe of analysis will

be restricted to 98 subjects since two respondents left this question unanswered.

*Table 16 Category to which the highest degree of achievement has been assigned*

<b>Area</b>	<b>f</b>
Reading Comprehension	44
Listening Comprehension	20
Writing	12
Grammar	12
Speaking	10
No answer	2
TOTAL	100

*Table 17 Category to which the lowest degree of achievement has been assigned*

<b>Area</b>	<b>f</b>
Listening Comprehension	28
Speaking	28
Writing	16
Grammar	4
Reading Comprehension	2
No answer	22
TOTAL	100

While 98% of the respondents (100% if we leave the two respondents who did not answer this question aside) marked with a (1) the area at which they felt their students evidenced better results, 22% of the respondents (not a small figure) failed to indicate with a (5) the area at which they deemed their students' results to be most unsatisfactory. This is not a piece of information that can be easily dismissed. It could be speculated that the considerable number of respondents that did not identify one particular area at which his students got the poorest results, failed to do so

because they did not want to admit that their students had failed precisely at the area which is most highly regarded by school administrators, parents and students alike: speaking.

44.89 % of the respondents that failed to identify their students' most deficient area, chose reading comprehension as the area at which their students obtained the best results. 20.40% of these respondents that failed to identify category (5) chose Listening Comprehension as the second area with the highest degree of achievement. The substantial difference between these two figures (24.49 %) is worth noticing.

If we consider the total number of respondents who identified Reading Comprehension as the area at which they got the best results or the second best results, assigning to it either numbers (1) or (2), the percentage of choices for this area goes up to 63.26%<sup>192</sup>.

It is, therefore, unquestionable that Reading Comprehension is the area at which students' performance is most satisfactory. This should not be, in any way, surprising, since Reading Comprehension tasks rank high within the group of favourite activities implemented by teachers in their classrooms (see commentary to answers to question 15). This preference could be due to a myriad of reasons, on the one hand it is a kind of activity that requires less effort on the part of the students and allows for a more

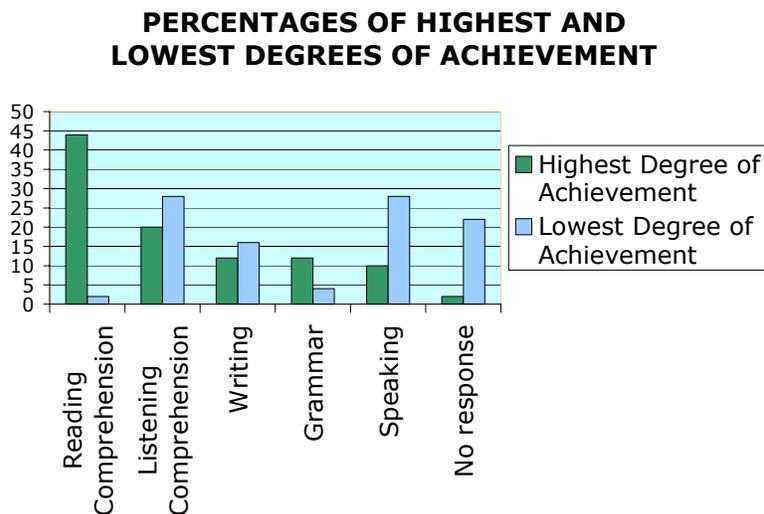
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<sup>192</sup> As an anecdotal detail we can point out that only one respondent marked Reading Comprehension with a (5) but it could well have been the case of a subject who did not understand or pay attention to the instruction in the questionnaire: *Give number (1) to the area in which you believe you get the best results.*

extensive use of the monitor<sup>193</sup> , on the other hand, the teacher may find these tasks more appropriate to work with large groups because of their organizational economy (the whole class works with the same text) and the low noise level that it implies.

The case of Listening Comprehension is slightly more complex to analyze. While it takes the second place among the areas with the highest degree of achievement with 20.40 % of the choices, it also ranks the highest (on a par with Speaking) among the areas where the poorest results can be observed with 35.89 % of the choices.<sup>194</sup> This figure goes up to 51.28% if we also include those respondents that assigned (4), the second most unsatisfactory area, to it. It is, therefore, self-evident that Listening Comprehension is a potentially problematic area where most students evidence poor results.

*Graph 4 Percentages of highest and lowest degree of achievement*



<sup>193</sup> According to Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis. See, particularly, Krashen (1981).

<sup>194</sup> The percentages for the categories where the students achieve the most unsatisfactory results has been calculated over a total of 78 respondents, as it should be remembered that 22 subjects failed to use (5) in their categorization.

### 13 Identification of an appropriate method for the teaching of English

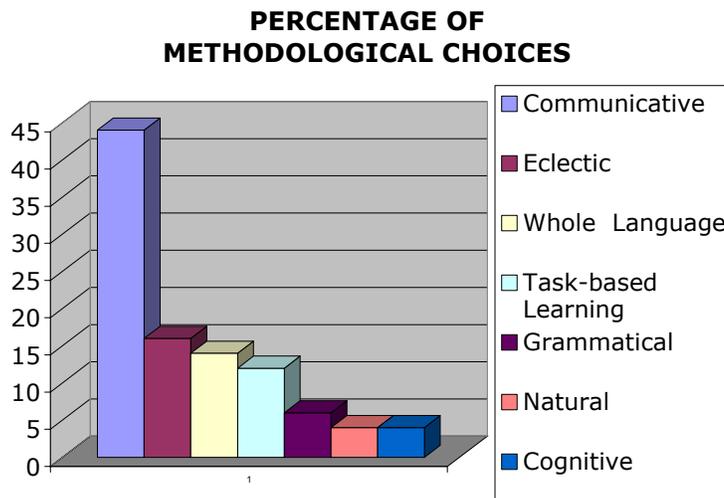
Table 18 Methodological choices made by respondents

<b>Method</b>	<b>f</b>
Communicative	44
Eclectic	16
Whole Language	14
Task based Learning	12
Grammatical	6
Natural	4
Cognitive	4
TOTAL	100

Only seven (the ones chosen by the respondents) out of the ten options offered in the questionnaire are listed in the table. The Structural Approach, the Audiovisual Approach and the Audiolingual Approach did not collect any choices.

It should be remembered that the options *Other* or *None* had also been offered but these categories were not chosen by any respondents.

Graph 5 Methodological options of respondents



As we had pointed out before, it comes as no surprise that almost half the number of respondents (44%) had chosen the Communicative Approach as their favourite method.

We had suggested that the fact that most of the respondents were within the age range of 20 to 40 years and the kind of language instruction and teacher education that they had received made this choice more than predictable.

It should, at the same time, be pointed out that the second most popular choice was that of the Eclectic Method (even when the percentage difference between the first and the second choice is considerable: 40% as contrasted with 16%). The choice of what we chose to call *The Eclectic Method*, rather than *An eclectic method* does not in fact reflect any methodological option if by “eclecticism in language teaching” we are to understand an (in the best of cases, *informed*) integration (at its worst, a *mixture*) of principles, techniques, procedures and tasks belonging to different methodologies.

The term eclectic might be particularly attractive to many practitioners, insofar as it is construed as the opposite of “dogmatic” or “orthodox” and as a synonym of “dynamic” and “flexible”. It might lure a number of others into choosing this option to free themselves from any intellectual engagement with any one particular school of thought and the need to

follow a series of precepts or more or less fixed or pre-established classroom routines.

It might also be relevant to point out that 30 % of the respondents chose options that could be considered to be “more progressive” than the Communicative Approach<sup>195</sup>: Whole Language, Task-based Learning and the Natural Approach which also appear later in a chronology of the language teaching methods, while only 6 % chose the more traditional (and older) Grammatical Approach.

*Table 19 Relationship between methodological option and teacher education*

<b>Method chosen by subjects</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Subjects with a teaching degree in English or completing teacher education</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Subjects without a teaching degree in English</b>	<b>%</b>
Communicative	44	28	51,85	16	34,78
Eclectic	16	6	11,11	10	21,73
Whole Language	14	10	18,51	4	8,69
Task-based Learning	12	8	14,81	4	8,69
Grammatical	6	2	3,70	4	8,69
Natural	4	0	0	4	8,69
Cognitive	4	0	0	4	8,69
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>46</b>	

<sup>195</sup> Though all three of them carry an undeniable communicative imprint, they move beyond the Communicative Approach which, in its most chemically pure form, could be said to be basically Notional-Functional.

For the analysis of the data under this heading we have divided our universe of respondents into two groups:

(a) Respondents that are holders of the official degree of Teacher of English for either Primary or Secondary School or who are completing their Teacher Education in English (attending Second Year (or beyond) of a four year course.

(b) Respondents without specific teacher Education in English.

It can easily be inferred that those respondents with a specific teaching degree tend to choose the Communicative Approach or the methodologies that we had termed “more progressive”. 85.18% of the respondents with a specific teaching degree chose these methodologies but the number of respondents without a teaching degree who chose these same options is not low: 60.86%.

Whereas in the case of respondents who chose an eclectic approach or the more traditional methodologies, the difference between those with a degree in English and those without it is clearer and the gap is larger. 39.13% of the respondents in group (b) above chose the more traditional methods or opted for eclecticism, while only 14.81% of the graduate teachers or teachers in training chose those options.

*Table 20 Relationship between methodological option and age of respondents*

<b>Method chosen by subject</b>	<b>20-30 years</b>	<b>31-40 years</b>	<b>41-50 years</b>	<b>51-60 years</b>
Communicative	24	12	8	0
Eclectic	4	6	4	2
Whole Language	12	0	2	0
Task-based Learning	2	6	4	0
Grammatical	4	2	0	0
Natural	2	2	0	0
Cognitive	2	2	0	0
TOTAL	50	30	18	2

A critical influence of the age factor in relation with the methodological choices made could be verified (which is evident by studying table 17). 50% of the respondents belong to the same age group (20 to 30 years) and this, evidently, explains why answers tend to cluster in this band. In the case of the Communicative Approach, choices diminish consistently as the age of the respondents increases with a significant and surprising loss from the first age group to the second. As it is also surprising that the larger number of options for the traditional Grammatical Method had been made by respondents in the younger age group and that Task-based Learning had received more choices in the second and third age groups (31 to 50 years of age)<sup>196</sup>. The values for the rest of categories, as can be seen, remain more or less constant.

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<sup>196</sup> TBL being one of the latest contributions to the field, we would have expected it to gain more acceptance among the respondents in the younger age group.

## 14 The Steps in a typical lesson

As this was an open-ended question in the survey, the quantity, length and quality of the answers varied considerably. In order to classify the answers consistently, we adopted the following descriptors:

PPP	for the traditional paradigm
ARC/TBL	for a more flexible paradigm
Unidentified	for cases in which it was not possible to identify a prevalent paradigm

*Table 21 Teaching paradigms adopted by respondents*

<b>Teaching Paradigms adopted</b>	<b>f</b>
Traditional Paradigm (PPP)	40
Flexible Paradigm (ARC or TBL)	32
It is not possible to identify a paradigm	24
No answer	4

### The PPP Paradigm

PPP has been the prevalent paradigm for lesson organization for more than 50 years in spite of its prescriptive nature (or probably because of it). Its popularity might be partly due to the fact that it affords a simple and “sensible” explanation of what teachers and students can be expected to do at each of the three well differentiated moments of a traditional lesson: Presentation- Practice- Production.

Presentation: The teacher presents a topic or problem<sup>197</sup> to the students. This is normally done in the context of a reading passage or a dialogue which exemplify the topic or problem and that will later be used as models at the next step. According to whether the teacher has decided to use a deductive or an inductive approach, the teacher explains or elicits the meaning of the items presented or the rule of pattern he wishes to teach.

Practice: The practice that the students are afforded at this step is normally pseudo-communicative and is, in most cases, conducted in the audio-lingual fashion with the students required to focus on the formal aspects of the language rather than on the meanings conveyed. Meaning is, therefore, sacrificed for the sake of automaticity and the internalization of the “mechanics” of the language. The activities can be more or less sophisticated and can be effected both in the written and oral medium. Typical examples range from the obvious “fill in the blanks” exercises to the oral practice of *conversation* which, in most cases, only amounts to contextualized substitution drills.

Some teachers are very comfortable at this stage of the lesson and do not very often move on to the next step. This might be partly due to what we will call the *illusion of communication* (students speak but they hardly communicate) or the (conspicuous) absence of mistakes or simply

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<sup>197</sup> It could be a topic of a lexical (e.g. the vocabulary of foods) or of a grammatical kind (e.g. the use of the genitive case or the present progressive).

because they are genuinely satisfied with their students' achievements up to this stage<sup>198</sup>.

Production: Theoretically the difference between the activities of this stage and those of the previous one can be explained in terms of the binary opposites "skill enabling" (Practice) and "skill using" (Production) tasks. This is sometimes popularly called the stage of "free communication" (or "creative writing", for that matter) in which the student is supposed to enjoy total freedom to choose the linguistic forms he needs to accomplish the task at hand. Games, role-plays, conversation and problem solving tasks are typical of this stage.

### **ARC Model**

Up to a certain extent this model (Scrivener:1996) could be said to crystallize the attempts that ELT specialists have been making over the past two decades to find a teaching paradigm to supersede the strictness of the time honoured (but well worn) PPP.

ARC is a descriptive rather than prescriptive model and it should best be viewed as a way of interpreting what actually happens in an English lesson than stating what should happen. *A*, *R* and *C* stand for *Authentic*, *Restricted* and *Clarification* and because of the dynamic and non-sequential nature of the model these three constituting elements can be

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<sup>198</sup> *The illusion of communication* is directly linked to the *threat of frustration*, since some teachers tend to shy away from really communicative tasks, lest the students fail and frustration set in.

combined in different manners (as need dictates) in such a way that different configurations (not necessarily ARC) may result, for example, ARC, CRA, ACR, ACAR, RCA, etc.

Authentic: The activities at this stage are focused on fluency and meaning and the learners are encouraged to communicate using whatever language they have at their disposal<sup>199</sup>. The use of *authentic* (newspaper or magazine articles, songs, video clips from TV serials or films, etc) or *simulated authentic*<sup>200</sup> materials is promoted to engage the students in what, along with Littlewood (1981), we will call *Functional Communication Activities* and *Social Interaction Activities* which might include tasks ranging from problem solving activities and games<sup>201</sup> to role-plays and sharing personal anecdotes.

Restricted: At this stage the teacher's efforts are sharply and unambiguously focused on the development of accuracy, therefore, he provides learners with formal practice of the *pseudo communicative* or

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<sup>199</sup> The linguistic repertoire to be used by the learners is only restricted by their own communicative capacities but is not predetermined by the teacher, as no particular linguistic forms are to be practiced (as is the case in the second P in the PPP model).

<sup>200</sup> Under the heading of *simulated authentic* we group all those kinds of materials that are produced for the purposes of teaching the language but that have got a "real" feel to them, in such a way that, for example, what is presented as a newspaper article looks very much like the real thing in that all the graphic conventions of newspaper publishing are respected. For a more detailed treatment of the question of *Authenticity* at the level of material selection and design, see the authoritative article by Breen (1985).

<sup>201</sup> A special note should be made as regards *games*. They are often classed within the *quasi-communicative* category on the grounds that they are frequently contrived to practise one particular linguistic form but, to say the least, there is no need for this to be so. Moreover, we daresay any game can become communicative insofar as the participants get genuinely engaged in it and move beyond the linguistic dimension into the real ludic nature of the activity.

*quasi communicative type*<sup>202</sup>. The linguistic repertoire to be used by the students at this stage is thus primarily and deliberately restricted to the linguistic forms being practised.

Scripted (dramatizations) and semi scripted dialogues (open dialogues), *conversational exchanges*<sup>203</sup>, guided composition (from expansion of telegraphic or dehydrated sentences to guided paragraph writing or guided summary) transformation exercises (paraphrasing, substitution tables, "turn into" tasks etc) are typical activities at this stage.<sup>204</sup>

Clarification: At this stage the learners' attention is directed towards one (or several) particular linguistic elements. This might be induced by the teacher or it might arise from the students' own interest to clarify a topic they find complex or intricate.

This is probably the most teacher-centred of the three stages as it is the teacher the one who demonstrates, exemplifies, clarifies a point or helps the students to find out by themselves.

Exemplification, display, translation, demonstration, explanation, repetition, diagramming, systematization and elicitation questions are

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<sup>202</sup> What Littlewood (1981) calls *Pre communicative Activities* which, in his taxonomy, comprise *Structural Activities* and *Quasi-Communicative Activities*.

<sup>203</sup> Of the type: "Ask your partner whether he likes the following foods and drinks" to practise the form: "*Do you like...?*" and positive and negative answers.

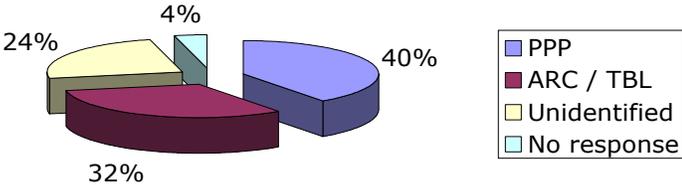
<sup>204</sup> As in fact are all those activities that could fit the *P* for *Practice* in the PPP Model.

typical techniques the teacher avails himself of for the purposes of clarification.

For practicality reasons, in this analysis of the answers to the questionnaire that we administered to teachers we included the ARC model together with the Task –based Learning (TBL) framework under a general heading of *flexible paradigm*.<sup>205</sup> TBL has already been discussed in Chapter 2 so we will not elaborate on it here.

Graph 6 Teaching paradigms adopted by respondents

**TEACHING PARADIGMS ADOPTED**



Although a primacy of the traditional PPP paradigm can be clearly observed (40 %), the number of respondents that chose a more flexible paradigm of the ARC / TBL kind is worth noticing (32 %). Another detail that should not be overlooked is the fact that 24 % of the respondents had answered this question in such unstructured (and at times, disorganized

<sup>205</sup> Though the *flexibility* factor in TBL could be reasonably disputed.

way) that their responses could not be classified into any of the two large groups we had chosen for analysis.

*Table 22 Relationship between paradigm adopted and level of teacher education*

<b>Paradigm</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Subjects with a teaching degree in English or completing teacher education</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Subjects without a teaching degree in English</b>	<b>%</b>
PPP	40	18	33,33	22	47,82
ARC / TBL	32	26	48,14	6	13,04
Unidentified	22	6	11,11	18	39,13
No Answer	4	4	7,40	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		54		26	

It is not surprising that most of the respondents that chose a more flexible model of lesson organization (ARC/TBL) are already graduate teachers or are teachers in training since it is precisely in the academic circles that these respondents come from that the more traditional PPP model is rapidly losing ground.

Within this group there were 26 choices for ARC/TBL as contrasted with only 6 choices from the group of untrained teachers. Still the number of respondents with teacher education that chose the PPP paradigm is considerably high (18 choices for PPP against 26 choices for ARC/TBL).

It is equally unsurprising that the respondents without a specific degree for the teaching of English ranked high among those cases that we have labelled *unidentified* (low degree of systematicity in the lesson

organization). 18 respondents without a teaching degree in English were slotted into this category against 6 cases of respondents with a specific teaching degree.

The almost even distribution of choices for the PPP paradigm (18 and 22) might be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of teachers currently in service received their early language instruction along the lines of that model and it might still be deeply rooted in their minds as an ideal model for lesson organization.<sup>206</sup> It should be remembered that the respondents were not confronted with the choice between PPP and ARC/TBL but, as has been said before these were two categories chosen for analysis.

For the sake of exemplification, we will quote the answers provided by one respondent whom we have labelled “case 12” (from the group of untrained teachers). He responded in Spanish even when the questions in the questionnaire were in English:

Pasos: (a) feedback (b) presentación del tema nuevo (c) aplicación del tema nuevo ya sea vocabulario o estructuras (d) juego de roles (e) actividades de comprensión auditiva (f) refuerzo con actividades como tarea extra-clase.

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<sup>206</sup> Paradigms are not easily replaced. For a more detailed treatment of the subject (with special reference to the PPP Model), see: Woodward, Tessa (1996).

Although this teacher appears to make an effort to use “more updated” terminology, it permeates that the paradigm he is using is the traditional PPP Model since in his response:

(b) is clearly the *Presentation* stage,

(c) is the *Practice* stage, and

(d), (e) and (f) could be construed to be the *Production* stage, although whether this is so will depend, to a large measure, on what kind of tasks the teacher has in mind when he refers to *role-plays*, *listening comprehension activities* and, very particularly, *after school reinforcement activities*.

A good guess is that in these activities the teacher restricts himself to loosening the degree of control and, obviously in (f), of teacher-centredness though what kind of language the students are to use is still kept under tight control. However, we can only guess here, since, for example, “Homework” (f) could be anything from a multiple substitution table (which would amount to further *practice*) to a piece of creative writing (which would undoubtedly be an instance of *production*).

We are still left with the problem of categorizing what the respondent has termed (a) feedback. We could speculate that what he meant was some kind of informal talk on petty school occurrences to (in very traditional

terms) “warm up” the students or some kind of activation of the students’ previous schemata in readiness for the new topic to be introduced, as much as it might simply mean the oral whole-class correction of the exercises he had assigned as homework the class before.

Eventually this teacher was included within the group of respondents that opted for the PPP paradigm.<sup>207</sup>

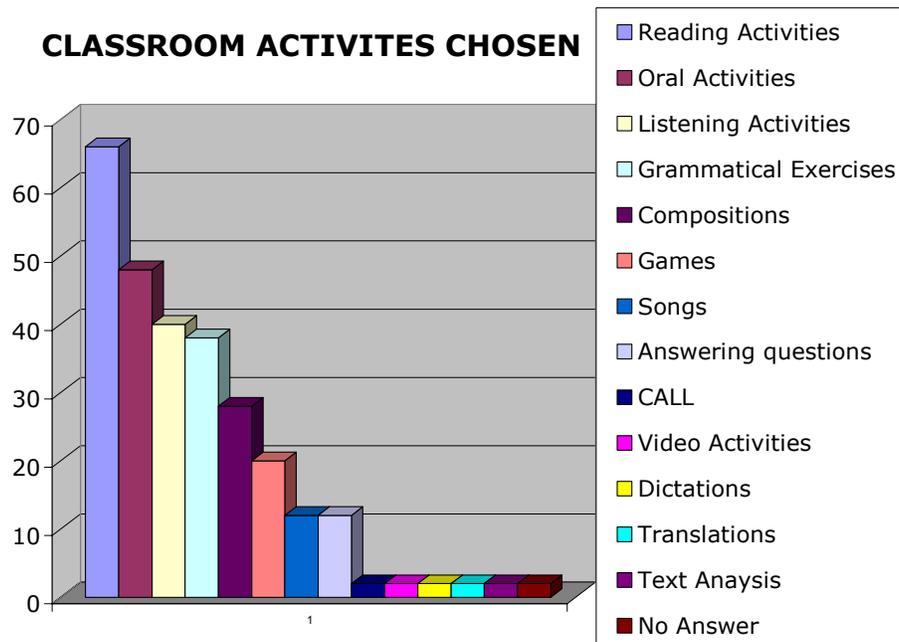
## 15 Identification of the most frequent learning activities in their classrooms

*Table 23 More frequent classroom learning activities quoted*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>f</b>
Reading Activities	66
Oral Activities	48
Listening Activities	40
Grammatical Exercises	38
Compositions	28
Games	20
Songs	12
Answering questions	12
Computer assisted language learning	2
Video Activities	2
Dictations	2
Translations	2
Text Analysis	2
No Answer	2

<sup>207</sup> These were the kinds of problems that we had envisaged when we constructed the open-ended question that we are presently analyzing and explains the rationale for the grouping the respondents’ answers under one descriptor or another (PPP or ARC/TBL)

Graph 7 Classroom activities quoted by respondents



As we had anticipated before in our analysis of question 12 (highest degree of achievement), it was not unexpected that respondents quoted *Reading Comprehension* as the area at which they could verify the best results with their students (44 % of the respondents), since 23.91 % of the respondents (66 subjects) have chosen Reading Activities as the most frequent activity in their classrooms.

What most probably merits further analysis is the fact that 48 respondents (17,39 %) have chosen typical *Oral Activities*, such as (in their own words) *conversations, role-plays, improvisations, and dramatizations*, when it was precisely that are the one at which they recorded the lowest degree of achievement by their students.

At first sight, this might be due to the need to provide more extensive practice in those skills that they perceive their students to be in deficit. What still remains to be seen is why the rate of improvement is so low provided extensive practice is afforded but this kind of analysis is beyond the scope of this work.

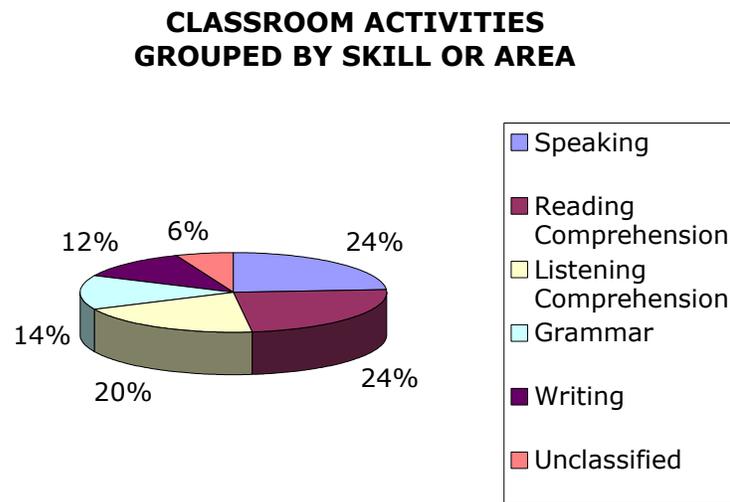
*Oral Activities* is followed by Listening Activities with 14.49 % of the respondents and *Grammatical Exercises* with 13.76 %. It is interesting to notice how such diverse kinds of tasks should appear in such an even distribution (40 and 38 choices respectively).

*Table 24 Frequent Classroom Activities grouped by skill or area*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Area</b>
Oral Activities	48	Speaking
Games	20	Speaking
TOTAL	68	
Reading Activities	66	Reading Comprehension
TOTAL	66	
Listening Activities	40	Listening Comprehension
Songs	12	Listening Comprehension
Video Activities	2	Listening Comprehension
TOTAL	54	
Grammatical Exercises	38	Grammar
TOTAL	38	
Compositions	28	Writing
Dictations	2	Writing
Translations	2	Writing
TOTAL	32	
Answering questions	12	Not classified
Computer assisted language learning	2	Not classified
Text Analysis	2	Not classified

Graph 8

Frequent classroom activities grouped by skill or area



A grouping of the activities quoted by the respondents in terms of the four macro skills and a category that we have defined as *Grammar* has been attempted. Since our research instrument was a self-administered survey, further clarification from the respondents was not viable and this might account for a number of difficulties that we encountered to classify more rigorously some of the tasks suggested.

For example it could be argued that a game can be played both in the oral or the written (crossword puzzles, jumbled words, finding the differences) media, but we have felt inclined to classify them as oral activities. In the same way, we are well aware of the fact that the exploitation of a video segment or of a song could be carried out orally or in writing but we have decided to classify videos and songs as activities for listening comprehension taking into consideration the nature of the input.

As it will be noticed a number of activities have been left unclassified : *Answering questions* and *Text Analysis*<sup>208</sup> because it not possible to determine whether they are carried out mainly orally or in writing (this will depend very much on the particular methodological construct of the respondent) and CALL (Computer assisted language learning) because the tasks will depend on the nature of the commodity that is run, the most widespread in our country are those that include games (with a focus on grammar or vocabulary) as much as the processing of texts (reading comprehension) or straightforward grammatical practice (for example “fill in the blanks with the correct tense of the verb” with self correction provided through some very popular programmes such as “Hot Potatoes”).

All things considered, this new configuration does not substantially change the results of our analysis of table 21 with the sole exception that in this case *Speaking* ranks slightly higher than *Reading Comprehension*: 24.63 % against 23.91 % as contrasted with 23.91 % 17,39 % in Table 23.

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<sup>208</sup> Moreover, in the case of *Text Analysis* we could not properly fancy what the two respondents that included this category had in mind. One of them stated “análisis de textos”, which we felt could be paired to a kind of reading comprehension task, and the other “Exégesis Textual”, which is a more complex activity in which Discourse Analysis might be brought into play, hence no longer a simple reading comprehension task.

## 16 Identification of teaching problems

Table 25 Teaching problems detected by respondents

<b>Problems</b>	<b>f</b>
Lack of interest	46
Lack of discipline	44
Lack of teaching materials/resources	40
Attention Problems	18
Large Groups	12
Mixed ability classes	10
Lack of capacity to communicate orally in English	10
Lack of coordination among teachers of English	10
Inadequate contents of school subjects	4
Lack of capacity to organize written texts logically	4
Lack of capacity to identify the gist of a text	4
Insufficient contact hours	4
Repeated learner's absenteeism	4
Memory and retention problems	4
Economic problems of the learner's family	4
Dislike of the language	4
Violent behaviour towards classmates	2

Table 26 Teaching problems classified according to the attributions made by respondents

<b>(A) Problems attributed to questions directly related to the learners</b>	<b>f</b>
Lack of interest	46
Lack of discipline	44
Problemas de Atención	18
Lack of capacity to communicate orally in English	10
Lack of capacity to organize written texts logically	4
Lack of capacity to identify the gist of a text	4
Repeated learner's absenteeism	4
Memory and retention problems	4
Dislike of the language	4
Violent behaviour towards classmates	2
TOTAL	140
<b>(B) Problems attributed to questions not directly related to the learners</b>	<b>f</b>
Lack of teaching materials/resources	40
Large Groups	12
Mixed Ability Classes	10
Lack of coordination among teachers of English	6
Inadequate contents of school subjects	4
Insufficient contact hours	4
Economic problems of the learner's family	4
TOTAL	80

220 answers were collected (80 answers short of the total number expected since some respondents quoted only one problem instead of 3, as was required in the questionnaire).

In 63.64 % of the cases the difficulties were attributed to causes directly related to the learners. This total of 63.64 % can be discriminated into 15.71 % attributed to cognitive factors and 81.42 % to attitudinal factors (among which we have included attention deficit)<sup>209</sup>.

Within this group, 2.85 % of the attributions made could be explained in terms of environmental or functional factors since problems like *repeated absenteeism* might be due to causes that go beyond the attitudinal or the cognitive.

36.36 % of the responses have been classified as not directly related to the learners and in these cases the attributions have been made to factors such as educational planning and school management or socio-economic situation of the school community.

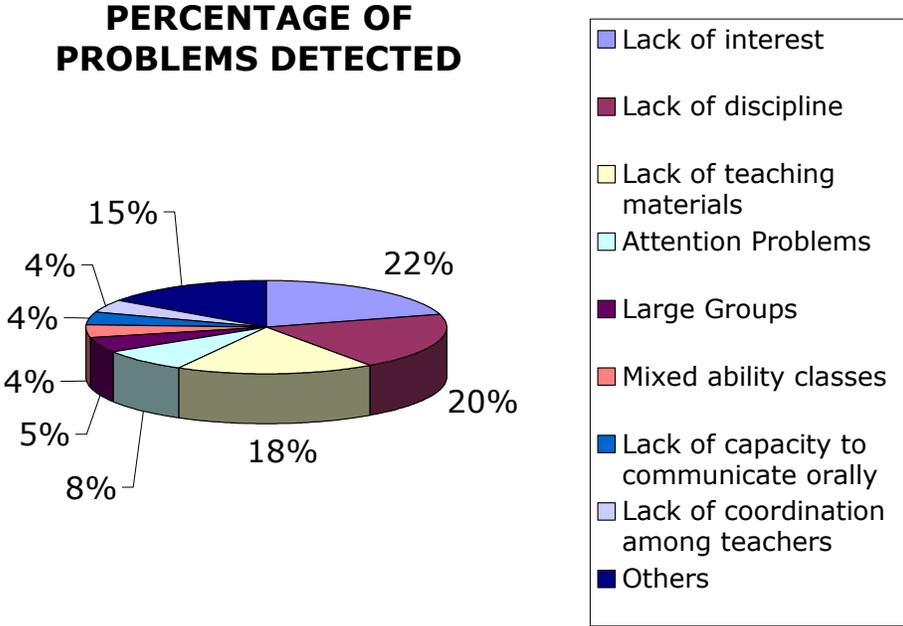
It is remarkable to observe that of this 36.36%, only 6 respondents seem to involve the teacher, and yet only indirectly, as the problem mentioned *Lack of coordination among teachers of English* might be construed to be

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<sup>209</sup> As it is known, attention deficit problems (like many other problems that are in a hard and fast way attributed to attitudinal reasons) might be due to a variety of factors ranging from the environmental to the physiological without leaving aside the cognitive or the emotional.

a social rather than a personal problem or, in extreme cases<sup>210</sup>, might be attributed to lack of proper supervision on the part of the school administrators.

Graph 9 Percentage of problems detected by respondents



Within the category *Others* we have included those problems mentioned by two or fewer respondents.

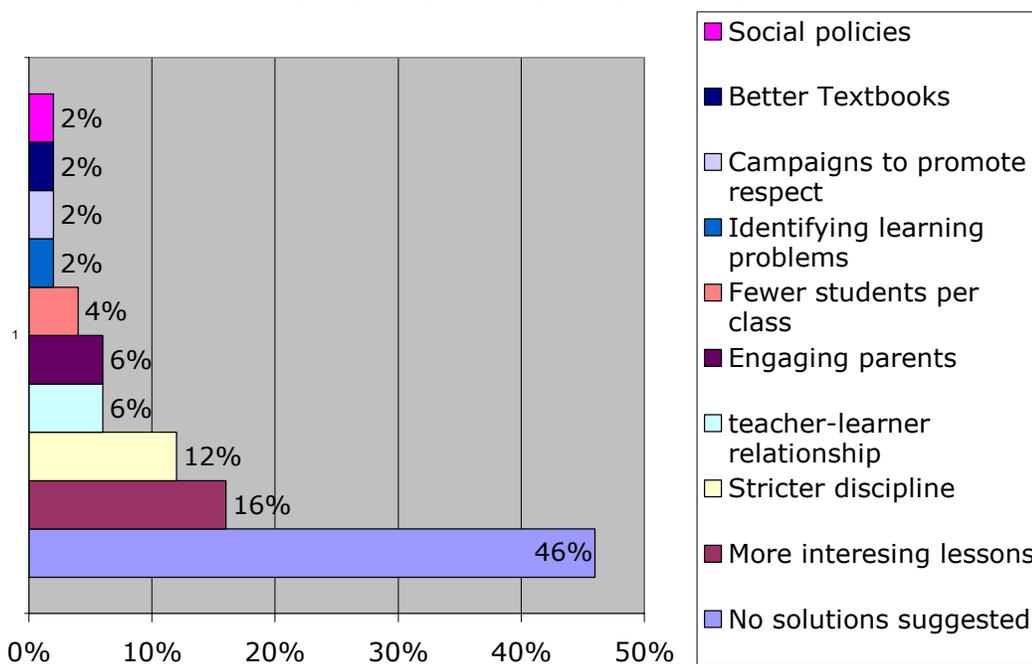
<sup>210</sup> For a more detailed treatment of the theory of attribution, consult: Difabio (1994).

Table 27 Suggested Solutions to problems detected

<b>Suggested Solutions</b>	<b>f</b>
More interesting topics and more dynamic lessons	16
Stricter discipline and punishment	12
Closer teacher-learner relationship	6
Engaging parents' cooperation	6
Fewer students per class	4
More coordination among teachers of English	2
Identifying the students' learning problems	2
Campaigns to promote respect for others	2
Textbooks with topics closer to the learners' reality	2
Adequate social policies	2
No solutions suggested	46

Graph 10 Suggested solutions to problems detected

### SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS



The category *Others* groups those answers suggested by only one respondent.

It is worth noticing that 46 respondents failed to provide a suggestion to the problems that they themselves had pointed out. The remaining 54 % suggested solutions that could be grouped into 2 large categories:

- (a) Solutions for which the teacher is directly responsible or that might fall within his area of responsibility.
  
- (b) Solutions for which other educational or governmental authorities are responsible.

24 (66%) of the total of 36 solutions suggested by respondents in group (a) are directly related to questions of classroom management, whereas the remaining 44% involves other members of the school community as well as the teachers themselves.

As regards the solutions put forward by the respondents in group (b), 18 are related to questions of government policy or school administration and 2 are related to the textbooks used.<sup>211</sup>.

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<sup>211</sup> *Textbooks* was a dubious choice for inclusion within this category, but we took into consideration that in a number of schools textbooks are either prescribed by the department or the school or governmental authorities or provided by the ministerial authorities (particularly in depressed areas of Greater Buenos Aires) or by the parents' union. If the choice of textbooks were the direct responsibility of the teacher, it was assumed, the solution suggested would be of a self-critical nature and self-criticism does not seem to be very popular with our respondents.

Table 28 Solutions discriminated by area of responsibility

<b>(A) Solutions under the responsibility of the teacher</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
More interesting topics and more dynamic lessons	16	
Closer teacher-learner relationship	6	
Engaging parents' cooperation	6	
More coordination among teachers of English	2	
Identifying the students' learning problems	2	
Campaigns to promote respect for others	2	
TOTAL	36	66
<b>(B) Other factors</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Stricter discipline and punishment	12	
Fewer students per class	4	
Textbooks with topics closer to the learners' reality	2	
Adequate social policies	2	
TOTAL	20	37

## 17 Identification of a theory of learning underlying the methodology chosen

Table 29 Theories of Learning chosen by respondents

<b>Selected Category</b>	<b>f</b>
Constructivism	54
Other ("a mixture" / "several")	12
Information Processing	8
Realism	6
Structuralism	6
"Psicogénesis"	4
Behaviourism	4
Rationalism	2
Scientific Method	2
I do not know	0
I have never thought of this	0
No answer	2

The choice of *Constructivism* by 55.10% of the respondents confirms the presuppositions with which we started this work and we will not elaborate

further here in the possible explanations for this choice since we have already discussed these before.

The second favourite choice among respondents was *Any Other* with 12.24 % (much below the favourite choice). The questionnaire required respondents who opted for the choice *Any Other* to specify which theory they favoured and this was invariably answered with phrases such as “ a mixture of them all”, “several”, “a bit of everything” “one that suits the students”. None of the 12 respondents who chose *Any Other* specified another theory of learning as an alternative to the ones that had been provided on the list of options. To us, the quality of the specifications made by those 12 respondents is far from reflecting a healthy lack of dogmatism, on the contrary, we are of the opinion that it only shows confusion or lack of adequate knowledge or information about the theories of learning that can be applied to the classroom situation. And, in this sense, the respondents in our universe are not alone.

Table 27 shows the frequency distribution for the choices made by the respondents from the list provided. The options *None*, *I do not know* and *I have never thought of this* were also made available to the respondents but no subject opted for any of these.

As can be easily seen, a number of distractors were included in the list of options: *Realism*, *Structuralism*, “*Psicogénesis*”, *Rationalism* and *Scientific Method*.

Among the distractors, two are philosophical schools of thought: *Realism* and *Rationalism*, one is a research method: the *Scientific Method*, one is a sociological theory: *Structuralism* (this was thought to be a strong distractor since, it was assumed, many teachers would find the word familiar from the times of the Audiolingual Approach, which had American Structuralism as one of its pillars), and the remaining one "*Psicogénesis*" though widely (and wrongly) assumed to be a theory of learning or a didactic model to facilitate the acquisition of literacy, should in fact be assimilated to Piaget's genetic epistemology and thus be more properly construed as a theory of knowledge.

The three keys in the list were: *Constructivism*, *Behaviourism* and *Information Processing*.

It is surprising that Information Processing should collect as many choices (8,16% which is equivalent to 8 subjects) as it did, ranking above *Behaviourism* and the popular "*Psicogénesis*".

*Information Processing* was conceived of as a weak distractor since it was assumed that very few respondents would be acquainted with the theory of George Miller (1956) (1960) or with McLaughlin's Model (1987) that within the framework of Cognitive Psychology apply the principles of information processing to the learning of a second language. Our assumption was based on the fact that these theories have been widely

disseminated among language teachers in our country but very especially because applied linguists have not adopted either of these theories as a foundation for any method for the teaching foreign languages.

The option for this theory can probably be explained in terms of the association that some teachers might have inferred that it has with computational models that, even if it is to be acknowledged, have not, as yet, had any direct application to the teaching of foreign languages, evoke an air of respectability and modernity that they most probably would wish to see as the foundation of their everyday teaching.

In the following table we will attempt to discern the profile of the respondents that opted for each one of the choices presented. To that end, the same two groups we established for the analysis of question 15 have been considered:

- (a) Respondents that are holders of the official degree of Teacher of English for either Primary or Secondary School or who are completing their Teacher Education in English (attending Second Year (or beyond) of a four year course. A total of 54 respondents.
- (b) Respondents without specific teacher Education in English (46 subjects).

Table 30 Categories selected and level of teacher education of respondents

<b>Selected Category</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Subjects with teacher education</b>	<b>Subjects without teacher education</b>
Constructivism	54	26	28
Other ("a mixture" / "several")	12	6	6
Information Processing	8	6	2
Realism	6	6	0
Structuralism	6	2	4
"Psicogénesis"	4	4	0
Behaviourism	4	0	4
Rationalism	2	0	2
Scientific Method	2	2	0
I do not know	0	0	0
I have never thought of this	0	0	0
No answer	2	2	0
TOTAL	100	54	46

Table 31 Frequency distribution of right answers and level of teacher education of respondents

<i>Kind of choice</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Subjects with teacher education</b>	<b>Subjects without teacher education</b>
Correct	66	32	34
Incorrect	54	22	12
TOTAL		54	46

The choice of the keys: Constructivism, Information Processing and Behaviourism are considered right answers. The choice for any other of the remaining options offered is, therefore, considered to be a wrong answer.

The option *Any Other* that, as has been said, was not accompanied by the specification of any other theory in any of the 12 responses and the lack of response (2 subjects) were computed as “wrong answers” for the purpose of this analysis.

From the analysis of Table 28, it is evident that Teacher Education was not a decisive factor for the identification of the correct options.

The number of respondents who provided correct answers is almost evenly distributed with a slight difference in favour of the respondents without teacher education.

More unexpected still was the fact that in the case of the wrong answers, the respondents without teacher education would fail almost 50 % less than the subjects with teacher education. A total of 64 % of the wrong answers were made by respondents with teacher education, moreover the two cases of respondents that failed to answer this question were subjects with teacher education.<sup>212</sup>

A preliminary and very tentative conclusion would be that graduate teachers as well as trainee teachers have not received enough information

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<sup>212</sup> Although the lack of response was assigned to the category of “wrong answers”, this was not an easy decision to make. The subject who fails to answer a question like his might have been more careful than another respondent who chose the right answer by chance (the chance factor in this question was, anyway, greatly diminished given the number of distractor included. Eventually, the criterion that prevailed was that both failing to make an answer and choosing the wrong answer were indicative of a lack of necessary knowledge or information.

about how students learn or if they have they do not give evidence that they have profited from it.

Table 32 Choices made by respondents over 41 years of age

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Constructivism</b>	<b>Structuralism</b>	<b>Realism</b>	<b>Other</b>
41 – 50 years	14	2	2	0
51 – 60 years	0	0	0	2

The age group to which the respondents belonged does not seem to have been a critical factor in the choice of an appropriate theory of learning. Table 29, for example, shows the choices made by the older respondents who could have been expected to be more conservative in their options. If we were to categorize the options presented into more or less *traditional*, we could probably have expected these respondents to choose theories like *Behaviourism* and *The Scientific Method* which, as we can see in the Table, they did not.

Realism<sup>213</sup>, which as has been said is in fact a philosophical school, was chosen by two respondents from this group as much as it was chosen by 4 subjects belonging to the younger age groups (20 to 40 years of age) . In

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<sup>213</sup> It could be argued that the respondents that chose *Realism* (namely and precisely the younger ones) might have misconstrued the term for *Authenticity*, a movement that is rapidly gaining ground in many Colleges of Education and Universities and that consists in the use of “genuine” material as input (e.g. authentic magazine or newspaper articles or video tapes of popular TV serials). A much weaker explanation could be that they misunderstood the term to indicate “realia” or even the “natural methods”, like Krahen’s Natural Approach.

the case of The Scientific Method, it was 2 respondents from the age group 20 to 40 years of age the ones who were responsible for those wrong choices.

Conversely, *Behaviourism*, which was the prevalent theory of learning in the fifties and the sixties, was chosen by 4 respondents in the age group 31 to 40 years of age who had not been born or were born in those decades and could hardly have had first hand experience of that theory, while the older respondents, who might have been educated in that tradition or might even have taught English following the precepts of that theory, failed to choose *Behaviourism* as a valid theory of learning.

### **18 and 19 Identification of the characteristics of Behaviourism and Constructivism**

*Table 33 Constructivism and Behaviourism. Distribution of correct answers (General)*

<b>Number of correct answers</b>	<b>f</b>
eight	12
seven	20
six	22
five	12
four	26
three	4
no answer	4

Questions 18 and 19 have been grouped together since both of them aim at assessing how much knowledge the respondents had about the general

characteristics of these theories, not necessarily specified to language teaching contexts.

The number of possible correct answers was 8. For the scoring of the correct answers, the measure for satisfactory performance was placed at 6 correct answers which represents 75% of 8. Applying this yardstick, only 54% of the respondents attained the score of satisfactory.

Of this 54% of respondents with a satisfactory marking only 22.22% could answer all the questions correctly (not a very encouraging prospect).

## **20 and 21 Identification of the applications of Behaviourism and Constructivism to the teaching of English**

*Table 34 Constructivism and Behaviourism. Distribution of correct answers (English)*

<b>Number of correct answers</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>
eight	0
seven	20
six	32
five	16
four	16
three	8
two	4
no answer	4

The answers to questions 20 and 21 have been analyzed together because both questions intended to ascertain whether the respondents

could identify correctly how Behaviourism and Constructivism could be applied to the English language classroom.

As in the case of questions 18 and 19, the number of possible correct answers was 8. and the measure for satisfactory performance was placed at 6 correct answers (which represents 75% of 8).

Only 32 % of the respondents attained a satisfactory score. If the evaluation of the results for questions 18 and 19 was discouraging, the performance of our respondents in the case of these two questions can be disquieting. From the comparison of the modest percentages of right answers for both pairs of questions, we can (not very prematurely) conclude that our respondents are more skilful at identifying the general characteristics of *Behaviourism* and *Constructivism* than at identifying concrete applications of these theories to their own teaching situation.

*Table 35 Comparison of answers to questions 18 -21*

<b>General Characteristics</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Specific Applications</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Number of correct answers</b>		<b>Number of correct answers</b>	
8	12	8	0
7	20	7	20
6	22	6	32
5	12	<b>5</b>	16
4	26	4	16
3	4	3	8
2	0	2	4
no answer	4	no answer	4

The Table above summarizes graphically the point that we had made in our analysis of Table 31.

Table 36 *Constructivism. Advocates and their correct answers*

<b>Number of correct answers to (19) and (21)</b>	<b>Subjects that produced that number of correct answers</b>	<b>Subjects that chose Constructivism in (17)</b>
<b>8 satisfactory</b>	14	6
<b>7 satisfactory</b>	18	12
<b>6 satisfactory</b>	18	8
5 unsatisfactory	16	10
4 unsatisfactory	14	18
3 unsatisfactory	0	0
2 unsatisfactory	0	0
1 unsatisfactory	2	0

We thought it convenient to consider the case of Constructivism in particular because 55.10% of the respondents had favoured this theory over all the others presented in the list in Question 17.

Only 26 out of the 54 respondents that had chosen *Constructivism* could give correct answers to Questions 19 (general characteristics) and 21 (concrete applications), while 28 produced wrong responses. This means to say, 51,85 % of the subjects that had stated that Constructivism was the underlying theory of learning for the methodology they use in their classrooms failed to identify the general characteristics of this theory or how it could be used to each English.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> In all justice, it should be said that there is a group of 12 subjects that produced satisfactory responses to the questions about Constructivism but had not chosen that theory among the options given in question 19. Their options were: 4 for *Any Other*, 3 for *“Psicogénesis”*, 2 for Structuralism, and 1 for each of the following: Information Processing, Behaviourism and the Scientific Method.

To further the analysis of the relationship between theory of learning, specific methodology and teaching paradigm, we performed a series of operations with the data collected in questions 13 to 21.

As a starting point, we chose to assess the consistency between the methodology chosen by the respondents and what they actually did in the classroom.

To that end we analyzed the data for question 13 (identification of a method) together with the data for questions 14 (steps in a typical lesson), 15 (more frequent students' tasks in the classroom) and 16 (problems encountered in the classroom and suggested solutions).

The comparison between 13 and 14 was effected on the basis of the PPP paradigm and the ARC/TBL models or the category "it is not possible to identify a paradigm"<sup>215</sup> as has been explained in the relevant section (see 14 above).

For the comparison between 13 and 15 we had to determine whether the activities quoted by the respondents could be considered typical of the

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<sup>215</sup> As an example, we could mention the case of one respondent who identified *Whole Language* as his favoured methodology in question 13 but when asked in question 14 to enumerate the steps of one of his typical lessons, he almost verbatim quotes Presentation, Practice and Production, producing an obvious contradiction.

methodology that they claimed to use.<sup>216</sup> .

The same criterion was applied to the comparison between 13 and 16, that is to say, if there was internal consistency between the problems observed and the methodology chosen<sup>217</sup>

In order to increase the reliability of the assessment of this series of questions (13 to 21) the cooperation of three external assessors was requested<sup>218</sup>. A high degree of inter-rater reliability could be observed (98%)<sup>219</sup> .

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<sup>216</sup> For example in the case of a subject identified as respondent 24, an evident incoherence could be observed. The methodological choice was Task-based Learning, but when asked to enumerate the most frequent activities his students engage in in his classroom, he quoted: “pregunta-respuesta”, “lectura de párrafos”, “aplicación de las reglas aprendidas” y “completar con una palabra” (“question-answer”, “reading of passages”, “application of the rules learnt” and “completing with one word” that seem to better describe the activities in a Grammatical or Audiolingual Approach. It must be said that this subject also evidenced an indisputable lack of coherence between his answers to questions 13, 14 and 16.

<sup>217</sup> In this case we found the clearer indicators among the problems detected rather than among the suggested solutions. For example, “*lack of capacity to communicate orally in English*” was thought to be a typical concern with the advocates of the Communicative methodologies. It must be remembered that 46 % of the respondents failed to suggest any solution to the problems they had detected and that most the answers called from the remaining 54% were not, for their most part, related to methodological issues.

<sup>218</sup> Prof. Ana Claudia Saraceni from Instituto Superior de Formación Docente 88 –San Justo, Lic. Mariano Quinterno from Instituto Superior del Profesorado “Joaquín V. González” – City of Buenos Aires and Prof. Marcela Santafé y Soriano from Instituto Superior de Formación Docente 52 –San Isidro.

<sup>219</sup> The only instance of discrepancy observed was related to the comparison between the answers to questions 13 and 17 in the case of one respondent. One of the assessors found that a Communicative methodology could be partly founded on the Information Processing theory while the other two assessors assigned 0 (zero or total lack of coherence) to same case. A question that was debated was whether a respondent that had opted for *The Eclectic Method* (as we had whimsically termed it) could rightly claim an association of this choice with any of the options provided in question 17. All three assessors eventually agreed that the right match for *The Eclectic Method* was *Any Other* as this option was, as we had stated before, normally specified by respondents as “several”, “a mixture”.

As for the assessment of the data collected in questions 18, 19, 20 and 21, that for ease of reference we will call “questions related to knowledge”, we added up all the right answers of each respondent for the questions in this series and worked out a score for each subject. Again the point of minimum acceptable performance was placed at 75 % which amounts to 12 right answers over a total of 16 possible answers.

The following results were observed, 47% of the respondents (46 subjects) evidenced satisfactory knowledge (12 or more correct answers) while 53 % of the respondents (50 subjects over 96 responses collected)<sup>220</sup> showed an unsatisfactory level of knowledge.

The percentage of correct answers showed the following distribution:

*Table 37 Percentage of correct answers to the series of questions 13 to 17*

		<b>Satisfactory knowledge</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory knowledge</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>A</b>	Coherence in the method (q.13), the learning theory (q.17) and the classroom activities chosen (qs.14,15,16)	31	25	56
<b>B</b>	Coherence only in the method (q.13) and the learning theory (q.17) chosen	10	8	18
<b>C</b>	Coherence only in the method (q.13) and the classroom activities chosen (qs.14,15,16)	4	13	17
<b>D</b>	No coherence	2	7	9
	Total	47	53	100

<sup>220</sup> It should be remembered that 4 respondents failed to answer the questions in this series.

From the analysis of these data, we can conclude that only 31 % of the respondents met the requirements that we had construed as the expected qualities of a teacher for the purposes of this study, a professional who:

(1) possesses a satisfactory level of knowledge of the theories of learning in general and their application to the teaching of a foreign language

(2) shows a satisfactory degree of coherence between the methodology chosen, what he believes its underlying theory of learning is and his actual teaching practice.

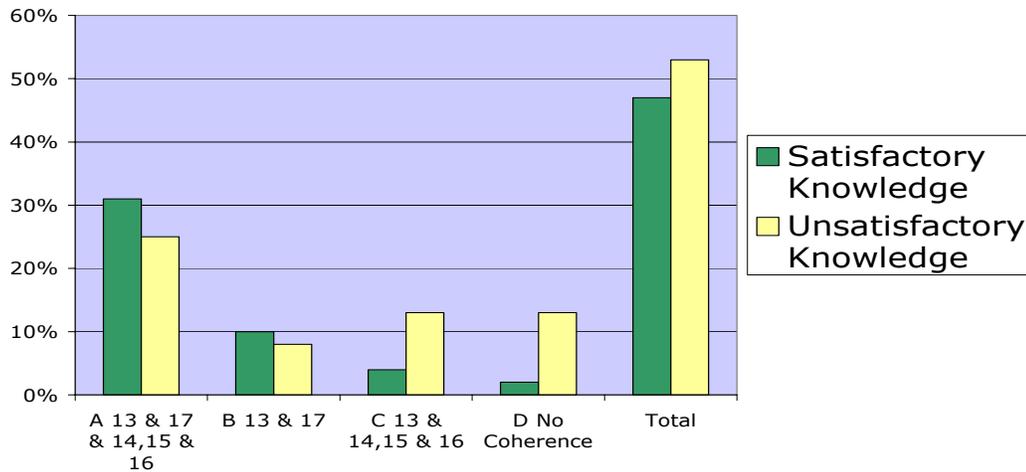
It is worth noticing that those respondents who evidenced an unsatisfactory level of knowledge of the theories of learning showed at the same time the highest degree of disagreement between the methodology chosen and its underlying theory of learning and the models they use in their actual professional practice. Only 25% of the respondents who showed unsatisfactory knowledge of the theories of learning evidenced coherence in the other answers.

It should also be noted that 9% of the respondents did not show any sort of coherence between the different aspects in question. Only 2% of these had evidenced satisfactory results as regards their knowledge of the theories of learning. This might prove that knowledge of the theories of

learning exerts a positive influence on the choice of an appropriate methodology and the selection of tasks for classroom teaching.

Graph 11 Concordances in the series of questions 13 to 17

**PERCENTAGE OF CORRECT ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS 13 TO 17**



However, there is a fact that cannot be overlooked. 13% of the respondents that had not evidenced a satisfactory level of knowledge of the theories of learning, showed coherence between the choice of methodology and that of classroom activities.<sup>221</sup>

This seems to prove our hypothesis that the teachers of English prioritize the knowledge of teaching methodologies and classroom procedures,

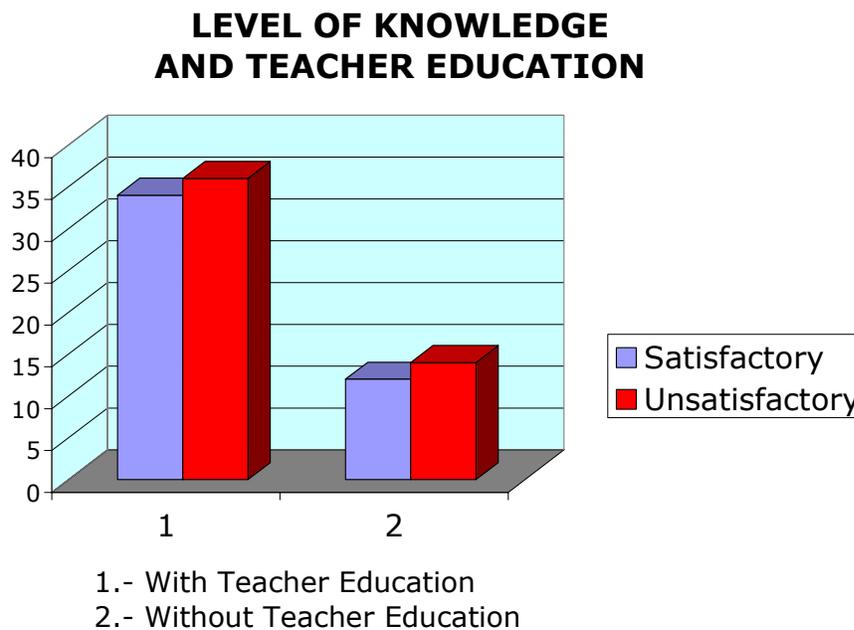
<sup>221</sup> 4% of the respondents with a satisfactory knowledge of the theories of learning, evidenced coherence between methodology and classroom activities but failed to match methodology with its underlying theory of knowledge.

techniques and strategies rather than the knowledge of the internal processes through which their students learn the language and that they are consistent about the principles of the methodology that they choose and the activities that they implement.<sup>222</sup>.

*Table 38 Level of knowledge and teacher education of respondents*

<b>Level of Knowledge (questions 18 to 21)</b>	<b>Subjects with teacher education</b>	<b>Subjects without teacher education</b>	<b>Total</b>
satisfactory	34 (35%)	12 (12,5%)	46
unsatisfactory	36 (37,5%)	14 (15%)	50

*Graph 12 Level of knowledge and teacher education of respondents*



<sup>222</sup> A further point that can be made is that the lack of knowledge about how students learn can lead to a dangerously unprincipled and uncritical dogmatism as regards the choice and implementation of teaching methods.

The information shown in Table 38 and Graph 11 is conclusive enough in that the level of teacher education of the respondents is not crucial to help them make the right choices in the questions related to knowledge (series 18 to 21). Moreover, the number of respondents whose answers have been found to be unsatisfactory is considerably (and alarmingly) higher in the case of graduate and trainee teachers.

## 22 Teacher Development

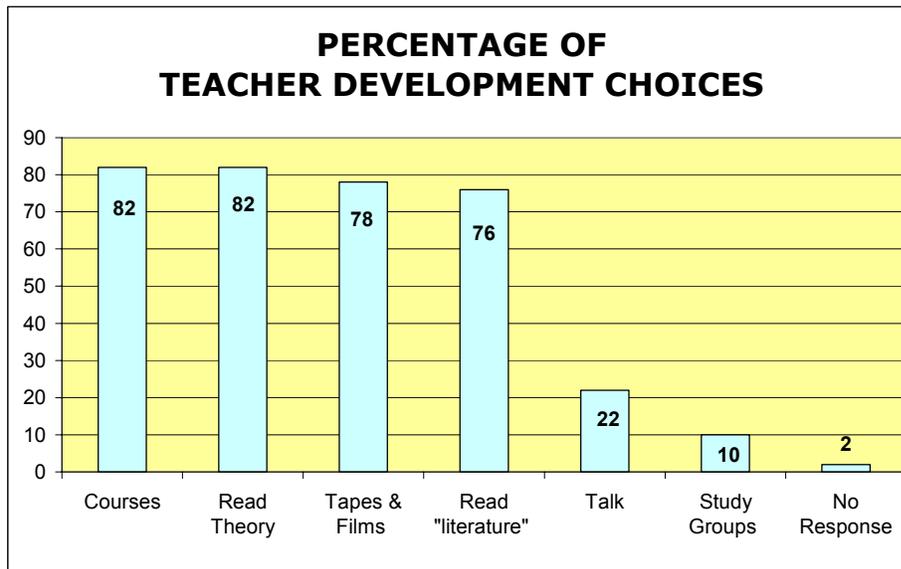
In order to determine what kind of teacher development activities the respondents preferred, six options were afforded. The choices made by the respondents resulted in the following distribution:

*Table 39 Teacher development choices of respondents*

<b><i>Teacher Development activities</i></b>	<b><i>f</i></b>
Attend teacher development courses, seminars, congresses and conventions	82
Read material on learning, teaching methods and education in general	82
Listen to tapes or watch films in English	78
Read all kinds of "literature" in English: novels, magazines, newspapers, material on the Internet	76
Take part in conversation groups	22
Take part in study/discussion groups (e.g. SIGs)	10
No Response	2

Graph 13

Teacher development choices of respondents



### 23 Teacher Development Options

To further the analysis of the options selected by the respondents and more clearly establish their relationship to the aims of this work, the six choices in question 22 were divided into two groups:

1.- Choices that evidenced a concern of the respondents to update their teaching skills, comprising the following alternatives:

a) I attend courses, seminars, congresses and conventions

d) I read material on learning, teaching methods and education in general in magazines, journals or on the Internet.

f) I take part in study/discussion groups (e.g. SIGs)<sup>223</sup>

2.- Choices that evidenced a concern of the respondents to improve or update their command of the language, which were construed to include the following options:

b) Listen to tapes or watch films in English

c) I read novels, magazines, newspapers and other kinds of “literature” in English and material of general interest on the Internet.

e) I take part in conversation groups

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<sup>223</sup> The inclusion of study groups within this set could be understandably disputed since these groups might include both those related to the practice of ELT as much as those related to other areas, such as Language, Phonology, Literature, Grammar and Linguistics. The criterion for inclusion that prevailed was finally that of popularity of the different groups, the Methods SIG's being the most heavily attended in our country and elsewhere in the world.

*Table 40 Frequency of Respondents that chose options (a), (d) or (f) in question 22*

<b>Choice</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Respondents that chose either (a), (d) or (f) or a combination of these	87	88.77
Respondents that chose neither (a), (d) nor (f) or a combination of these	28	11.23
No response	2	
TOTAL	98	100

Question 23 required respondents that had selected either (a), (d) or (f) or more than one of these at the same time<sup>224</sup> in question 22 ( a total of 87 respondents) to state what kind of course or reading material they would favour with the resulting frequency distribution:

*Table 41 Choices for courses and material related to Theories of Learning or Methods*

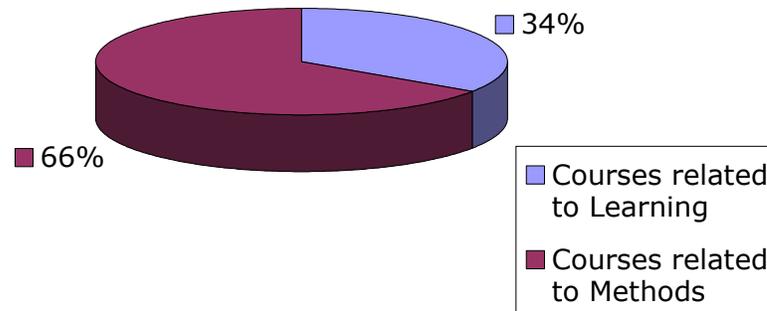
<b>Preferences of Respondents</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Courses and Materials related to Theories of Learning	30	34.48
Courses and Materials related to Teaching Methods	57	65.52
TOTAL	87	100

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<sup>224</sup> It should be remembered that question 22 offered respondents the possibility of selecting more than one choice.

Graph 14 Choices for courses and material related to Theories of Learning or Methods

**PREFERENCES RELATED TO  
EITHER *LEARNING* OR *METHODS***



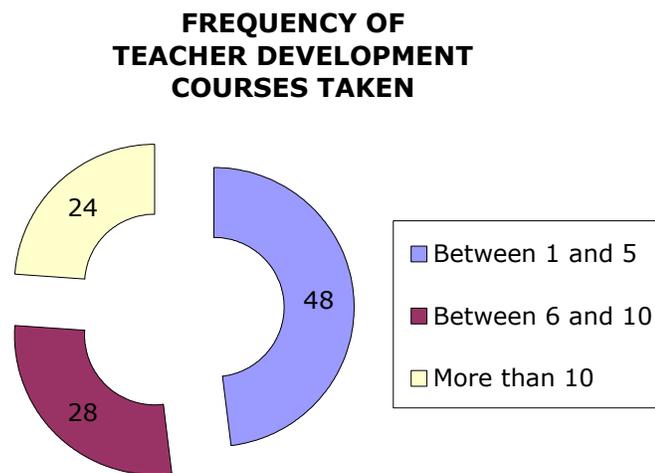
The figures of 66% respondents choosing courses or reading material related to teaching methods and allied concepts (like classroom management or materials design) contrasted against the 34 % that opted for theories of learning and concepts that were thought to be normally included within their domain (like thinking processes and affective factors in learning) might indicate beyond any reasonable doubt that the respondents to our questionnaire (and by extension teachers of English in general) seem to be more interested in improving their knowledge about *how to teach English* rather than expanding their knowledge about *how learners actually learn the language* as we had anticipated in Chapter 1.

**24 Number of Teacher Development Courses taken over the last five years**

*Table 42 Frequency of teacher development courses taken by respondents*

<b>Number of courses</b>	<b>f</b>
Between one and five	48
Between six and ten	28
More than ten	24

*Graph 15 Frequency of teacher development courses taken by respondents*



12 of the 24 respondents that claim to have taken more than 10 Teacher Development courses (at a rate of two or more per year) have evidenced satisfactory results in their answers to the questions in the series 18 a 21. This fact might seem to point out that Teacher Development courses do not have a crucial incidence on the knowledge of the respondents about the theories of learning or at best that their positive influence is neutralized by its lack of influence (it should be noticed that the distribution of influence is even with 50% in each one of the groups).

In all due justice, it should be said that teacher development courses dealing with the theories of learning or allied topics<sup>225</sup> are conspicuously missing from the offer directed at the general ELT audience<sup>226</sup> in Argentina. The favourite subjects for teacher development courses in our country are normally those related to the teaching of the language (e.g. *Teaching Vocabulary* or *How to teach English in Kindergarten*) or to the study of the language itself (*Changes in Pronunciation* or *Phrasal Verbs*)<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> A different chapter which is beyond the scope of this work should be devoted to the courses on what allegedly constitutes a new theory: *Brain-based Learning*. The basic fallacy behind this fad promoted by makeshift self appointed *brain-based specialists* is that any kind of learning that does not take the brain into consideration is simply not feasible at all. These kinds of courses with the esoteric characteristic we have pointed out above are not based on (or do not constitute) any theory of learning (or theory of knowledge, for that matter) and scarcely reflect any developments in the Neurosciences or Neurolinguistics with any acceptable degree of seriousness.

<sup>226</sup> Though this is not necessarily the case of courses with credits towards an M.A. or a Diploma (“Maestría” o “Especialización”) as the ones offered by Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Universidad Nacional de La Plata and Universidad Nacional de Rio Cuarto among others.

<sup>227</sup> The calendars of events for 2006 and 2007 published in the following websites and electronic magazines or newsletters were consulted: [www.welcometoenglish&fun.com.ar](http://www.welcometoenglish&fun.com.ar); [www.eltevents.com.ar](http://www.eltevents.com.ar) and [www.ShareEducation.com.ar](http://www.ShareEducation.com.ar). The criterion for choosing these sources has been their comprehensiveness and their circulation.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Conclusions

The central hypothesis of this work, it will be remembered, was to demonstrate to what extent the classroom teacher possessed a sound knowledge of not only the models and approaches that he purported to use in his classroom practice but also of their underlying theories of learning and whether the techniques, procedures and strategies that he used reflected that particular methodology and were in keeping with the particular theory of learning he advocated.

By analyzing the data collected, we can conclude that:

1.- A considerable number of respondents evidence unsatisfactory or insufficient knowledge of the contemporary theories of learning and how these influence classroom processes.<sup>228</sup>

2.- The lack of satisfactory knowledge as regards the theories of learning is not perceived to be an obstacle for the respondents in our survey to

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<sup>228</sup> Only 47% of the respondents were rated as "with satisfactory knowledge" as opposed to 53% that were evaluated as "with unsatisfactory knowledge".

apply the postulates of the specific teaching methodology of their own choice in their teaching practice.

3.- An adequate knowledge of the theories of learning on the part of the teachers surveyed is not a decisive factor in the identification and application in the classroom of the techniques, procedures and strategies that are construed to be in keeping with the tenets of one particular methodology.<sup>229</sup>

4.- The lack of knowledge about the theories of learning manifested by the classroom teachers surveyed is partly due to the lack of proper information received in the course of their Teacher Education<sup>230</sup> and partly due to their lack of interest in this area as evidenced in their choice of graduate teacher development courses.<sup>231</sup>

5.- The teachers in our sample tend to prioritize teacher development activities related to methodology and/or learning rather than activities

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<sup>229</sup> 73% of the respondents gave evidence of coherence between the methodology chosen and the activities implemented in the classroom. Of these, 35% exhibited a satisfactory knowledge of the theories of learning underlying the methodology that they had chosen and 38% showed the same degree of coherence but attested to an unsatisfactory knowledge of the theories of learning. The difference between one group and the other (35% against 38%) confirms that this factor (knowledge of the theories of learning) is not critical.

<sup>230</sup> It should be remembered that, for example, 51.85% of the respondents that had favoured Constructivism were not able to identify the general characteristics of this theory, which is not a minor detail since in our survey 55.10% of the respondents claimed that Constructivism was the theory of learning underlying the methodology they had chosen.

<sup>231</sup> Only 34% chose courses related to theories of learning, learning and thinking processes, learning strategies and styles, or cognitive and affective factors in learning as opposed to 66% that opted for courses that focused on teaching methodology.

dealing with the improvement of their language skills or their command of the language.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The analysis of the results of our survey and the conclusions derived from it, clearly prove that our classroom teachers, as we had stated in our introduction, are more interested in “*how to teach*” a foreign language than on “*how their students learn*” it, and this, in part, explains the apparent disregard that these teachers show for the theories of learning and the definite contribution that a more rigorous knowledge of these would make to their classroom practice.

This lack of interest can be easily explained and even justified if we, in a more philosophical sense, accept that nobody can rightly appreciate that which he does not understand or does not know. In this sense, our formal educational system does very little or nothing<sup>232</sup> to instil in the minds of the teachers-in-training a curiosity for the learning and thinking processes involved in the act of learning a new language.

A decided move to change the curricula of the Colleges of Education in our country to include *Theories of Learning* as a separate discipline<sup>233</sup> appears to be compelling if we are to remedy this, that we understand, is

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<sup>232</sup> See the relevant section on “The Theories of Learning at our Colleges of Education” in chapter 2.

<sup>233</sup> Rather than as an appendix to a more general course in Psychology.

an important deficit in the course of studies of the future teachers of English.

Moreover, we daresay, that, in cases when the availability of human resources so permits, this “*new*” subject should be in the hands of experienced teachers of English or lecturers in Methods or Pedagogy of EFL with a necessary systematic preparation in the area of learning theories who could bridge the gap between the declarative knowledge of each theory and the classroom applications of each particular theory in ELT.<sup>234</sup>

At the same time, we believe, it would be necessary to raise an awareness among the members of the teachers’ associations and the educational authorities in our country of the need for the graduate teacher to become conversant with the theories of learning so that in-service training is provided in this crucial area.

A special note should be made here of the alarmingly large number of courses that tend to proliferate these days and that can be wrongly (and carelessly) identified with a theory or theories of learning, such as those make-shift courses on *Brain-based learning* or *Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)* which can, at best, be termed to be “current trends” and that, to our understanding, lack the scientific rigour of the long

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<sup>234</sup> In this sense the specialists in Education or psychologists, we could venture, can be of little help since they lack specialized knowledge of the teaching of foreign languages and we run the risk of establishing a course focused exclusively on the psychological aspects of learning or, worse still, on the history of learning theories.

established and well founded theories like *Behaviourism*, *Gestalt Theory* or *Constructivism*.

## **Research Implications**

As has been said before, the theories of learning have traditionally received infrequent attention from ELT specialists and applied linguists alike. Again, and attesting to our assumption that EFL teachers seem to be more interested in “how they teach” than on “how learners learn”, books, handbooks, journals, papers and all kinds of publications on Methods, ELT Pedagogy and ELT Pedagogy abound<sup>235</sup>, whereas publications in the field of learning theories and their application in methodologies for the teaching of foreign languages are scarce and very often have a limited circulation, being confined to the academic circles of the Universities abroad.<sup>236</sup>

The situation concerning this issue is still worse in our country. As it is common ground, we do not have a research tradition in ELT in Argentina<sup>237</sup> and the very few researchers that carry out serious investigations in the field of Applied Linguistics have not, in our opinion,

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<sup>235</sup> And the authors of those publications are seldom generous when the time comes to deal with the relationship between the theories of learning and the appropriate methodologies, and, what is worse, their references are often lackadaisical and at times imprecise or even confusing when not definitely whimsical, as many authors create their “own” ad-hoc theories of learning or psychological theories to serve as a backdrop to the methods that they themselves have originated or that they advocate.

<sup>236</sup> Due tribute is, nonetheless, paid to the very valuable works in this area in Chapter 1.

<sup>237</sup> Neither are we, in our profession, provided with the necessary funding or afforded the indispensable time for serious research.

geared their interests towards the area of theories of learning or, in any case, they have not seen their work published.<sup>238</sup>

The present work has been conceived of as a prolegomenon to further enquiry to be undertaken in our future works or in other studies and investigations by other researchers.

It is our personal conviction that this is an area that lends itself naturally to being investigated by an interdisciplinary research team made up of educational psychologists, psychologists, specialists in education and, basically, ELT specialists. The treatment of this topic would undoubtedly be greatly enriched by the expert contributions of specialists from such diverse but related fields.

### **Concluding Remarks**

It would be utter reductionism to posit that the language teacher could solve or ameliorate all or most of the problems that he has to face in his classroom if he had an adequate speculative and practical knowledge of the theories of learning, as much as it would be illusory to believe that a teacher's effectiveness could be guaranteed by the simple expedient of his rightful application of an appropriate methodology disparaging any consideration of the learning processes involved in the act of acquiring a foreign language.

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<sup>238</sup> A seminal attempt in this sense has been Pozzo (1996), although her work has a definite bias towards contrastive analysis and the explicit teaching of grammar.

The present trend in the field of Applied Linguistics seems to be moving in the direction of a reappraisal of the role of the theories of learning as the necessary foundations of the specific methodologies for the teaching of languages and, it is to be expected that in the near future curriculum designers will finally grow into an awareness of the need to provide the future generations of teachers of English with substantial education in this area if they want them to be able to make informed, knowledgeable decisions about how to create their own materials and classroom activities, how to properly discern what is pertinent and what is not from the plethora of innovations that they are daily offered, and how to deal with their students' learning problems effectively.

It is precisely in this latter aspect, although, by no means, not in the only one, that a solid knowledge of "*how the students learn*" can be of invaluable help for the language teacher. The ELT practitioner is confronted on an everyday basis with most varied learning problems in his classroom, some of them on account of the general impoverishment of the educational standards in our country and others due to an array of attitudinal and motivational factors.

We understand that the treatment of those problems will ultimately rest in the hands of specialists but the early detection of those deficits definitely falls within the sphere of responsibility of the classroom teacher and, in this respect, an impeccable command of the foreign language or a

thorough knowledge of the teaching methods will certainly not be of much utility, whereas an understanding of the learning processes the students go through, what helps them to learn or , why they fail to learn would indeed be very useful.

It is an accepted fact by the general public and the members of the profession alike that the teaching of English in our country suffers from a number of pitfalls and that the results that the ordinary classroom teacher obtains from his students in his classroom are, by and large, highly unsatisfactory.

We strongly believe that the educational authorities should take a firm decision to conduct a large-scale national survey to detect the causes of those deficits and, on the basis of the analysis of the results of that survey, adopt the necessary measures for curriculum renewal or adjustment in the provincial Colleges of Education and issued recommendations in this regard to the national or private universities, as much as it would be highly commendable that the relevant authorities organized in-service training courses to attend to the solution of the shortcomings detected.

If the authorities responsible for the modifications to the curriculum for EFL Teacher Education or the organization of professional development courses for in-service teachers took into consideration, as we are strongly convinced that they should, the case for the inclusion of the theories of learning as applied to English language teaching, they would be making a

decided contribution to the profession. It is in this way, that the future teachers and the in-service practitioners might be afforded the opportunity to appraise for themselves how much a sound knowledge of “*how students learn*” can contribute to improve the way in which we teach English in our classrooms.

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