Recent Trends and Issues in ELT Methodology

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1.1 Introduction

Over the past fifteen years, articles in the professional English language teaching (ELT) literature have declared the impossibility of finding a best method (Prabhu 1990), the death of the method (Allwright 1991), and the onset of a postmethod condition (Kumaravadivelu 1994 and 2001). There is currently an ongoing debate in the literature and on the internet (see for example www.teaching-unplugged.com) about where the profession should go next, now that the apparent certainties of teaching methods have been shown to be questionable. In this article and a later one I aim to provide a review of some of this debate.

1.2 Definitions

What exactly were these certainties? A dictionary definition of 'method' tells us that it is:

a way of teaching a language which is based on systematic principles and procedures, i.e., which is an application of views on how a language is best taught and learned. Different methods of language teaching such as the direct method, the audiolingual method, the audio-visual method, the grammar translation method, the Silent Way and communicative approach result from different views of:

a the nature of language

b the nature of language learning

c goals and objectives in teaching

d the type of syllabus to use

e the role of teachers, learners and instructional materials

f the techniques and procedures to use. (Richards, Platt and Platt 1992: 228)

The dictionary then refers us to the citation for 'approach' where we find that

Language teaching is sometimes discussed in terms of three related aspects: approach, method and technique. Different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learned (the approach) imply different ways of teaching language (the method), and different methods make use of different kinds of classroom activity (the technique). (op. cit., p.20)

This tripartite definition originates in an article by Anthony (1963) which has been extremely influential. It informed a seminal text in ELT, Richards and Rodgers' *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (1986) which is widely used on teacher education courses, and recommended by certificating bodies such as the Royal Society of Arts for their RSA/Cambridge Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults, and Trinity College London for their Diploma in TESOL, both of which are recognized by the British Council as qualifications for senior teaching positions in ELT institutions worldwide. However, it soon becomes clear on reading Richards and Rodgers' book, that the definitions that they have adopted from Anthony are not entirely suitable to their subject matter. For example, they note that grammar translation 'is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.' (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 5). Grammar translation is described early on in the book before the introduction of Anthony's definitions and so it does not appear to matter that there is no match. Later methods however, presented within Anthony's

framework, do not fit the definitions either. The inventor of Suggestopedia, Georgi Lozanov 'does not articulate a theory of language' (ibid., p.144); Curran, the inventor of Community Language Learning 'wrote little about his theory of language' (ibid., p.115); Asher (the author of Total Physical Response) 'does not directly discuss the nature of language or how languages are organized' (ibid., p. 88). It is clearly not theories of language that inform these methods, and it becomes difficult to argue that there is the kind of theoretical grounding (an 'approach') that could be used to justify 'the method'. Anthony's definitions are however, applicable to the dominant method of the time: audiolingualism. Audiolingualism was firmly based on structuralist linguistics, which in turn produced a method and techniques for the classroom. Geared to this specific case, the generalizability of Anthony's tripartite definition is limited. So its widespread adoption has meant that thinking about what teachers do in classrooms has in turn been limited. The rectification of this unfortunate consequence is to be a central theme of this paper. Anthony's definitions have of course not been the only ones offered in the past thirty years. Others will be discussed as I present the summaries of articles which will form the bulk of this paper.

1.3 The review

I have divided the articles for review into four groups. The first papers to be discussed deal with the dominant method of the 1980s: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). As we will see, it is impossible to come up with a clear-cut definition of CLT in the way that Richards and Rodgers would have us believe. The approach is criticized, changed and adapted in all of the papers that I will summarize. The second group of papers are those which announce the death of the method, or the beginning of a 'postmethod' situation

within the ELT profession. These papers reflect and trace changes in thinking and attitudes towards ELT and propose developments in new directions. These two groups will form the main part of this article. The third and fourth groups deal with two of these new directions: the third group is directed at the nature and role of culture in English language teaching; the fourth deals with the classroom as a social event and looks at the impact of social context on language teaching and learning. I will deal with these two groups in a subsequent article.

2.1 CLT: Adoption, Adaptation, Criticism

Even a cursory examination of the ELT textbooks produced in recent years by the major publishing houses will demonstrate the dominance of the communicative method in modern English language teaching. The typical activities of a CLT classroom (role plays, information gaps, discussions) are to be found in abundance in these texts. But the dominance of CLT now does not mean that it has always gone uncriticized.

2.2 Michael Swan on CLT

In a pair of articles published in the *ELT Journal* (Swan 1985a; Swan 1985b) Michael Swan criticized the Communicative Approach to English language teaching for its proponents' attitudes to the students. He noted that the applied linguist Henry Widdowson's distinction between 'usage' (i.e. 'the function of a linguistic item as an element in a linguistic system') and 'use' (i.e. 'its function as part of a system of communication' [Richards et al. 1992: 394]) had meant that students of English now needed to study rules in order for them to be able to understand utterances like 'the window is open' as a request to close it. Swan argued that it was not necessary to transfer this knowledge (part of the approach) into classroom aims (method) because students of

English as a foreign language know just as much as we do about communication from their knowledge of their first languages. Swan went on to argue that because of this knowledge it is largely irrelevant for teachers to spend time developing students' prediction skills, negotiation skills and guessing abilities. He acknowledges that these skills are not entirely irrelevant however, and suggests that if it is rude in certain cultures to ask for repetition then it would be wise to teach negotiation techniques to students from those cultures, but otherwise students' knowledge of their native language will suffice. Overall, Swan criticizes the Communicative Approach for transferring too much of the communicative theories of meaning and use into the classroom, wasting students' and teachers' time on irrelevancies and unnecessary skills, while ignoring more important elements of communication.

In his second paper (1985b) Swan turns his attention to communicative syllabuses, and the functional-notional syllabus in particular. The Communicative Approach used this kind of syllabus, which is semantic in nature. So for example the notion of relative size which is embodied in various grammatical structures is taught together. This, Swan argues, is confusing because it involves so many different grammatical structures. Language is still a system and parts of it at least should be taught as such. Swan's argument here seems to be with the adoption of only one type of syllabus: this, he says, will result in courses with serious omissions. The solution he proposes is 'to integrate eight or so syllabuses (functional, notional, situational, topic, phonological, lexical, structural, skills) into a sensible teaching programme' (ibid., p.80). Swan's 'sensible teaching programme' would include a great deal of language of both the scripted and authentic variety. He dismisses CLT's preoccupation with authentic language as the 'real-life fallacy' (ibid., p.82) arguing that while it can give students a taste of real language in use and therefore has its place in the

classroom, scripted language is more suitable for presenting specific language items in an economical manner. In conclusion Swan summarizes the good points of CLT, but urges its practitioners not to reject all that had been learnt about language teaching in previous methods; nor should we expect too much of CLT, because it had not been proved that students learnt more this way than with other teaching methods.

2.3 CLT demands too much

In the same year and in the same publication, Peter Medgyes (1986) wrote a partly tongue-in-cheek protest against the demands that a theorist-produced Communicative Approach makes on teachers, especially non-native-speaker (NNS) teachers. The communicative language teacher must be superhuman to take on all the responsibilities required of her, argues Medgyes. Writing from his experience in Hungary, he takes eight elements of CLT and deals with each in turn. The needs analysis recommended by CLT practitioners in order to match course content with students' wants is unlikely to be useful because the needs of Medgyes' students cannot, for the most part, be identified. He also doubts the feasibility of meeting the needs of individual students and the group as a whole. Medgyes notes that CLT teachers focus on both form and content (traditional approaches requiring the teacher to focus only on form). He wonders whether thus spending less time on teaching form does not make teachers less valuable. CLT teachers are also required to create the context for 'real' communication in the classroom between 'whole persons', and do all of this with total respect for the human individuals in the class. Medgyes is distinctly tongue-in-cheek here, and this tone intensifies: communicative teachers, he notes, are to both facilitate learning and withdraw from the centre of class; they are to provide security to

enable the students to show initiative and yet retain control of the class; they are to dispense with textbooks in favour of authentic materials despite the fact that textbooks contain lots of useful language and provide security for the NNS teacher. This facetious summary of the demands made on the communicative teacher is an attack on those theorists (usually university academics) who recommend all this as best practice to tired, overworked teachers who are expected to implement it. Medgyes identifies a chasm between the theorists and the teachers and suggest that NNS teachers should act as mediators between the two groups. The mediators need to be NNS teachers who can cut out most of the more far-fetched ideas. The demands made on NNS teachers by the communicative approach are too much, Medgyes concludes: their linguistic problems are enough to contend with.

2.4 Adapting (to) CLT (1): Translation

Julian Edge (1986) suggests that interactive methods and communicative procedures taken from CLT should be applied to teaching translation. The task that Edge outlines is as follows: students are divided into pairs and each student in each pair is given a different L2 text to translate into their mother tongue. The L2 texts are then handed in to the teacher and the students exchange translations. They then translate their partner's L1 translation back into L2. Pairs of students are put together to form groups of four and the original L2 texts are given back out. Students compare their translations and the originals to identify lost meanings, unclear areas, changed words and sentence structures, cohesion and coherence. Students then discuss whatever differences they note and find of interest in the translations within their group.

In this article Edge outlines a classroom technique by which translation, a somewhat unfashionable classroom activity, is drawn

back into the realm of acceptability.

2.5 Adapting (to) CLT (2): Materials design

In his 1989 paper, Clarke traces a move in ELT towards involving students more in the learning process. Beginning by citing Allwright (1978) who argued that students should develop responsibility for elements of language programmes for two reasons: teacher overload, and learner under-involvement, Clarke suggests that there have been four responses to the second of these two problems. Work in needs analysis, humanistic methods, learner autonomy, and learning strategies have all attempted to tap students pragmatic, emotional or cognitive needs in order to design language programmes better suited to the students. The ultimate aim here is to motivate the students and thus get better results. But the syllabuses produced as a result of this work are still externally imposed. Clarke notes that discomfort with this has led to Michael Breen's process syllabus (what Clarke calls a negotiated syllabus) in which the content and 'operational features' are open to negotiation from the first day of the course and are 'internally generated'. Clarke expresses reservations about whether even an externally imposed communicative syllabus will be acceptable in many situations, 'let alone negotiated "internal" models' (Clarke 1989: 134). Because of these doubts, Clarke suggests a 'micro-approach' to student involvement in the process of materials adaptation; materials which are externally imposed on both the students and the teachers. The adaptation process provides students with a series of meaningful tasks and problems to solve. Clarke notes five basic principles, which are: (1) that students' creative involvement will lead to greater commitment; (2) that students who work on materials created by other students are collaborating and not just receiving, which should also lead to greater commitment; (3) that creating tasks and solving associated problems

are worthwhile and meaningful in themselves; (4) that students will become 'experts' after researching an area of language to produce materials; (5) that students will be both evaluators and assessors of any materials placed before them, and also of their own achievement. Clarke then provides examples of how these principles might be applied in materials adaptation: for example, students write their own substitution tables, produce comprehension questions on reading texts, or make their own tests. Clarke concludes that most teachers and students are in a situation in which an external syllabus is imposed on them. An internal negotiated (process) syllabus, even if applicable, is too daunting for most. However, the value of involving students remains - hence the need for exercises that do this within an external, imposed syllabus.

2.6 Adapting (to) CLT (3): Back to the future

I have titled this section 'Back to the future' because in the very recent paper which I summarize here (Pica 2000) there is a call for the integration of older and more recent methods in the light of second language acquisition (SLA) research. There is also an echo of Swan's sentiments as expressed in his two articles from 1985, and summarized above (section 2.2). Pica notes that recent research has shown that the Communicative Approach alone is not enough to get students to the levels of linguistic ability that they now want. Some elements of language (e.g. complex grammar rules, subtle sociolinguistic and pragmatic strategies) cannot be acquired via communication, but need traditional teaching methods in addition to comprehensible input. These traditional methods are designed to supplement and enhance input (encouraging 'noticing' of grammatical features for example, or 'awareness raising'), and giving feedback on students' output to enable their self-modification.

With regard to instruction and correction, Pica draws on SLA research to argue that students will learn better if their attention is drawn to verb inflections before they engage with texts and listenings; that teachers should focus on one mistake at a time and correct it rather than elaborate or reformulate the student's output; that students should be made aware of their mistakes by providing a corrected version immediately after their own output; that students' 'readiness' for a particular structure should be taken into account (assuming that students have an 'internal syllabus' in which for example, statements precede copular yes-no questions, which precede lexical yes-no questions, which precede wh- questions, and so on); that learning should be integrated with instruction, so for example we might teach the regular formation of the past tense in English, and then correct students' overgeneralizations to irregular verbs; and that sociocultural rules and negotiation strategies should be explicitly taught.

In other areas, Pica notes that research has shown that peer-interaction 'promotes authentic, purposeful L2 use' (2000: 11) and that it enables students to use language 'more communicatively and across a broader range of functions than do lessons characterized by lock-step, teacher-led classroom interaction' (ibid., p.12). There remains a need however, for student-teacher interaction because students who engage in extensive peer-interaction without interacting with the teacher become fluent but non-target like in their use of L2.

Pica goes on to suggest a number of classroom activities which provide students with the type of practice that the research suggests is beneficial. 'Grammar decision-making' involves students in answering grammar exercises and then explaining their decision to a peer or the teacher. This reportedly has a powerful impact on students' grammar learning over time. Jigsaw tasks (information gap activities) are also recommended, although extensive use without teacher interaction

would presumably lead to the kind of fluent inaccuracies noted above. A further technique is the dictogloss/dictocomp in which the teacher gives a mini-lecture about a structure or language point to the students, and then the teacher dictates or the students read a text with that point contained in it. Students take notes individually and then work in teams to try to reconstruct the text for a follow-up presentation (either oral or written) to the class. The students talk about grammatical features and rules in their reconstructions and when comparing their version with the original, which is supplied at the end. This type of activity has a good balance between the traditional dictation and communicative groupwork. The use of the students' first language, often outlawed in the communicative classroom, is found to be useful in explaining complex sociocultural rules and other areas, in building rapport in the classroom between teacher and students, and in reducing the anxiety undergone by students as a result of their struggles to express themselves in a foreign language. Pica justifies the use of these more traditional techniques by reference to SLA research, but she ends by noting that the research does not suggest that a return to translation as an over-riding strategy would be beneficial.

2.7 CLT is not for me

A major complaint about communicative language teaching, heard regularly at teachers' conferences, is that its techniques do not work in 'my situation': in large classes; in high schools; in exam classes; in universities; with a certain kind of student. Adrian Holliday (1994) draws the distinction between the private language schools of Britain, North America and Australasia (BANA) and the state education sector of the rest of the world (TESEP, derived from Tertiary, Secondary, and Primary). The private language schools of BANA have students with different expectations from those of TESEP, and the classes are set up

for small groups and the communicative approach. TESEP on the other hand have institutional constraints, from the type of furniture in the classrooms, to the curriculum, to the attitudes of the teachers of other subjects, to the attitudes of the students themselves. Holliday's argument is that the methods, techniques, procedures, materials and textbooks (what he calls the 'technology' of ELT) originate in BANA and are transferred to TESEP, a transfer which ought not to be problematic in itself, but which is rendered problematic by a combination of three factors.

The first factor is that the version of CLT which comes to TESEP is what Holliday calls 'narrow'. It requires the 'learning group ideal' i.e. small groups, pair and groupwork, the teacher available to all students, and the whole class set in suitable surroundings. In this ideal the pair and groupwork are taken to be central, and this leads to frustration among teachers of large classes etc. Holliday argues that it is not pair and groupwork which are central to CLT, but communication. Communication is possible between students and *texts*, with the students working alone or in groups. The teacher can monitor large classes from a distance, and after the event. Texts can be written, recorded, read aloud, dictated and so on. Holliday argues that CLT should be adaptable to the requirements of all participants, but in trying to explain this he concedes that we can make decisions not to use CLT at all, as long as the decision is principled.

The second factor that problematizes CLT for TESEP practitioners is the lack of ownership. BANA theory, comforting as it may be to understand and speak, is largely inapplicable in its TESEP recipients' situations, because these have not been used as the rationale for the BANA technology. Attempts in BANA publishing houses to rectify this with cultural profiling have not helped as they are dealing with large culture rather than the necessary small cultures of

individual classrooms, of teachers, students and institutions.

The third factor which Holliday includes is the narrowness of the SLA research behind CLT. In itself SLA research can provide valuable insights into language learning, but despite the efforts of researchers to convert their results into classroom practice (section 2.6) it remains too abstract. We need to add educational research to the mix: we need studies of real students in real classrooms. Holliday concludes by noting that teachers' research into their own classrooms is crucial. He also argues against dispensing with all of BANA technology, because some of it is good and strong, for example those BANA aid projects which learn about TESEP classrooms.

I will return to some of these themes in my next article, but now I want to turn to the second group of articles, those which are concerned not with adapting existing methods, but with moving beyond the restrictions that thinking through method imposes on us.

3.1 No Best Method

To say, as most teachers would, that there is no best method, is an illocutionary act which terminates debate without reaching a conclusion. It appears to raise the discussion to a higher level in order to reconcile conflicting views; it keeps the peace but it curtails debate. So argues N.S. Prabhu in his 1990 paper. He goes on to examine some of the reasons that teachers might give to justify the comment that 'there is no best method'.

First is the notion that a best method must depend on the teaching context. The logic of this argument is suspect however, because if there is no one best teaching method for everyone, then it suggests that different methods *are* best for different people or different contexts. So this implies that there is a best method for a specific context. Teaching context involves a vast number of factors, and it is an

enormously complex task 'to determine dependencies between contextual factors and instructional methods' (Prabhu 1990: 163). Contextual factors may be easily identifiable, for example students' age, the teacher's experience, or the official language policy of the institution, but the consequences of these factors for instruction are not clear. Other factors are unclear in themselves: motivation, attitudes, learning styles and personality for example are all notably difficult to analyse. This complexity tends to lead to simplifications and stereotyping which are not useful. In addition to this it is important to know which forms of variation in contextual factors matter to instruction and which do not; otherwise all variation must be taken as important and must be catered for, with the result that we can justify no teaching method for nobody. One factor which is regularly identified is the students' needs, via a needs or situational analysis. The multiple needs which are elicited are met with multiple responses from educators. However, it is difficult to match each need accurately, and invariably the result is an inflexible teaching package that ignores ideas about language acquisition and the nature of language ability, and which leaves no room to deal with spontaneity or for students to generate their own language. A syllabus put together entirely from a needs analysis ignores all theories of language and theories of learning (theories being our only way of making sense of complex phenomena) and if we discard these then instead of a single system of principles we are left with a bewildering catalogue of disparate entities. If our theory does not account for the diverse contexts in which we find ourselves then we need a more comprehensive, and likely more abstract theory, not to discard what we already have in favour of the catalogue approach.

The second justification for the statement that there is no best method is that there is some truth in every method (ibid., p.166). The

argument here is that if a teacher selects elements of different methods based on her perception of what is true and good, the perception itself forms that teacher's method. Being a blend of elements from different methods does not make that teacher's method any better or more true than any other method: its value will be determined by the quality of the original perception. Selecting elements of methods at random is just a gamble, and not a method (although we might come across the truth by accident). The question remains: if there is some truth in every method, then which parts are the truth?

Prabhu suggests that we rethink what 'best' might mean. To talk about a best method implies that one is identifiable through objective, scientific enquiry; to say that there is no best method means abandoning this ideal as unrealizable. This can be justified by noting as Brumfit (1984) does that method is an embodiment of teaching principles within a variety of contextual features (including the teacher's and students' psychological states); that predictive testing of method demands manipulation and control of many of the features of context; and that even if we manage to control contextual features, by doing so we will have distorted the method and therefore the results of the enquiry will be inapplicable. Behind this notion of objective evaluation of method is the idea that there is some set of procedures that will yield maximal results in the maximum number of contexts if replicated correctly, rather like a chemistry procedure that yields predicted results regardless of the chemist's thoughts and feelings. This is clearly an unsustainable point of view: when 'good' methods go 'wrong' we look at the teacher, and generally find that a poor teacher is one who is not involved in her work, or who is too mechanical. As many other applied linguists have done (see below), Prabhu here moves the focus from the method to the teacher.

Prabhu notes that more important than a choice between methods

is the teacher's subjective understanding of the teaching that she does: a conceptualization of how her teaching leads to learning. This involves a notion of causation in her teaching that derives from the teacher's experience of learning and teaching, her exposure to one or more methods, what the teacher thinks and knows about other teachers, and the teacher's experience as a parent or caretaker. The resulting concept (or theory, or intuition) of how learning takes place and how teaching supports it is what Prabhu calls the teacher's 'sense of plausibility'. When this is engaged the teacher is involved and the teaching is productive. Classroom activities which satisfy the teacher will add to her sense of plausibility, those which dissatisfy will detract from it. It is more worthwhile to pursue a sense of plausibility than a best method, because when the sense of plausibility is active, alive and operational enough to create a sense of involvement for both the teacher and the students, then 'real' teaching occurs.

How then to pursue the sense of plausibility? As noted above this is done in the classroom as each activity or event will affect the teacher's conceptualization, but teachers also need to engage in discussion and debate with their peers in order to activate, maintain and develop their sense of plausibility. Interaction with specialists who may (or may not) be proposing a method is a good way of doing this. Now it is possible to conceive of method as a highly developed and articulated sense of plausibility which has great power to influence teachers. Prabhu concludes by arguing that the search for a best method should give way to a search for ways in which teachers' and specialists' perceptions can most widely and effectively interact in order to promote maximally 'real' teaching.

3.2 Method is Dead

Writing in 1991, Dick Allwright noted the continued importance of

'method' as a central methodological issue in how to help people learn languages, and that these separately labelled, separately marketed 'methods' are unhelpful for a variety of reasons.

Allwright traces the development of method from Anthony's 1963 article (see section 1.2), noting the 'alternative' methods which began at around the same time: Curran's Community Language Learning in 1961, Gattegno's Silent Way in 1963, and Asher's Total Physical Response in 1965, before going on to describe the Pennsylvania Project. This was a research project conducted throughout the 1960s and reported in 1970 (Smith 1970) which tried to identify the best method. The results of this enormous project were inconclusive, which led many applied linguists to take the next step and move from examining methods to looking at teacher roles.

Teacher roles were studied through classroom research, which in turn led to the observation that classroom language teaching and learning were enormously complex processes. Conversation analysis and ethnomethodology were introduced to try to cope with this complexity, and soon the dominance of one individual (the teacher) in a social event (the class) was questioned. Applied linguists started to look at classrooms as co-productions by all members, by which stage the question of method had become even less important. By the 1990s method had been relegated by many in favour of content, particularly by teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) who had taken on board needs analysis with all its consequences (see section 3.1). Others were becoming involved with task-based, process and procedural syllabuses (see section 2.5) and so Allwright is able to ask the question: 'is method dead?' (Allwright 1991: 2). The answer it seems is no: alternative methods are still successfully marketed, and as I noted in section 1.2 teacher-training courses still have to have a methods element. But Allwright argues that 'method as a unitary/unified set of

principled answers to all the main questions of how language is to be taught must...be...highly problematic' (ibid., p.7) for a number of reasons. It sees difference (in theoretical positions) where similarity (in actual classroom practice) is more important; it makes unhelpful simplifications when it claims that one method is suitable for all because this implies that all students are essentially the same; it encourages brand loyalty, pointless rivalries and 'flame wars' on irrelevant issues; it breeds complacency because it conveys the impression that answers to all methodological issues have been found; and it provides comforting externally-derived answers with an accompanying sense of coherence rather than challenging, internally-derived and ultimately far more valuable answers.

In conclusion, Allwright urges language professionals 'to establish, mainly from development research and from professional experience generally, principles that will themselves help them to make well-motivated but essentially local decisions at the level of classroom technique. This would effectively eliminate the "method" level that Anthony originally interposed in 1963 between "approach" and technique".' (ibid., p.8). Allwright's second suggestion is in keeping with Prabhu's sense of plausibility (what Allwright calls 'an internal sense of coherence' [ibid.]) and is aimed at teacher educators, who should help teachers to develop and articulate their own principles in order to facilitate decision-making at the local level.

3.3 The Postmethod Condition

The papers by Prabhu and Allwright are amongst those described as 'robust reflection' about method by Kumaravadivelu (1994) in his paper on the postmethod condition. He notes that these and other papers have advised practitioners against looking for the best method, and indeed have spoken out against the concept of method itself. The

first point to make is that pursuing method 'negates the very essence of intellectual inquiry' (Kumaravadivelu 1994: 28), and the second point is that the analysis of method and of teaching are often confused, despite the fact that they are clearly separable. Since the 'robust reflection' has begun, there is now a 'state of heightened awareness' (ibid., p.27) that method is a cycle which needs to be broken out of.

The postmethod condition which Kumaravadivelu outlines consists of three points and a consequent 'strategic framework for L2 teaching'. In traditional methodology, theories from various disciplines inform theoretical principles which in turn lead to classroom procedures for teachers to follow. In sociopolitical terms, power lies at the centre with the theorists who are usually academics in Western universities. Teachers, on the other hand, are disempowered practitioners on the periphery. The 'ideal' of embodying theory in the classroom could never be realized because the theory is not derived from classrooms. The first point of the postmethod condition (PMC) is that practitioners are to be empowered: pedagogical practice is to be location-specific and classroom-oriented. The second point of PMC 'signifies teacher autonomy' (ibid., p.30) which means that theory is derived from practice rather than the reverse. This theory is then applied in the classroom and revised in the light of further experience such that theory and practice are mutually informing and classroom-based. Teacher training which treats teachers as conduits for a method is replaced by teacher education which acknowledges that teachers know how to teach, and how they should act within academic and administrative constraints, and it concentrates instead on how teachers can develop a reflective approach to teaching, on how they can analyse and evaluate their own teaching, and on how to initiate change and monitor its effects. (ibid.) The third point of PMC is 'principled pragmatism' which 'focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped

and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal. One of the ways in which teachers can follow principled pragmatism is by developing what Prabhu (1990) calls a sense of plausibility.' (ibid., p. 31).

From these three points, and from theoretical, empirical and pedagogic insights from classroom-oriented research, Kumaravadivelu develops 'a strategic framework for L2 teaching' which is made up of ten macrostrategies. Some of these will be familiar from other articles summarized here and this should be of no surprise as for example Pica (2000) refers to the same research and draws similar conclusions.

Kumaravadivelu's ten macrostrategies are as follows: (1) maximizing learning opportunities. Within this macrostrategy the teacher and students recognize that the class is a co-constructed event in which the teacher can create learning opportunities, but she must also be aware of and utilize those learning opportunities created by students. In this sense everyone becomes a 'manager of learning' (Allwright 1984). This macrostrategy also implies continuous modification of the syllabus, to the extent that it should be treated as a pre-syllabus; (2) to facilitate negotiated interaction, as research has shown that this is a catalyst if not a cause of language learning. Such interaction would involve clarification, confirmation and comprehension checks and requests, as well as repair, reaction and turn-taking skills; (3) minimizing perceptual mismatches between teacher intentions and student interpretation; (4) activate intuitive heuristics, i.e. encourage students' self-discovery of rules etc. by exposing them to texts; (5) foster language awareness, which is a combination of 'consciousness raising' and 'input enhancement' of language (see section 2.6), and which is a learner-based, cyclic process especially useful in dealing with aspects of language that would otherwise be overlooked; (6) contextualize linguistic input, to facilitate

syntactic, semantic and pragmatic understanding; (7) integrate language skills, i.e. integrate the four skills (separation of the four is a relic of audiolingualism and finds little justification in recent research); (8) promote learner autonomy, because learning a language is a solo enterprise at many times, and should involve learning skills, self-direction and study strategies; (9) raise cultural consciousness; (10) ensure social relevance by being aware of social context and local communicative situations.

Kumaravadivelu intends this framework as a descriptive, open-ended set of options which are to provide a starting point for 'strategic teachers' who will reflect, explore, extend, design and monitor their own microstrategies. The framework provides a basis for the activation and development of teachers' sense of plausibility and active involvement in their professional lives.

3.4 A Postmethod Pedagogy

In his 2001 paper, Kumaravadivelu outlines three parameters for what he calls a 'postmethod pedagogy'. The three parameters are particularity, practicality and possibility. By particularity he means a pedagogy relevant to particular students, working with a particular teacher in a particular institution, in a particular sociocultural milieu. He calls for a cycle of action research which will be context-sensitive and location-specific, based on an understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural and political particularities, and which will lead to this particularity in pedagogy. The second parameter, of practicality, deals with the relationship between theory and practice. Teachers adopting (or even adapting) professional theorists' theories does not leave enough room for teachers' self-conceptualizations and self-constructions of pedagogical knowledge. A pedagogy of practicality aims for a teacher-generated theory of practice: theorize from *your*

practice, practise from *your* theory. Teachers will need help to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and autonomy necessary to do this, and this is where the role of teacher educators lies. Possibility, the third parameter, refers to the work of Paolo Freire and his work on the pedagogy of possibility, which advocates the empowerment of participants. As described by Giroux it involves: 'theories, forms of knowledge and social practice that *work with* the experiences people bring to the pedagogical setting' (Giroux 1988: 134, quoted in Kumaravadivelu 2001: 543). The experiences that people bring to the classroom are shaped not only by prior educational experiences but also by social, economic, and political factors, all of which are taken into account.

What implications do these parameters have for students, teachers, and teacher educators in the postmethod era? The postmethod learner should be autonomous in three areas: academic autonomy, such that the student can identify her own learning strategies and compare them with those of successful learners, can evaluate her own learning outcomes, and expand her learning opportunities in self-access centres, libraries and so on; social autonomy, meaning that the student should seek teacher intervention and feedback, collaborate with peers on projects and take advantage of opportunities to interact with native-speakers; and liberatory autonomy for critical thinking, which will help students to recognize the sociopolitical factors which impact on their learning, encourage them to undertake their own mini research projects, and help them to form learning communities.

The postmethod teacher must also be autonomous, and should become so by 'embarking on a continual process of self-development' (Kumaravadivelu 2001: 549). The teacher's personal reflection must be related to sociopolitical background or else it will be 'parochial' (ibid.).

How is this to be achieved? Through teacher research in their own classrooms, together with questionnaires, surveys and interviews with students. From this initial investigation research questions can be developed which in turn can be researched. The aim here is for teachers to engage in a 'continual recreation of personal knowledge' (ibid.)

Finally, the postmethod teacher educator needs to work with her trainees in a dialogic construction of meaning, by pointing out the flaws in the traditional model of teacher education, getting trainees to express their own experiences and vision and then to build on that, encouraging trainees' critical thinking, versing trainees in classroom discourse analysis, conducting research with trainees in their classrooms, and by exposing them to the professional literature.

4 Conclusion

In the last fifteen years there have been a series of calls for alternative ways to design effective teaching strategies and create effective teaching professionals. Within the same period dissatisfaction with the concept of method as an organizing principle has been expressed, and pedagogy has come to be seen as involving a variety of historical, political and sociocultural factors as well as linguistic and educational elements. In this article I have looked at the movement away from adapting existing methods towards developing new pedagogies for ELT. In a subsequent paper I will look at some of the ways in which sociocultural elements have been brought into ELT.

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