

Part VI Applications of Linguistics

28 Second Language Pedagogy

Where Theory Meets Practice

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Foreign language or second language (L2) pedagogy is where theory meets practice. The L2 teacher must answer crucial questions of theory: What is the nature of language? How are L2s acquired? The L2 teacher must also answer general practical questions: Who are my students? Why are they learning this language? Then, given who my students are and their reasons for learning the language, what are reasonable goals and expectations for my students? The answers to these general questions of theory and practice will crucially inform the day-to-day questions of practice: How are we going to spend our time in class? What materials will we use? What activities or tasks will we do?

This chapter will describe the relationship of theory and practice in various language teaching methodologies with particular emphasis on communicative language teaching, which has become the most commonly used approach to L2 pedagogy today. In light of recent developments, the chapter will reconsider the theory/practice relationship in the second decade of the twenty-first century and examine the challenges posed to our underlying theories by the emergence of English as a worldwide lingua franca.

1 Methodologies¹

In the last fifty to sixty years, the questions posed in the first paragraph about theory and practice have been answered in quite different ways, as the following examples will serve to demonstrate. As the first example, the book *Practical French Review* (Barton and Sirich 1954, first published 1941) organizes the table of contents according to grammar topics. Lesson 1 is devoted to articles and prepositions with names of countries and cities. The first four pages of the lesson are taken up with grammar explanation in English of the topics listed in the contents, followed by a reading passage concerning Pierre and his late appearance at lunch due to delays at the American Express. This is followed by comprehension questions in French and a “composition” written in English for translation to French, grammar exercises to be translated from English to French, and an oral drill: “Translate and reply with a complete sentence: 1. When are you going to be in French Indo-China? 2. What languages does Dr. Renauld speak? 3. What time do you have French class on Mondays? . . .” Aside from the reading and composition, the grammar exercises

are sentence-level tasks unrelated to each other or to the lives of the students. Although the authors of the book do not have a preface setting forth their theoretical bent, it is clear that the core of language is conceived to be discrete language points. We can infer from the exercises that languages are assumed to be learned through reading and translation. Since the reading and translation passages concern an American visiting France, we might infer that a possible goal for students is a sojourn in France. We can envision a classroom in which there is teacher-fronted explanation of grammar in English, perhaps some reading aloud of the passages, assigned homework, and some teacher-led sentence-level work.

A contrast to *Practical French* is *Eastern Arabic*, a course in colloquial Arabic (Rice and Sa'íd 1966). The table of contents is organized according to situations and language functions such as greetings, directions, telling time, in a coffee shop, and buying fruits and vegetables. The first lesson begins with "pattern sentences," essentially a dialogue of greetings and introductions. Following the dialogue are "structure sentences" with examples of feminine forms, plural forms, and independent pronouns. There is no grammar explanation accompanying the examples, just a list of expressions and their translation, e.g., *How are you? Please sit down. Will you excuse me? I'm well. He's well. She's well.* A section of grammatical explanations follows and includes the topics of word stress and prominence, sentences without verbs, and independent pronouns. The lesson ends with drills; there are sentences in Arabic that would be said to a man that must be changed to sentences that would be said to a woman and to a group. This book does have a fairly extensive preface that sets forth certain principles for use. It states that the book is designed to teach spoken language and is "based on the principle that the only way to learn to understand a spoken language is to hear it spoken, and the only way to learn to speak it is to practice speaking." The teacher is to be a native speaker of the language, whose pronunciation of the dialogues is to be mimicked; dialogues must be repeated after the teacher's model, and then memorized. The instructor is directed to "help [the student] form proper habits, and try to keep him from continuing wrong ones." Although the dialogues do not derive from students' personal experience, the book was published in Beirut (albeit first compiled at Georgetown University) and used for language instruction in Arabic classes for foreigners in-country; topics throughout the book relate to common situations that a learner of Arabic would face in the Middle East.

A third book, in contrast to the previous two, is *Claro Que Sí!* (Garner, Rusch, and Domínguez 2008), an introductory Spanish book for US university students. The table of contents is headed in Spanish, and each chapter contains one or more sections for listening, essential vocabulary, reading, culture, and communicative grammar (*gramática para la comunicación*, e.g., talking about yourself and others, expressing likes and dislikes, expressing habitual and future actions, etc.). Like *Eastern Arabic*, the first lesson begins with a dialogue of people introducing themselves and saying where they are from. The dialogue, though, is presented via a video of two South American students in Bolivia. Following this are activities in which students in the class mingle with other class members and introduce themselves. There are a dizzying number of separate activities and bits of information, including various forms of greetings and information about hand-shaking and cheek-kissing, information on use of *tu* and *usted* (the formal and informal "you"), and map work on countries and capitals in the Spanish-speaking world. The concept of language here is multifaceted: language includes grammar and vocabulary to be sure, but also functions as communication within the social realm, which is inextricably bound up in the culture(s) in which the language is used. In the preface, students are told that "the ultimate goal is communication" and are urged to participate actively in oral activities. While listening, reading, or viewing, students are cautioned to focus on gist without expecting to understand every word, and to view studying Spanish as an adventure in which they should be willing to make mistakes.

These examples from three different texts provide very different answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the chapter and exemplify modified forms of three methodologies or approaches used in L2 pedagogy in the last half century, namely grammar translation, audiolingualism, and communicative language teaching (CLT). Each had a very different starting point

because of differing theoretical concepts of what language is and how languages are learned. Grammar translation, illustrated by *Practical French*, took as a starting point language as discrete grammatical points and vocabulary items that are best learned through the medium of the first language. The audiolingual approach, illustrated by *Eastern Arabic*, took spoken language as primary, and the model of spoken language must be the native speaker. It presupposed that language learning was a process of habit formation best accomplished through imitation and repetition to eliminate the possibility of error. *Claro Que Sí!* illustrates communicative language teaching (CLT), which has been the dominant theoretical model since the last quarter of the twentieth century. In CLT, language is conceptualized as not just a framework within the learner's head but a communicative system that relies on use within a social context. Thus, language includes not just grammar rules or correct pronunciation but the way in which individuals interact effectively with each other.

2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Since CLT is far and away the dominant model for L2 pedagogy worldwide, a more detailed description of what that entails is appropriate. CLT had its origin in the late 1960s and early 1970s, both in Europe and the USA. As Europeans considered the language needs of a more unified Europe, it became clear that all Europeans needed to be multilingual (Trim 1979 [1973]). Also, as educational opportunities became available in English for an increasing number of citizens in the world, it became apparent that previous concepts of language and modes of teaching were inadequate (Widdowson 1979 [1972]).

2.1 CLT: theoretical bases and implications for practice

The theory of language underlying CLT derives from work in the 1960s and 1970s that focused on language as communication rather than just a grammatical system in an individual's mind. In an oft-cited essay derived from a talk, Dell Hymes (1979 [1972, 1966]) took issue with Noam Chomsky's definition of linguistic competence as that of an ideal native speaker in a homogeneous monolingual community. Hymes pointed out that the ideal native speaker does not exist, speech communities are not homogeneous, and language cannot be divorced from its socio-cultural uses for communication. He proposed the term *communicative competence*, which takes account not only of whether something is formally possible but whether it is appropriate within a given social context.

Hymes' idea converged with ideas that had been developed in Europe; these ideas had strongly influenced the functional/notional syllabus proposed by the Council of Europe (van Ek 1979 [1975]) for foreign language education of Europeans. Functions refer to how language is used to accomplish certain social actions, such as asking permission, expressing likes and dislikes, apologizing, requesting, and so on. Notions refer to semantic concepts that can be expressed through language, such as past vs. present, existence vs. nonexistence.

Meanwhile, in the USA in the early 1970s, Savignon was developing classroom activities that would reflect this new concept of language as communicative. Since language is conceived as essentially social, it follows that students would learn language through interaction. Learners would be able to take risks with the language and make mistakes as they sought to make meaning together by interacting with each other (Savignon 2001). Activities used in a CLT classroom should then involve the students in tasks that have a communicative purpose; students should be using the target language for authentic purposes, in other words, for communicating real information about themselves and their world. Similarly, CLT makes use wherever possible of authentic texts, texts that are not artificially modified or specially written for non-native speakers but reflect real language as it is used by native speakers.

As the theoretical bases of CLT have been elaborated over the last decades, they have drawn on work in second language acquisition. One of the most influential theoretical ideas is that of comprehensible input, which refers to input that is slightly beyond the learners' existing competence but is nonetheless understandable (Krashen and Terrell 1988: 32–7). The practical application of this idea is that, in the CLT classroom, the teacher is expected to use the target language almost exclusively and thus provide comprehensible input. But the focus is not just on the teacher's input; students can get comprehensible input from interacting with each other. Negotiation of meaning refers to the way in which interlocutors cooperate to make meaning together by asking for repetition or clarification and checking and confirming comprehension. Through negotiation of meaning, learners hone their strategic competence and also obtain comprehensible input from their partners (Pica et al. 1996; also discussed in Macaro 2003: 186–7). Output is also important not only to help learners practice what they have learned but also to push them to stretch their language resources to make themselves understood (Swain 1985; also discussed in Gass and Selinker 2001: 276–8). Thus, CLT lessons include interactive classroom activities to encourage both negotiation of meaning and output.

Because learners are expected to engage in frequent interactive activities in a CLT classroom, the teacher takes on a multitude of roles, only one of which may be the language authority. Far more important may be the role of organizer of language activities and facilitator for language tasks. The communicative task is a kind of experiential learning activity in which learners must use the target language resources at their disposal to arrive at an outcome (Richards and Renandya 2002: 94; Norris 2011: 579–80). Such tasks can vary from conversations exchanging personal information and opinions to role-play or information gap activities, in which students must work collaboratively in pairs or small groups and share information to complete a task successfully. These kinds of activities are underlain by the assumptions about the nature of language as social, communicative, and authentic, and by assumptions about second language acquisition as requiring negotiation of meaning and social engagement.

The relationship of the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in CLT contrasts with earlier methods. In grammar translation, reading and writing were the more important skills while speaking and listening got short shrift. In audiolingualism, because speaking was considered primary, students were taught speaking skills in pronunciation drills and memorized dialogues first; in some cases of audiolingual application, students were not even supposed to see the printed form of the language until they had acquired good habits in speaking (see, e.g., Brooks 1964: 51–2; Lado 1964: 61–9).

Generally, for CLT, the four skills are integrated, with special emphasis given to speaking and listening since the theoretical bases of the approach describe language as communication, which presupposes speaking and listening as part of the communicative process. However, since reading and writing also play a role as part of the communicative process, reading and writing may be integrated into work on speaking and listening. A “typical” CLT lesson might include a listening comprehension passage and a related speaking activity. Some kind of realistic or authentic reading activity may also be included with a follow-up writing task. For example, if the theme is ordering food in a restaurant, students might be presented with an actual restaurant menu and listen to a recording in which various diners place orders for food. This could be followed by a role-play activity in which students practice placing orders from the authentic menu. Combining skills of both speaking and writing, students might then be asked to work in groups to create a menu for a new restaurant. Depending on the particular theoretical inclinations of the instructor or textbook, there may be a focus on grammatical forms such as (for English) the distinction between *I'll have . . .* and *I'm going to have . . .*. Alternatively, there could be a more functional approach with a focus on a variety of grammatically unrelated ways of placing an order, such as *A bowl of tomato soup, please; Tomato soup for me; I'd like the tomato soup; Could I have the tomato soup?*

2.2 CLT and the question of grammar

Virtually since the inception of CLT, theorists and practitioners alike have vigorously debated the role of grammar instruction. Should grammar be explicitly taught, or will students acquire it as they go along? If grammar is taught, in what ways should it be taught? Should it be a stand-alone part of the course, or should it be integrated into whatever content the language is being used to discuss? A related question has to do with error correction. Assuming that students will inevitably make mistakes, as doing so is conceived to be part of the process of learning, how should errors be treated? Should errors be corrected explicitly, and at what stage of the process should errors be corrected?

There are those within the CLT tradition on either extreme of the grammar instruction question. On the one hand, Krashen and Terrell's (1988) *Natural Approach* distinguishes *learning*, which they view as superficial knowledge *about* the target language, from *acquisition*, which they view as the deeper knowledge *how to use* the target language. They hypothesize that comprehensible input should be sufficient for acquisition. In a classroom that puts into practice the ideas about grammar embodied in the *Natural Approach*, there would be little if any explicit grammar instruction, and error correction might be through recasts in which the teacher simply repeats what the student has said in the correct form.

On the other extreme is the structural syllabus, which is organized according to pre-set grammar points. It is supported by the so-called PPP procedure for teaching new language. PPP – standing for *presentation, practice, production* – is still in common use today (Swan 2005; Larsen-Freeman 2011: 523–4) and was the lesson plan style favored by teacher training programs of the Royal Society of Arts in the 1980s (see, e.g., Matthews, Spratt, and Dangerfield 1985: 5–17 or Gower and Walters 1983: 65–142; the Royal Society of Arts programs are now part of Cambridge ESOL). In PPP, new grammar or vocabulary structures are first presented in some kind of context, perhaps in a reading or listening text. The teacher then highlights the form to be learned and provides students with an opportunity for controlled or semi-controlled practice of the form.

During the controlled or semi-controlled practice phase, the teacher provides error correction to assure that students produce the form correctly. In both presentation and practice of form, contextualization has long been an important feature of teaching grammar within the communicative approach (Dickens and Woods 1988). (This contrasts sharply with decontextualized audiolingual pattern drills, such as examples given by Lado (1964: 99): "The students are busy → Are the students busy? The teacher is reading papers. → Is the teacher reading papers? The class can go faster. → Can the class go faster? . . .") In the production phase of the PPP, the teacher sets up an open-ended communicative task in which learners can produce the form creatively. During the production phase, the teacher monitors students as they work and provides feedback on errors when the task is completed.

A middle ground seems to be claimed by scholars who eschew a syllabus based on a pre-set list of grammar points but support some sort of form-focused instruction as a complement to communicative activities (e.g., Long 2011). Spada and Lightbown (2008) see a role for both integrated and isolated form-focused instruction within CLT. If learners are engaged in a communicative task and the teacher intervenes briefly with correction or explanation to help them express meaning more accurately, the form-focused instruction is integrated within the activity. Or it may be isolated from the communicative task as instruction either to prepare the learners with language forms they will need for doing the task or, after task completion, to correct language the learners produced.

Despite the voluminous literature published on the subject, both teachers and students expect grammar instruction in some form to be part of a language course. In response to consumer demand, publishers continue to produce language textbooks with grammar instruction. Through an examination of some of the best-selling English language textbooks, Waters (2012) demonstrates that a focus on grammar has remained a constant element in course books and concludes

that “enduring situational realities” will continue to drive classroom practice, rather than “some kind of theory-driven ‘second coming’” (p. 448).

2.3 *CLT applications: content-based instruction (CBI) and task-based instruction (TBI)*

Two developments within the CLT tradition warrant mention as they have become quite extensively used worldwide for teaching a variety of languages. These two developments are content-based instruction (CBI) and task-based instruction (TBI; also known as TBLT for task-based language teaching). CBI and TBI are related to each other in the sense that both take as a starting point the idea that language is best learned when the language itself is the tool for *doing* something rather than the object of learning. As defined by Stryker and Leaver (1997), content-based instruction refers to the integration of language learning with content. In fact, the content to be learned, be it culture, literature, journalism, or banking, is the focus of the course; the second or foreign language is the means by which the content is learned. In addition to having the subject matter as the core, authentic texts and language are used. (With reference to texts, *authentic texts* are produced by native speakers for native speakers; *authentic language* refers to language that would be used to accomplish real-world goals, although cf. Badger and McDonald (2010) on questions concerning the meaning of *authentic*.) A third characteristic of CBI is the tailoring of the course to meet the specific needs of a particular group of students.

Content-based instruction (CBI) has been used for K-12 immersion education in such diverse settings as the USSR in the 1960s–1980s, Canadian French immersion schools from the 1960s to the present, and US Spanish–English bilingual education programs at the present. In these school settings, children are taught the range of normal school subjects in the medium of the L2. At the level of tertiary and adult education, CBI has been utilized in US universities, for example, for teaching business in French or anthropology in Japanese (Stryker and Leaver 1997: 15–21) and more recently with various models of languages across the curriculum (Klee 2009). Since late 2000, a few Language Flagship Programs have been developed in the US, using a combination of CBI, study abroad, and internships for intensive language training of undergraduate students in critical languages (Spring 2012).

The European Union has been especially active in promoting CBI, which is called content and language integrated learning, or CLIL. Examples of CLIL that have received funding from the EU include secondary school science courses in physics, chemistry, biology, and technology taught in English in Sweden; courses taught in English in a nursing school in Grenoble to enable French nurses to admit patients, apply therapeutic measures, and deal with health-related topics in English; and business ethics taught in French to final-year undergraduates majoring in fields related to international business at Dublin City University in Ireland (European Commission 2006). CLIL seems to have many positive outcomes (e.g., Lorenzo, Casal, and Moore 2010); however, conclusions about the degree of success may need to be tempered by close attention to whether CLIL groups are truly comparable to non-CLIL groups with whom their results have been compared (Dalton-Puffer 2011; also Bruton 2011).

Similar to CBI, task-based instruction (TBI) rests on the belief that the purpose of learning language is language use, and that learning takes place by making use of language. A distinction can be made between the “weak form” of TBI, which makes use of communicative tasks simply as part of CLT, and the “strong form” of TBI, which organizes the whole syllabus around tasks (McDonough and Caikitmongkol 2007). The strong form of TBI was pioneered in the Bangalore Project in India and publicized by Prabhu (1987) and has since been used extensively in Flanders to teach Dutch as a second language (Van den Branden 2006: 13–14). TBI is gaining in popularity in Asia as well: Hong Kong included TBI in its syllabus in the late 1990s, and China mandated use of communicative tasks in 2001 (Butler 2011). According to the proponents of TBI, language is not

learned in isolated bits but rather in a complex mapping of form to content. In the strong form of TBI, the syllabus is organized around a series of tasks, goal-directed activities that require language for successful performance (Van den Branden 2006: 3–6; Ellis 2009: 223). Specifically, a task is characterized as having a specific discernible outcome with real-world relevance. Performance of the task should be focused on *meaning*, not language form, and can call on any one or more of the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Willis 2004: 13–16; Ellis 2009: 223–4). The task cycle begins with pre-task material introduced by the teacher; this could include introduction to the topic and an explanation of the upcoming task. The students are then set to work on the task. On completion of the task, they plan their report on the task and subsequently present the results of their task to the class. Following the task completion and report is the language focus part of the task cycle. At this time, the students are encouraged to review and analyze the language features of both the input they received and the output they produced. Finally, the teacher provides practice with the new language forms that were required for successful completion of the task (Willis 2004: 42). Other advocates of TBI allow for attention to language form at various stages of the task cycle, not restricting it solely to the post-task phase (Ellis 2009: 231–2).

2.4 Criticisms of CLT, CBI, and TBI

Despite its widespread use, CLT is not without its critics, particularly when it involves teaching a *foreign* language, one that is not used in the environment in which it is taught (e.g., German or French in most parts of the USA or English in Vietnam or China). Any methodology betrays a certain value system, as discussed in some detail by Adamson (2006: 610–11, 615), who states, “methods only cross cultural boundaries easily if they can be appropriated in a form consistent with the values and beliefs of the community adopting and adapting the methods.” With its emphasis on student-centered teaching, CLT embodies values and expectations of individualism and creativity on the part of the students that may be at odds with prevailing educational traditions and culture (e.g., see Cortazzi and Jin 1996; Shamim 1996; Butler 2011 offers a more nuanced summary).

Local teaching conditions will also have an impact on how successfully any methodology can be employed. In the case of CLT, students are expected to use the target language among themselves in the classroom, which is a reasonable expectation in a multilingual language center (e.g., for immigrants in the USA or in Europe). However, when the students share the same first language and do not need the L2 outside the classroom, there may be little incentive for them to participate in pair or group work in the target language. In addition to these difficulties, Hiep (2007) and Butler (2011) also note that practices used in a second language setting in the West cannot necessarily be imported wholesale into a country such as Vietnam or China because of different sociocultural, political, and physical conditions. Large classes, differing concepts of students’ and teachers’ appropriate roles, concern with passing national grammar-based exams, and teachers who may not be proficient enough in the target language to teach with confidence through the target language can all impede the successful implementation of CLT (Butler 2011; Li 1998).

Some of the concerns voiced by Butler (2011) and by Hiep (2007) apply wherever CLT is used for foreign language teaching. In the USA, Schulz (2006) complains that the goal of CLT of communicative competence is “neither a realistic nor a sufficient goal” for US university students who typically take only the first two years of a foreign language to satisfy university general education requirements. Magnan (2007) notes that personalized CLT activities as used in foreign language classes in the USA lack cultural authenticity. When US students talk about themselves with each other, albeit in the target language, their ideas about language and culture are bounded by their own experiences and merely serve to reinforce US-centered views. In such activities, US students are not getting the experience of language as “socially constituted” (Magnan 2007: 250).

Similar practical concerns limit the effectiveness of content-based instruction. The success of CBI rests on practical considerations that are often far removed from specifically linguistic concerns. Of crucial importance is the integration of both content and language. If comprehension of content is stressed, with language instruction relegated to a subordinate role, then students' language skills may not improve (Klee 2009; Tan 2011). If, on the other hand, language instruction takes priority, then content is watered down (Lyster and Ballinger 2011). In their introduction to a special issue devoted to CBI in the journal *Language Teaching Research*, Lyster and Ballinger (2011) stress the crucial role of professional development for both language and content teachers. However, teacher training and the development of successful CBI models at all levels are expensive and time consuming; when funding dries up, so do the CBI programs (Klee 2009).

Task-based instruction (TBI) in particular has come in for its share of criticism based on both theory and implementation (although see Ellis 2009 for refutation of some criticisms). Critics point to flaws in the underlying theory, which rests on the assumptions that comprehensible input is sufficient for acquisition (Sheen 1994) and that language learning is taking place while students are engaged in communicative tasks (Swan 2005). Proponents of TBI are accused of ignoring research that would contradict TBI practice. Sheen (1994), for example, cites research results that show the effectiveness of explicit, deductive grammar instruction, while Swan (2005) points to skill-building research that indicates the importance of practice to turn declarative knowledge into automatized procedural knowledge. When students are supposed to be acquiring new language, it is through interacting with each other, and Swan (2005) questions whether they are receiving sufficient quantity and frequency of exposure to new language. In practical terms, teachers need knowledge, training, and commitment to the principles in order to implement TBI effectively. If TBI is simply imposed from above by government mandate, teachers may not understand the purpose, discipline may be problematic, and students may not actually be using the L2 (Carless 2004). As Butler (2011: 48) points out, the more engaging the task, the more likely students are to use their L1 in order to complete the task efficiently, and that then calls into question the value of the tasks for L2 learning. For reasons such as these, critics consider the exclusive use of TBI in a foreign language environment to be inadequate. That being said, some of the criticisms of implementation can be offset if teachers themselves create the program to fit their local needs and then pilot, monitor, and revise the program in response to input from teachers and students (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 2007).

3 The Postmethods Era

The heyday of methods, according to Richards and Rogers (2001: 14–16), was the 1950s to 1980s, when correct use of a particular method or approach was thought to yield better results than using another method. Indeed, this coincided with a time when education in general was pre-occupied with finding the best method (e.g., New Math of the 1960s or Whole Language of the 1980s). The idea was that the best method would improve the quality of instruction if teachers just adhered to the classroom techniques and activities associated with it.

However, teachers can become cynical and are often frustrated with mandates to switch to a new magic bullet that does not address the complexities of their own particular situation. The almost religious fervor with which some new methods and approaches have been introduced also dismisses the beliefs and previous experience of teachers actually in the classroom (Adams 2006: 616). The literature of pedagogy has begun now to focus more on the teacher as a mediator of learning, a practitioner who is able to take a principled approach that is pragmatic and reflective (e.g., Richards and Lockhart 1994). Allwright's (2005) *Exploratory Practice*, for example, encourages practicing teachers and their learners to explore "puzzles" in the classroom with the ultimate goal of achieving deeper understanding of classroom life.

The recognition of the teacher as principled practitioner is long overdue, and some have labeled this trend as the “postmethod condition” (Kumaradivelu 1994, 2001; Brown 2002 [1997]). Kumaradivelu (1994: 29–31) characterized the postmethod condition as: a search for an alternative to the confinement of a single set of practices inherent in adoption of a method; an acceptance of teacher autonomy that allows teachers to respond to their own academic and administrative contexts; and a recognition of principled pragmatism that allows teachers to choose practices that are engaging and effective for their particular students. Brown (2002 [1997]: 10) adds that the demise of methods can be ascribed in part to the lack of distinctiveness of various methods beyond the early stages and an inability to test the effectiveness of methods empirically. Teachers are not cookies cut with the same cutter, and teaching is too “artful and intuitive” to be subjected to study under rigorous experimental conditions.

Another possible contributor to a decreased focus on method and methods, at least in the USA, was the proficiency movement of the 1980s and 1990s. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) and Educational Testing Services (ETS) combined forces to articulate expected outcomes for each level of foreign language study. The ACTFL standards spell out what learners at a particular level should be able to *do* in the target language (Mitchell and Vidal 2001: 32). For example, in speaking at the general intermediate level, learners should be able to ask and answer questions, creatively combine learned elements, and complete a basic communicative task from start to finish (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages 1983). The standards did not specify *how* goals were to be reached, thus freeing teachers from the grip of adherence to any particular method. Instead, teachers could choose whatever methods or techniques worked for them and their particular students (Mitchell and Vidal 2001: 32).

Bell (2003) links the postmethod condition to postmodernism and a move from positivism to pragmatism, including an awareness of the need to adapt to changing contexts. In fact, as he points out, teachers have never universally followed all the strictures of any given method because an individual teacher’s methodology evolves from the interaction of teacher, students, materials, and activities.

Work by an Australian research team (Breen et al. 2001) confirms the individualized nature of teachers’ belief systems and reveals teachers to be principled practitioners who make conscious reflective choices in their practice. The research team examined teaching practice and self-identified principles motivating the practice by 18 experienced English as a second language (ESL) teachers. The team found that each individual teacher articulated a coherent set of practices and principles. However, the relationship each individual teacher saw between principle and practice often differed from the relationship posited by other teachers. While the team found a number of shared principles voiced by all the teachers, the practices that teachers identified as arising from the principles varied widely. Similarly, there were common practices, such as pair and group work and teacher modeling and explanation. However, individual teachers attributed these common practices to different principles. The research team concluded that, unlike novices, not only do experienced teachers have more knowledge of subject and craft, but they also structure that knowledge differently as a result of experience in their individual teaching lives.

In her qualitative study of seven experienced ESL teachers in New Zealand, Wette (2009) found that teachers began their pre-course planning with certain very general outcomes in mind and only specified and adapted course content, delivery, and pacing to fit the individual learners in the class once the course was underway. Ur (2013) calls this kind of teaching “situated methodology.” Unlike traditionally defined method, which originates in research in applied linguistics, situated methodology is driven by local needs and constraints, including: the characteristics of learners – their age, level, and goals; the demands of stakeholders, such as employers, parents, or government ministries; the content of exams or other high-stakes assessment measures; and the preferences, beliefs, and personality of the individual teacher.

For experienced practicing teachers, it would probably be unrealistic to say that theory is at the forefront of their minds as they plan lessons and teach in the classroom every day. Teachers

are pragmatic and do not necessarily work top-down. It is far more likely that a practicing teacher may try a new technique that appears intriguing, whether she has heard of it at a conference or workshop, read about it in a journal article, or simply had her own bright idea. It is in the aftermath of trying the new technique that the experienced teacher may reflect on why it did or did not work with her students and make her own connections to the principles that guide her teaching.

It must be said here that the success of a particular technique, lesson, or even language course may well boil down to an individual's teacher's skill in the teaching craft, a skill that has little to do with a theory of language or second language acquisition. Instead, it is related to the characteristics of the students in the class, the teacher's knowledge of students' personalities, levels, and learning preferences, and her skill in classroom management. She must be able to choose classroom activities that are both challenging and engaging given the age, level, and background of her students. She must know how to group students for productive work by taking into account the dynamics of that particular collection of individuals in the class. She must be able to set up activities clearly and efficiently so that students know what they are doing and why, have enough language resources at their disposal to accomplish the task, and have sufficient time to complete the task without lollygagging. She must assure that students are attentive and on-task and make provisions for students who finish early or lag behind their classmates. These are all part of the craft of teaching that can determine whether a language class is a success that results in student learning or a failure that creates frustration for all concerned.

4 The Relationship between Theory and Practice

It is this kind of individual and particular experience of teachers that can alienate practicing teachers from the generalizations of theory as presented by university researchers. To overcome the "dysfunctions of the theory/practice discourse," Clarke (1994) recommends that teachers need to resist the imposition of experts' advice if it does not work for them. Conversely, Clarke advises theorists on university faculties to consider whether their work is not just generalizable but also "particularizable" to individual teachers. Crookes (1997) also questions the relationship between the research and theory of second language acquisition researchers and the concerns of second and foreign language teachers and suggests that the relationship could be improved if research focused on learning as social and was within a more qualitative tradition that would make it easier for practicing teachers to read.

Lightbown (2000) also asserts the need for dialogue between researchers and teachers. On the one hand, teachers should know what research has found, but on the other hand, researchers should listen to what teachers say. As a bridge between theory and practice, Lightbown (also echoed in Long 2011) lists a number of findings from second language acquisition research that she believes can have a direct bearing on the practice of classroom teaching. Group and pair work are useful techniques to enable students to get input and negotiate meaning. Although copious communicative practice is useful, and comprehensible input is necessary, neither practice nor comprehensible input is sufficient to produce both fluent and accurate use of the L2 by learners. Within a content-rich context, a focus on form is helpful in getting students to notice and use new and/or correct forms. Error correction is effective if it is sustained and focuses on something the learner is ready to acquire. Indeed, in terms of readiness for acquisition, learners progress through developmental stages, but their progress through a given stage can be speeded up by form-focused instruction.

In an effort to make research more accessible to practicing teachers, Macaro (2003) surveyed secondary school teachers of modern languages in England on research issues that they felt would be most useful for their practice. Of the 80 responses he received, top-ranking areas of interest seem to reflect day-to-day chalkface concerns. The first area was vocabulary acquisition

and what memorization techniques would prove most effective for learners. The second area of concern, how rules of grammar can best be learned, reflects the mandate of the 1999 National Curriculum in the UK, which called for students to be taught grammar and how to apply it. One of the most frequently mentioned areas of concern for teachers was the vexed issue of motivation, particularly for boys, slow or reluctant learners, and learners with xenophobic attitudes. Among the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), speaking garnered most interest. As Macaro notes, given 20 years of CLT in the UK and abundant interaction in modern language classes, it is of concern to teachers that the results are no better than they are.

5 English as Lingua Franca: A Challenge

Perhaps the poor results for language learning in the UK and the USA may be attributed at least in part to the rapid growth of English as lingua franca. Twenty-first-century globalization and the explosion of English language learning worldwide mean that we must look at language teaching and learning from a new perspective. At least one estimate counts a total of 2 billion speakers of English throughout the globe, with the number of non-native speakers of English outnumbering native speakers of English by three or four to one (Crystal 2008). Previously, it was relatively easy to categorize English language speakers according to whether they belonged to one of three “circles” proposed by Kachru (1986). The Inner Circle included those countries where English was the native language of the vast majority of speakers (e.g., the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand). In the Outer Circle, comprising mostly countries that had been former British colonies (e.g., Nigeria and India), English was a second language used as a link language within the country but not the native language of most speakers. The Expanding Circle included all those countries where English was a foreign language not used within the community (e.g., Turkey, China, countries in continental Europe). Now, however, these easy distinctions have blurred. Learners of English as an international language (EIL) or English as a lingua franca (known by the endearing acronym ELF) use the language to communicate with other non-native speakers of English in a variety of domains. With its wide geographical distribution and range of functions, English has become the lingua franca for science and technology, business, and higher education, to name just a few (McArthur 2003; Bolton 2008; McKay 2003).

English, then, is no longer “owned” solely by native speakers within the Inner Circle of Great Britain, the United States, Australia, and other countries that owe their origin to settlement by the British. As a result, ELF has become de-linked from Inner Circle native speaker norms of pronunciation, grammar, and pragmatics (rules for using the language within the social context). This calls into question our ideas of language connected to a native speaker community and the norms of language as a result. On the one hand, Seidlhofer (2001a: 146, 149) has described ELF as a language without native speakers, and thus a language for which there can be no native speaker intuitions to guide what is “correct.” On the other hand, Canagarajah (2007: 925–6) points to the hybrid nature of the ELF speech community and asserts that *all* users of ELF have native speaker competence in it. Because the form of the language is fluid and negotiated anew with each encounter, it is a language with variable form and no real expectations of norms, depending as it does on the speakers in any given situation.

Not all those who have examined ELF would agree with Canagarajah’s position. Instead, it has been asserted that in places like Europe and Asia, a localized variety of ELF has developed. In Europe, for example, the development of “Euro-English” has occasioned study and description not only of how the language is used but also how it can be described linguistically with an eye toward establishing a teachable standard. Jenkins (2002) has sought to describe the phonology of ELF that should be taught to learners. The core features were selected as core because they are necessary for comprehensibility between non-native speakers, such as: the rhotic *r* (pronunciation of the *r* after vowels in words such as *car* or *birth*); aspiration of voiceless stops (producing a

little puff of air after the sounds [p], [t], [k] at the beginnings of syllables); preservation of consonant clusters word-initially; and the tense–lax distinction of vowels (e.g., the distinction between vowel sounds in words such as *rich* versus *reach*, or *mace* versus *mess*). Noncore features, those not considered necessary for comprehension, include: the *th* sounds [θ, ð]; weak and reduced forms (such as swallowing the vowel sound in words such as *and* or *to* in rapid speech); and stress-timed rhythm (evenly timing the stresses in a sentence regardless of the number of intervening syllables). In terms of grammar, Seidlhofer (2001b) has listed the following forms that are unacceptable in native speakers' English but are evolving as acceptable and comprehensible in Euro-English: deletion of the third person singular *-s* on present tense verbs; omission of definite and indefinite articles; loss of the *who/which* distinction; and *isn't it?* used as a universal tag question.

In China, the notion of “China English,” a localized variety of English “with Chinese characteristics” (Kirkpatrick and Xu 2002: 269) has been proposed by some as a standard. The phonology of China English is characterized by a reduction in vowel contrasts and syllable-timed rhythm, inter alia. In vocabulary, it includes Chinese loan words such as *Putonghua* ‘Mandarin Chinese’ and *fengshui* and direct translations from Chinese such as *the four modernizations* and *to get rich is glorious* – expressions for concepts relevant to modern Chinese culture. In grammar, there is lack of the plural and third person singular *-s*, an invariant tag question, and a weakening of the count/mass noun distinction. In addition, Asian pragmatic norms are in operation, such as delaying a request until after facework has been done and reasons for the request are given (Bolton 2008: 8–9; Kirkpatrick and Xu 2002: 270–4). Although the idea of China English as a localized standard has been floated for some time, it has not garnered support from business and political leaders or indeed from learners themselves (Bolton 2008: 9–10; Hansen 2007: 274–8; Kirkpatrick and Xu 2002: 275–7; Li 2007: 12–14). Attitudes, however, may be changing at least so far as pronunciation is concerned; a more recent large-scale survey revealed greater tolerance for Chinese-accented English, while maintaining strong preference for native speaker grammar as the model (He and Zhang 2010).

In both the examples of Euro-English and China English, the proposal is that the language is to be judged not by its congruence with a native speaker model but by the effectiveness of its communication within the international context. Indeed, as Llorca (2004: 316) points out, these standards at least in Europe are already emerging naturally without language planning and will mean that the idea of communicative competence needs to be re-examined (Llorca 2004: 317). Before the turn of the millennium, the native speaker model had been questioned in general, and the interest in ELF has brought those questions to the fore. As Cook (1999) points out, the native speaker model is based on a flawed concept of an idealized normative monolingual speaker; however, the L2 learner is by definition not a monolingual. Furthermore, if the L2 speaker is compared with a native speaker, there is no hope of success since the L2 learner will never become a native speaker; instead, the learner should be viewed positively as a successful L2 *user*, not as a failed native speaker. The native speaker model is thus a deficit model because it faults the non-native speaker for lacking what he can never have. This deficit model has been decried by other scholars who note its inappropriateness when dealing with emerging forms of EIL (e.g., Jenkins 2002: 85; Li 2007: 11). Within the context of EIL, users of English may not want or need native speaker competence and may even reject native speaker norms (McKay 2003: 5–6).

In removing the native speaker norm from consideration of language form, there remains the vexed question of the relationship between language and culture. English, for good or for ill, is associated not only with access to international business and research but also with colonial history and hegemonic politics in the modern age. According to Modiano (2001), British English – particularly the prestige form known as RP – is associated with class stratification and ideas of *noblesse oblige* and the “white man’s burden,” while American English is associated with insensitive political and economic hegemony on the world stage. Because language learning in some senses requires the learner to redefine his or her identity, Modiano warns of the danger that “the learner’s mind is colonized” (p. 164). Without pointing to specifics, Modiano calls for teachers to

identify those teaching practices that would “disenfranchise the learner” so that ELF can become a tool for establishing “a democratic basis for cross-cultural communication” (p. 171).

However, as Kramsch (2006) points out, the world has changed as we become multilingual, global citizens who use L2s not just with native speakers in their culture but with other global citizens. As we negotiate meaning, we must understand not just the linguistic structures but the intentions, power, status, speaking rights, pride, honor, and face needs of our interlocutors. The position of the nonnative speaker is one within the “global market of symbolic exchanges” (Kramsch 2006: 250). Indeed, users of ELF may be appropriating the language variety to signify their own identity as global citizens. Similar to the way that global hip-hop is interpreted as performance of a global identity (Pennycook 2009), there is evidence from work on motivation that acquisition of ELF has important symbolic meaning that signifies the user’s international posture (Kormos, Kiddle, and Csizér 2011). This new ELF reality will require new ways of thinking about pedagogy.

If the native speaker is not the model, native speaker competence is not the goal, and the language should be de-linked from inner circle cultural associations, what then is the role of the native speaker teacher? As Liu (1999: 97–101) points out, native speakers have been privileged as teachers of English and often given preference in hiring. However, by one estimate, 80 percent of teachers of English are non-native speakers of the language (McKay 2003: 8–9). It may be time for these teachers to receive the recognition and respect they deserve. Llorca (2004) lists a number of contributions that the non-native speaker teacher can offer. Being bilingual themselves, non-native teachers understand the challenges their students face in learning the language. They can also counter claims of English dominance by maintaining their own multicultural perspective. They can act as cultural and linguistic mediators by presenting the “multifaceted reality” of L2 use and help learners express their identity in English. Furthermore, the teacher’s ability to code-switch will be a powerful illustration of cultural identity and linguistic competence (Llorca 2004: 318–20). And the non-native speaker is also a role model of what is achievable (Cook 1999: 199–200).

For the classroom teacher of ELF, publications have not set forth much specific detail on pedagogy. Cook (1999: 196–204) suggests setting appropriate goals that emphasize the learner as a potential successful user of the L2. To that end, materials and activities should present models of competent L2 use. Teaching should be based on a description of L2 users, for example by basing intermediate goals on corpora of actual L2 use. In course books and materials, the L2 user can be presented within his or her own culture interacting with native speakers or other non-native speakers of the target language, rather than being portrayed only as a visitor in an English-speaking culture. Teaching methods should also incorporate and allow for use of students’ L1, which can even include updated translation exercises to involve the learner as an “intercultural speaker.” McKay (2003: 18–19) stresses the need for a sufficiently complex understanding of the diversity of teaching and learning, of how EIL is used, and of cross-cultural encounters and how English is used in these encounters. She cautions that learners may not want or need the full range of registers or native speaker-like pronunciation or pragmatics. Canagarajah (2007) suggests that teachers need to develop students’ ability to negotiate and focus on communicative strategies rather than on linguistic form. They should recognize that proficiency is measured by versatility in language use; it is not what the user knows, but what the user is able to do with the language. Jenkins (2012) probably offers the most realistic assessment of the pedagogical implications of ELF: She asserts that teaching applications must come from the teachers themselves, not from researchers removed from the language classroom.

6 What Does the Future Hold?

We should be entering a brave new world. Globalization has created greater need than ever to connect with people who speak other languages, and easy travel and new forms of technology

have made this ever more possible. In fact, while the primary source of language learning may still be the classroom, it is fast being supplemented by various sorts of media. A survey of 8,830 young people in six European countries, for example, revealed that, on average, the young people acquired 57.55 percent of their English through school, 25.96 percent through the media, and 17.19 percent through other means (DeBot 2007: 274–5).

Technology is opening up new possibilities of distance learning and self-access learning both in the context of formal classroom learning and for more individualized web surfers (see Blake 2007 for a summary and the 2009 focus issue of *Modern Language Journal*). Students in foreign language classes can be brought together for various forms of online communication with each other, and learners can easily access authentic texts through the internet, thus gaining a richer exposure to language used for authentic communicative purposes (e.g., Levy 2009; Thorne, Black, and Sykes 2009). Technology, however, is not the magic bullet, as attested by even a cursory glimpse at earlier promises of technology, namely language labs in the 1960s (e.g., Brooks 1964: 189–98) or electronic media in the 1970s (e.g., Arendt 1970).

Within Inner Circle English-speaking countries, interest in foreign language learning remains disappointing. Present enrollments in foreign languages at the university level in the United States are dishearteningly low. Although enrollments increased 13 percent from 2002 to 2006 and another 6.6 percent between 2006 and 2009, the rate of enrollment is still only about half what it was in the mid-1960s, and the vast majority of enrollments are in the first and second-year courses with only a small minority of students continuing to advanced courses where they could gain real fluency (MLA 2007; MLA 2010). A survey of elementary and secondary schools in the USA in the decade 1997–2008 found a decline in the number of schools offering foreign language instruction and in the actual number and percentage of pupils enrolled in foreign language (Pufahl and Rhodes 2011). The situation is likewise disappointing in the British Isles. An extensive survey of foreign language knowledge in Europe revealed that over 60 percent of the respondents in Ireland and the UK could not hold a conversation in any language but the L1 (TNS Opinion and Social 2006). In the UK, Mitchell (2000) cites the conclusion that secondary school pupils do not show creative ability to use the L2 they have studied, nor do they apply what they have previously learned to new language situations. Phillipson (1998) even suggests that policymakers in education do not really see the necessity for native speakers of English to learn other languages.

The picture in continental Europe is more optimistic; a survey of 28,694 Europeans in 2005 found that 56 percent could conduct a conversation in a language other than the L1, and 83 percent considered language learning useful for their lives (TNS Opinion and Social 2006). The role of English, however, is cause for concern. In Europe, there is a “growing tendency for ‘foreign language learning’ to mean simply ‘learning English,’” and the trend toward using English as the medium of instruction “may have unforeseen consequences” for national and regional languages (Commission of the European Communities 2005: 4, 6). In other parts of the world as well as Europe, there is concern that the spread of English is due to linguistic imperialism, that English is a “killer language” threatening indigenous languages and taking away the incentive to study other world languages (e.g., see Phillipson 1998; Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1997).

The success of L2 pedagogy can rest on factors such as the congruence of a teacher’s theoretical understanding of language, second language acquisition, and practice within the classroom. Yet there are sociopolitical concerns that crucially affect students’ attitudes and levels of motivation. While a skillful L2 teacher can do much to increase the positive attitudes of her students and their level of motivation to learn, the wider sociocultural context within which teaching takes place may have a far-reaching effect on the extent to which success is possible.

NOTE

1 The term *methodology* has been deliberately chosen to avoid the fine semantic distinctions in the academic literature among *approach*, *method*, and *technique* (e.g., Brown 2002; Richards and Rogers

2001) and to reflect teachers' less narrowly defined uses of the term *methods* (e.g., in Bell's 2007 study of teacher beliefs).

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