30 Years of TEFL/TESL: A Personal Reflection

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Introduction

Second and foreign language teaching is a field that is constantly in a state of change. For example new curriculum frameworks currently being implemented in different parts of the world include *competency based*, *genre based*, and *content based* models. In many countries English is now being introduced at primary rather than secondary level necessitating considerable new investment in textbooks and teacher training. And among the innovations that teachers are being asked to consider are *Multiple Intelligences*, *Co-operative Learning*, *Task-Based Instruction*, and *Alternative Assessment*.

I have recently had the opportunity to reflect on these and other changes that have come about in language teaching in recent years. This process of reflection was prompted by several quite practical tasks. One was the preparation of the third edition of the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards and Schmidt 2002), which required reviewing several hundred journal articles and books in the field to identify new terminology that has appeared since the last edition of the dictionary was published in 1994. This resulted in the addition of some 800 items to the third edition. A second task was the preparation of a new edition of *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (*Richards and Rodgers 2001*)*, which resulted in the addition of chapters on eight approaches and methods that had not been included in the first edition of 1986. Another activity was the compilation of an anthology of current practices in language teaching methodology – *Methodology in TESOL: An Anthology of Current Practice* (Richards and Renandya 2002) - which likewise required an extensive review of articles published in the last 10 years.

On a more personal level I have recently made a transition from full time to part time academic life to enable me to accommodate a more flexible life style. It is some 30 years since I completed my own Ph.D. and came to Asia as a teacher and teacher-educator. I have worked continuously in the Asia-Pacific region since then. Looking back over the last 30 years, at the influences that have shaped my own thinking and professional practice and reflecting on the current "state of the art" in language teaching prompted me to ask three basic questions:

1. What are some of the key questions we have been concerned about in language teaching?
2. What did we believe and understand about these issues thirty years ago?
3. What do we believe and understand about them now?

To explore these questions I made use of the information obtained from the activities mentioned above and also examined all the issues of two important professional journals in language teaching – *English Language Teaching Journal* and *English Teaching Forum* – for the years 1970-1975 and 1995-2000 *. In reviewing these journals I sought to identify the issues that were most frequently written about during the two time periods. This paper presents the results of these activities and explores the following eight questions:

- What are the goals of teaching English?
- What is the best way to teach a language?
- What is the role of grammar in language teaching?
- What processes are involved in second language learning?
- What is the role of the learner?
- How can we teach the four skills?
- How can we assess students' learning?
- How can we prepare language teachers?

In examining these questions I will try to show how our understanding of each issue has changed over the last 30 years and what current beliefs and practices in relation to each issue are. In the process we will also see hints of the transition from *modernism* (the rejection of prescription, authority, untested claims and assertions in favor on reason, empirical investigation and objectivity closely associated with the *scientific method*) to *postmodernism* (the rejection of modernism for failing to recognize the cultural relativity of all forms of knowledge, an emphasis on the autonomous individual, and the adoption of amoral stance against all forms of injustice). I will also highlight some of the most important terminology that is used in contemporary professional discourse about each issue. My aim is therefore to provide a brief snapshot of where we are today in TEFL/TESL and the terminology we use to describe our current beliefs and practices.

1. What are the goals of teaching English?

Purposes for learning English

Today English is so widely taught worldwide that the purposes for which it is learned are sometimes taken for granted. 30 years ago the assumption was that teaching English was a politically neutral activity and acquiring it would bring untold blessings to those who succeeded in learning it. It would lead to educational and economic *empowerment*. English was regarded as the property of the English-speaking world, particularly Britain and the US. Native-speakers of the language had special insights and superior knowledge about teaching it. And it was above all the vehicle for the expression of a rich and advanced culture or cultures, whose literary artifacts had universal value.

English as an International Language

This picture has changed somewhat today. Now that English is the language of globalization, international communication, commerce and trade, the media and pop culture, different motivations for learning it come into play. English is no longer viewed as the property of the English-speaking world but is an international commodity sometimes referred to as *World English* or *English as an International Language*. The cultural values of Britain and the US are often seen as irrelevant to language teaching, except in situations where the learner has a pragmatic need for such information. The language teacher need no longer be an expert on British and American culture and a literature specialist as well. Bisong (1995) says that in Nigeria English is simply one of a number of languages that form the speech repertoire of Nigerians which they learn "for pragmatic reasons to do with maximizing their chances of success in a multilingual and multicultural society." English is still promoted as a tool that will assist with educational and economic advancement but is viewed in many parts of the world as one that can be acquired

without any of the cultural trappings that go with it. Proficiency in English is needed for employees to advance in international companies and improve their technical knowledge and skills. It provides a foundation for what has been called "process skills" – those problem-solving and critical thinking skills that are needed to cope with the rapidly changing environment of the workplace, one where English is play a growingly important role.

Role of the native speaker

In the nineteen seventies the target for learning was assumed to be a native-speaker variety of English and it was the native speaker's culture, perceptions, and speech that were crucial in setting goals for English teaching. The native speaker had a privileged status as "owners of the language, guardians of its standards, and arbiters of acceptable pedagogic norms"(Jenkins 2000:5). Today *local varieties* of English such as Filipino English and Singapore English are firmly established as a result of *indigenization*, and in contexts where English is a foreign language there is less of a pressure to turn foreign-language speakers of English (Koreans, Taiwanese, Japanese etc) into mimics of native speaker English, be it an American, British, or Australian variety. The extent to which a learner seeks to speak with a native-like accent and sets this as his or her personal goal, is a personal one. It is not necessary to try to eradicate the phonological influences of the mother tongue nor to seek to speak like a native speaker. Jennifer Jenkins in her recent book argues that RP pronunciation is an unattainable and an unnecessary target for second language learners, and she proposes a phonological syllabus that maintains core phonological distinctions but is a reduced inventory from RP. A pronunciation syllabus for EIL would thus not be a native-speaker variety but would be a phonological core that would provide for phonological intelligibility but not seek to eradicate the influence of the mother tongue.

Critical perspectives

The messages of *critical theory* and *critical pedagogy* have also prompted reflection on the *hidden curriculum* that sometimes underlies language teaching polices and practices. The theory of *linguistic imperialism* argues that education and English language teaching in particular, are not politically neutral activities. Mastery of English, it is claimed, enhances the power and control of a privileged few. *Critical theorists* have turned their attention to the status of English and the drain on education resources it demands in many countries and its role in facilitating the domination of multinational corporations. Teachers are now encouraged to examine and confront the underlying *ideologies* of texts and textbooks. Textbooks, no longer seen as indispensable tools, are viewed as controlling instruments, hindering the creativity of the teacher, maintained in place through the pressure of publishers, and may result in the *deskilling* of teachers through their recycling of old, but tried and tested teaching techniques. They are transmitters of a dominant and dominating ideology. Critics of language programs for refugees and immigrants have pointed out that often these programs seek to provide the means by which learners can enter dead end low paid jobs rather than genuinely seek to empower them.

In practice however in many parts of the world this has meant little more than standards of *political correctness* being applied to the content of textbooks. Content of books is carefully scrutinized to ensure that they represent *diversity*, though many of the topics teachers and perhaps learners would like to see in textbooks are still taboo. McCarthy (2001,132) writing about *Critical Discourse Analysis* has pointed out

that “there is a whiff of political correctness in much of what CDA presents, and a middle-class left-wing bias and academic elitism which is often thinly disguised behind the unquestioned caring for minorities and the oppressed which CDA practitioners sincerely posses”.

Then:

- English as cultural enrichment.
- English the language of English-speaking countries.
- Native-speaker privileged status.
- Teachers seen as cultural informants.
- Literature an important dimension of language learning.
- Native-speaker accent the target
- Native-speaker-like fluency the target

Now:

- English as a practical tool.
- English a world commodity.
- English learning not necessarily linked to US or British cultural values.
- English teaching linked to national values.
- Mother-tongue influenced accent acceptable as well as native-speaker accent
- Comprehensibility the target

Buzzwords
critical discourse analysis, critical pedagogy, critical theory, deskilling, diversity, empowerment, hidden curriculum, ideology, indigenization, English as an International Language, linguistic imperialism, local varieties, political correctness, World English

2. What is the best way to teach a language?

The decline of methods

The 1970s ushered in an era of change and innovation in language teaching methodology. This was the decade during which *Communicative Language Teaching* came to replace *Audiolingualism* and the *Structural-Situational Approach*. And it was during this decade that we heard about such novel methods as *Total Physical Response, The Silent Way,* and *Counseling Learning*. Improvements in language teaching would come about through the adoption of new and improved teaching approaches and methods that incorporated breakthroughs in our understanding of language and how language learning takes place.

Thirty years later, while Communicative Language Teaching is still alive and well many of the “novel” methods of the 1970s have largely disappeared. And so to a large extent has the question that attracted so much interest at that time: “What is the best method to teach a second or foreign language?” We are now in what has been termed the *post methods* era. How did we get there?

Many of the more innovative methods of the 1970s had a very short shelf-life (Richards and Rodgers 2001). Because they were linked to very specific claims and

to prescribed practices they tended to fall out of favor as these practices became unfashionable or discredited. The heyday of methods can be considered to have lasted until the late 1980s. One of the strongest criticisms of the "new methods" was that they were typically "top-down". Teachers had to accept on faith the claims or theory underlying the method and apply them in their own practice. Good teaching was regarded as correct use of the method and its prescribed principles and techniques. Roles of teachers and learners as well as the type of activities and teaching techniques to be used in the classroom, were generally prescribed. Likewise, learners were often viewed as the passive recipients of the method who should submit themselves to its regime of exercises and activities. The *post methods* era has thus lead to a focus on the processes of learning and teaching rather than ascribing a central role to methods as the key to successful teaching. As language teaching moved away from a search for the perfect method, attention shifted to how teachers could develop and explore their own teaching through *reflective teaching* and *action research.* This, it was argued, could lead to the revitalization of teaching from the inside rather than by trying to make teachers and teaching to conform to an external model (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

Communicative approaches

Perhaps this difference in orientation explains why Communicative Language Teaching has survived into the new millennium. Because it refers to a diverse set of rather general and uncontroversial principles *Communicative Language Teaching* can be interpreted in many different ways and used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures. The principles themselves can be summarized as follows:

- The goal of language learning is communicative competence
- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities
- Fluency and accuracy are both important dimension of communication
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills
- Learning is a gradual process that involves trial and error

Several contemporary teaching approaches such as *Content Based Instruction*, *Cooperative Language Learning*, and *Task-Based Instruction* can all claim to be applications of these principles and hence continue as mainstream approaches today.

In the last thirty years there has also been a substantial change in where and how learning takes place. In the seventies teaching mainly took place in the classroom and in the language laboratory. The teacher used chalk and talk and the textbook. Technology amounted to the tape recorder and film strips. However towards the end of the seventies learning began to move away from the teacher's direct control and into the hands of learners through the use of *individualized learning*, group work and project work.

Context and resources

The contexts and resources for learning have also seen many changes since the 1970s. Learning is not confined to the classroom: it can take place at home or in other places as well as at school, using the computer and other forms of technology. Today's teachers and learners live in a technology-enhanced learning environment. Videos, computers and the internet are accessible to almost all teachers and learners and in *smart schools* the language laboratory has been turned into a *multimedia*

centre that supports *on-line-learning*. Technology has facilitated the shift from *teacher-centered* to *learner-centered* learning. Students now spend time interacting not with the teacher, but with other learners using *chatrooms* that provide access to more authentic input and learning processes and that make language learning available at any time.

Influences from corporate sector

In the last decade or so language teaching has also been influenced by concepts and practices from the corporate world. In the seventies, four ingredients were seen as essential to provide for effective teaching: *teachers*, *methods*, *course design*, and *tests*. Teaching was viewed rather narrowly as a self-contained activity that didn't need to look much beyond itself. Improvements in teaching would come about through fine-tuning methods, course design, materials and tests. By comparison effective language teaching today is seen both as a pedagogical problem and well as an organizational one. On the pedagogical side teachers are no longer viewed merely as skilled implementers of a teaching method but as creators of their own individual teaching methods, as classroom researchers, and curriculum and materials developers. Beyond the pedagogical level however and at the level of the institution, schools are increasingly viewed as having similar characteristics to other kinds of complex organizations in terms of organizational activities and processes and can be studied as a system involving inputs, processes, and outputs. Teaching is embedded within an organizational and administrative context and influenced by organizational constraints and processes. In order to manage schools efficiently and productively it is necessary to understand the nature of the organizational activities that occur in schools, the problems that these activities create, and how they can be effectively and efficiently managed and controlled. These activities include setting and accomplishing organizational goals, allocating resources to organizational participants, coordinating organizational events and processes, and setting policies to improve their functioning (Visscher 1999).

This management-view of education has brought into language teaching concepts and practices from the commercial world, with an emphasis on planning, efficiency, communication processes, targets and *standards*, *staff development*, learning outcomes and *competencies, quality assurance, strategic planning, performance appraisal*, and *best practice*. We have thus seen a movement away from an obsession with pedagogical processes to a focus on organizational systems and processes and their contribution to successful language programs (Richards 2001).

Then:

- Methods seen as the key to successful language teaching
- Top-down approaches to teaching
- Prescriptivism in teaching
- Schools and institutions still installing language labs
- Teaching and learning took place in the classroom
- The teacher was the primary source of input
- Teaching largely book and paper-based

Now:

- Post-methods era
- Communicative approaches
- Bottom-up approaches to teaching
- Exploratory and reflective approaches to teaching

- Language lab converted to a multimedia center.
- Video and computers a common teaching and learning resource
- Learning occurs inside and outside the classroom
- Classrooms are connected to one another and to the world
- E-mail connects students with other students anywhere in the world.
- Teachers and students use the World Wide Web as a teaching/learning resource
- Educational software is an integral part of the curriculum
- Focus on organizational systems and processes

Buzzwords
action research, communicative approach, best practice, chatrooms, competencies. content-based instruction, c*ooperative language learning*, *learner centeredness, learning styles, learning strategies, multimedia centre, on-line learning, post-methods era, prescriptivism, quality assurance, reflective teaching*, *smart schools*, *staff development*, *standards*, *strategic planning, task-based teaching*, *teacher research,*

3. What is the role of grammar in language teaching?

In the 1970s we were just nearing the end of a period during which grammar had a controlling influence on language teaching. Approaches to grammar teaching and the design of course books at that time reflected a view of language that saw the sentence and sentence grammar as forming the building blocks of language, language learning, and language use (McCarthy 2001). The goal of language teaching was to understand how sentences are used to create different kinds of meaning, to master the underlying rules for forming sentences from lower-level grammatical units such as phrases and clauses, and to practice using them as the basis for written and spoken communication. Syllabuses were essentially grammar-based and grammar was a primary focus of teaching techniques. Correct language use was achieved through a drill and practice methodology and through controlled speaking and writing exercises that sought to prevent or minimize opportunities for errors. The title of the textbook I taught from in those days echoed the emphasis on controlled practice - *Practice and Progress* (Alexander 1967). Practice was viewed as the key to learning, embedded within a methodology with the following features (Ellis 2002, 168):

1. A specific grammatical feature is isolated for focused attention.
2. The learners are required to produce sentences containing the targeted feature.
3. The learners will be provided with opportunities for repetition of the targeted feature
4. There is an expectancy that the learners will perform the grammatical feature correctly, therefore practice activities are success oriented.
5. The learners receive feedback on whether their performance of the grammatical structure is correct or not. This feedback may be immediate or delayed.

But in the 1970s Chomsky's theories of language and his distinction between *competence* and *performance* were starting to have an impact on language teaching. His theory of "transformational grammar" for example, with core kernel sentences

that were transformed through the operation of rules to produce more complex sentences sought to capture the nature of a speaker's *linguistic competence*. It seemed to offer an exciting new approach to grammar teaching, and for a while in the early seventies was reflected in popular texts book series such as O'Neill's *Kernel Lessons* (O'Neill 1974). Exercises in which learners "transformed" sentences into more complex ones lay at the heart of *Kernel Lessons* and similar courses.

Linguistic competence to communicative competence

Gradually throughout the seventies the sentence as the central unit of focus became replaced by a focus on language in use with the emergence of the notion of *communicative competence* as well as functional approaches to the study of language such as Halliday's theory of *functional grammar*. Krashen's *monitor model* of language learning and his distinction between *acquisition* (the unconscious process by which language develops as a product of real communication and exposure to appropriate input) and *learning* (the development of knowledge about the rules of a language) as well as his claims about the role of *comprehensible input* also prompted a reassessment of status of grammar in language teaching and the value of explicit grammar instruction. Proposals emerged for an *implicit approach* to the teaching of grammar or a combination of *explicit* and implicit approaches.

Accuracy and fluency

The development of communicative methodologies to replace the grammar-based methodologies of the seventies also resulted in a succession of experiments with different kinds of syllabuses (e.g. *notional, functional,* and *content based*) and an emphasis on both *accuracy* and *fluency* as goals for learning and teaching. The difference between accuracy-focused and fluency-focused activities can be shown as follows:

Accuracy-focused activities

- reflect typical classroom use of language
- focus on the formation of correct examples of language use
- produce language for display (i.e. as evidence of learning
  call on explicit knowledge
- elicit a careful (monitored) speech style
- reflect controlled performance
- practice language out of context
- practice small samples of language
- do not require authentic communication

Fluency-focused activities

- reflect natural language use
- call on implicit knowledge
- elicit a vernacular speech style
- reflect automatic performance
- require the use of improvising, paraphrasing, repair and reorganization
- produce language that is not always predictable
- allow students to select the language they use
- require real communication

However the implementation of communicative and fluency-based methodology did not resolve the issue of what to do about grammar. The promise that the communicative methodologies would help learners develop both communicative competence as well as linguistic competence did not always happen. Programs where there was an extensive use of "authentic communication", particularly in the early stages of learning reported that students often developed fluency at the expense of accuracy resulting in learners with good communication skills but a poor command of grammar and a high level of *fossilization* (Higgs and Clifford 1982). To address this problem it was argued that classroom activities should provide opportunities for the following processes to take place (Ellis 2002):

1. *Noticing* (the learner becomes conscious of the presence of a linguistic feature in the input, where previously she had ignored it)
2. Comparing (the learner compares the linguistic feature noticed in the input with her own mental grammar, registering to what extent there is a 'gap' between the input and her grammar)
3. Integrating or *restructuring* (the learner integrates a representation of the new linguistic feature into her mental grammar)

Proposals as to how these processes can be realized within the framework of current communicative methodologies include:

- Incorporating a more explicit treatment of grammar within a text-based curriculum
- Building a *focus on form* into task-based teaching through activities centering on consciousness raising or noticing grammatical features of input or output
- Using activities that require "stretched output", i.e. which expand or 'restructure" the learner's grammatical system though increased communicative demands and attention to linguistic form

Then:

- Sentence-grammar the focus of teaching
- Linguistic competence the goal of learning
- Grammar often taught divorced from context
- Accuracy-based methodology

Now:

- Accuracy and fluency of equal status
- Grammar taught in meaningful context
- Focus on grammar in discourse and texts
- Communicative competence the goal of learning
- Fluency-based methodology
- Grammar taught through tasks

Buzzwords
acquisition, communicative competence, comprehensible input, consciousness-raising content syllabus, explicit approach, fluency, focus on form, fossilization, functional grammar, functional syllabus, implicit approach, input hypothesis, learning, linguistic competence, notional syllabus, noticing, , restructuring, ,

4. What processes are involved in second language learning?

In the early seventies both British and North American ideas about language learning were rather similar, though they developed from different traditions. The theory of behaviorism dominated both psychology and education. According to this theory the processes of imitation, practice, reinforcement, and habit formation were central to all learning, including language learning. Chomsky rejected this theory as inapplicable to language learning and emphasized the cognitive nature of language learning and the fact that children appear to be born with abstract knowledge about the nature of language, i.e. knowledge of *universal grammar*. Exposure to language was sufficient to trigger the acquisition processes and initiate the processes of hypothesis formation that were evident in studies of language acquisition.

Second language acquisition

These ideas generated a great deal of interest in applied linguistics and lead to the fields of *error analysis* and *second language acquisition* or *SLA* which sought to find other explanations for second language learning than habit formation. Error analysis argued that learners errors were systematic, not always derived from the mother tongue, and represented a developing linguistic system or *interlanguage*. Gradually a view emerged of the learner as actively and creatively involved in developing his or her interlanguage, which Dulay and Burt sought to explain in their *creative construction hypothesis.* This proposed that learners make use of processes leading to the creation of novel forms and structures that are not found in the target language, using natural processes such as generalization. Dulay and Burt argued that as with first language acquisition, many grammatical features of a second language are acquired in a predictable order or *developmental sequence*. By the 1990s however error analysis and the creative construction hypothesis had been replaced by further developments in Chomskyan theory. Chomsky's theory of universal grammar had been elaborated to include innate knowledge about the *principles* of language (i.e. that languages usually have pronouns) and their *parameters* (i.e. that some languages allow these to be dropped when they are in subject position) and this model was applied to the study of both first and second language acquisition (Schmitt 2002).

Information-processing models

Other dimensions to second language learning were explained by reference to *information processing* models of learning. Two different kinds of processing are distinguished in this model. *Controlled processing* is involved when conscious attention is required to perform a task. This places demands on *short-term memory .Automatic processing* is involved when the learner carries out a task without awareness or attention, making more use of information in *long term memory*. Learning involves the performance of behavior with automatic processing. The information processing model offered an explanation as to why learners language use sometimes shifts from fluent (automatic processing) to less fluent (controlled processing) and why learners in the initial stages of language learning need to put so much effort into understanding and producing language (Spada and Lightbown 2002).

Vygotsky's theory

Learning through interaction (the *interaction hypothesis*) was also proposed as an alternative to learning through repetition and habit formation. Interaction and *negotiation of meaning* were seen as central to learning through tasks that require attention to meaning, transfer of information and that require *pushed output*, the latter triggering the processes of *noticing* and *restructuring* referred to above.

Learning came to be seen as both a social process as well as a cognitive one, however. Some SLA researchers drew on Vygotsky's view of the *zone of proximal development,* which focuses on the gap between what the learner can currently do and the next stage in learning – the *level of potential development* - and how learning occurs through negotiation between the learner and a more advanced language user during which a process known as *scaffolding* occurs. To take part in these processes the learner must develop *interactional competence*, the ability to manage exchanges despite limited language development. Personality, motivation, cognitive style may all play a role in influencing the learners willingness to take risks, his or her openness to social interaction and attitudes towards the target language and users of the target language.

Current view of second language learning thus argue that for language learning to take place the following elements must be provided in the classroom (Shrum and Glisan 2000, 14-15):

- comprehensible input in the target language
- an interactive environment that models and presents a variety of social, linguistic, and cognitive tools for structuring and interpreting participation in talk
- opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning in the target language, with assistance from the teacher and from one another
- opportunities for learners to interact communicatively with one another in the target language
- conversations and tasks that are purposeful and meaningful to the learner
- a non-threatening environment that encourages self-expression

However SLA theory throughout the 90s still tended to reflect a grammar-based view of language, with an interest in explaining how learners built up knowledge of "rules" of the target language. Recently this view of learning has been questioned by those favoring *connectionism* which explains learning not in terms of abstract rule or universal grammar but in terms of "probabilistic or associative models of acquisition, rather than symbolic rule-based models" (McCarthy 2001,83). SLA theory today remains strongly influenced by a Chomskyan view of language and limits its focus to oral language and the acquisition of grammatical competence. For this reason it is considered to be largely irrelevant in understanding the learning of other aspects of language such as reading, writing or listening (see Grabe 2002).

Then:

- Emergence of error analysis and SLA
- Cognitive views of learning replace behaviorist theory
- Creative construction hypothesis proposed

- Interlanguage concept proposed
- Developments sequences described
- Information-processing models of learning

Now:

- Role of universal grammar
- Interactionist model of learning
- Learning through scaffolding
- Probabilistic models of learning proposed

Buzzwords
automatic processing, connectionism, controlled processing, creative construction hypothesis, developmental sequence, error analysis, information processing, interaction hypothesis, interactional competence, interlanguage, long term memory, negotiation of meaning, principles, parameters, scaffolding, second language acquisition (SLA), short term memory, universal grammar, zone of proximal development,

5 What is the role of the learner?

In the last thirty years learners have come to assume a much more significant role in the language learning process from their contribution in the early 1970s. In the 1970s we tended to underestimate the contribution of the learner or to view it as a somewhat negative one. We tended to assume that learners were very much alike in their reasons for wanting to learn English as well as the ways in which they learn a language. It was assumed that good language teaching meant controlling the learner and that a good teaching method would lead the reluctant learner through the learning process. But then a rethinking of the learner's contribution began in earnest. A book John Oller (Oller and Richards 1973) and I edited at the time, aptly named *Focus on the Learner,* sought to capture this new interest. The focus on the learner manifested itself in several different ways.

Role of motivation

One interest that emerged at this time was the role of motivation in language learning. Two early motivational orientations that were identified were *instrumental motivation* (e.g. wanting to learn a language for the practical benefits it brings) and *integrative motivation* (e.g. wanting to learn a language in order to interact with and become similar to valued members of the target language community). Another distinction that appeared was the distinction between *intrinsic motivation* (enjoyment of language learning itself) and *extrinsic motivation* (driven by external factors such as parental pressure, societal expectations, academic requirements or other sources of rewards or punishment). The construct of motivation emphasized the importance of *individual differences* among learners (which also include *language aptitude*, age, and gender), the learner's role in determining the goals of language learning and the kind of effort he or she might commit to it, and the need to find ways of creating motivational conditions in the classroom.

The emergence of *humanistic methods* in the seventies reflected another dimension to a focus on the learner. Humanistic methods were those in which the following principles were considered important:

- the development of human values
- growth in self-awareness and the understanding of others
- sensitivity to human feelings and emotions
- active student involvement in learning and the way learning takes place.

Community Language Learning and the *Silent Way* are examples of this movement from the seventies, and though these have largely disappeared today the humanistic philosophy is seen in more recent innovative approaches such as *Neurolinguistic Programming* and *Multiple Intelligences*.

Individualization

A different strand to the focus on the learner theme emerged at the same time under the rubric of *individualized instruction* and more generally, *individualization*. Individualized approaches to language teaching are based on the assumptions that:

- People learn in different ways
- They can learn from a variety of different sources
- Learners have different goals and objectives in language learning
- Direct teaching by a teacher is not always essential for learning

Individualization includes such things as one-to-one teaching, home study, *self-access learning*, self-directed learning, and the movement towards *learner autonomy*, all of which focus on the learner as an individual and seek to encourage learner initiative and to respect learner differences. In the 1980s it was replaced by the term *learner-centeredness*, which refers to the belief that attention to the nature of learners should be central to all aspects of language teaching, including planning teaching and evaluation. Learning is dependent upon the nature and will of learners. Learner centeredness may be reflected by:

- recognizing learners' prior knowledge
- recognizing learners' needs, goals, and wishes
- recognizing learners' learning styles and learning preferences
- recognizing learners' views of teaching and the nature of classroom tasks

In learner-centered approaches, course design and teaching often become negotiated processes through *needs analysis*, since needs, expectations, and student resources vary with each group of learners. This was the approach used in the Australian Migrant Education program and described in Nunan's book *The Learner Centered Curriculum* (Nunan 1988). *Learner-centered teaching* was contrasted with *teacher-centered teaching*, i.e. teaching in which primary decisions are carried out by the teacher based on his or her priorities.

Learning strategies

In the 1980s interest in learner differences also led to the emergence of *learner strategy* research, an issue which received considerable attention into the 1980s and 1990s. Strategies first came to attention with studies of the *good language learner* in the mid 1970s and the idea that when we teach a language we also have to teach

language learning strategies and acknowledge different *cognitive styles*. For example reading strategies include (Cohen and Dornyei 2002):

With regard to reading habits in the target language:

- *Making a real effort to find reading material that is at or near one's level*

As basic reading strategies:

- *Planning how to read a text, monitor to see how the reading is going, and then check to see how much of it was understood*
- *Making ongoing summaries either in one's mind or in the margins of the text*

When encountering unknown words and structures:

- *Guessing the appropriate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context*
- *Using a dictionary to get a detailed sense of what individual words mean*

Some strategies are more likely to be effective than others and by distinguishing between the strategies of experts and novices or good language learners versus poor learners we can improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. *Strategy training* and the notion of strategies still continues to attract attention, though not perhaps with the same level of enthusiasm that it did a decade ago since many teachers feel that strategies are hard to identify, sometimes differ from learner to learner, and are often difficult to address in teaching.

Then:

- Teacher-centered teaching
- Uniform view of learners
- Learning controlled by the teacher and the method
- Humanistic methods appear
- Role of motivation examined
- Individual differences emphasized

Now:

- Learner-centered teaching
- Diversity a strength
- Learning controlled by the learner
- Emphasis on individual difference
- Training of learner strategies
- New versions of humanistic approaches

Buzzwords

individual differences, individualization, individualized instruction. language aptitude, learning strategies, learner autonomy, self-directed learning, cognitive style, extrinsic motivation, good language learner, instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, intrinsic motivation, learner training, learner strategies, humanistic methods, learner-centeredness, needs analysis, self-access learning, strategy training, multiple intelligences, needs analysis, Neurolinguistic programming (NLP),

6. How can we teach the four skills?

Teaching listening

Listening, hardly mentioned at all in journals in the 70s has come into its own by the present period, and although it continues to be ignored in SLA theory and research at least in teaching it now plays a much more prominent role. University entrance exams, school leaving and other examinations have begun to include a listening component, acknowledging that listening proficiency is an important aspect of second language proficiency, and if it isn't tested, teachers won't pay attention to it. An early view of listening saw it as the mastery of discrete skills or *microskills* (e.g. Richards 1983) and that these should form the focus of teaching and testing. A skills approach focused on such things as (Rost 1990):

- discriminating sounds in words, especially phonemic contrasts
- deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words
- predicting content
- noting contradictions, inadequate information, ambiguities
- differentiating between fact and opinion

The changed status of listening was partly prompted by Krashen's emphasis on the role of comprehension and *comprehensible input*, i.e. the *input hypothesis*, in triggering language development, which lies at the heart of his *Natural Approach*. In the 80s and 90s applied linguists also began to borrow new theoretical models of comprehension from the field of cognitive psychology. It was from this source that the distinction between *bottom-up processing* and *top-down processing* was derived, a distinction that lead to an awareness of the importance of background knowledge, and schema in comprehension. The *bottom-up model* holds that listening is a linear, data-driven process. Comprehension occurs to the extent that the listener is successful in decoding the spoken text. The *top-down model* of listening, by contrast, involves the listener in actively constructing meaning based on expectations, inferences, intentions, knowledge of *schema* and other relevant *prior knowledge* and by a selective processing of the input. Listening came to be viewed as an interpretive process. At the same time the fields of *conversation analysis* and *discourse analysis* were revealing a great deal about the organization of spoken discourse and lead to a realization that written texts read aloud could not provide a suitable basis for developing the abilities needed to process real-time authentic discourse. *Authenticity* in materials became a catchword and part of a pedagogy of teaching listening that is now well established in TESOL. Mendelsohn (1994) summarizes the assumptions underlying current methodology as:

- Listening materials should be based on a wide range of authentic texts, including both monologues and dialogues
- Schema-building tasks should precede listening
- Strategies for effective listening should be incorporated into the materials
- Learners should be given opportunities to progressively structure their listening by listening to a text several times and by working through increasingly challenging listening tasks
- Learners should know what they are listening for and why
- Tasks should include opportunities for learners to play an active role in their own learning

Then

- Accurate recall of the information is a passage was the goal.
- Comprehension viewed as decoding.
- Learner viewed as a passive participant in listening.
- Comprehension viewed as a demonstration of learning.
- Native speaker models on tape speaking standard and prestige accents.
- Listening materials mainly specially written.
- Little distinction between teaching and testing of listening.

Now

- Comprehension viewed as a mix of bottom-up and top down processes.
- Learner viewed an active participant in listening.
- Comprehension viewed as the basis for acquisition.
- Listening strategies are taught.
- Role of pre-listening emphasized.
- Variety of accents on tape, native and non-native, as well as regional.
- Listening materials often based on authentic speech and seek to capture features of authentic speech.

Buzzwords
authentic texts, bottom-up processing, comprehensible input, conversation analysis, corpus, discourse analysis, input hypothesis, microskills, Natural Approach, prior knowledge,top-down processing, schema,

Teaching speaking

Speaking has always been a major focus of language teaching, however both the nature of speaking skills as well as approaches to teaching them have undergone a major shift in thinking in the last 30 years. Speaking in the early seventies usually meant "repeating after the teacher, reciting a memorized dialogue, or responding to a mechanical drill" (Shrum and Glisan, 200, 26), reflecting the sentence-based view of proficiency prevailing in the methodologies of Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching. The emergence of the constructs of *communicative competence* and *proficiency* in the 1980s, lead to major shifts in conceptions of syllabuses and methodology, the effects of which continue to be seen today. The theory of communicative competence prompted attempts at developing *communicative syllabuses* in the 1980s, initially resulting in proposals for *notional syllabuses, functional syllabuses*, as well as the *Threshold Level* and more recently proposals for *task-based* and *text-based* approaches to teaching. *Fluency* became a goal for speaking courses and this could be developed through the use of *information-gap* and other tasks that required learners to attempt real communication despite limited proficiency in English. In so doing they would develop *communication strategies* and engage in *negotiation of meaning*, both of which were considered essential to the development of oral skills. Activities borrowed from the repertoire of techniques associated with *Cooperative Learning* became a good source of teaching ideas.

In foreign language teaching a parallel interest lead to the *proficiency movement* in the 1990s, which attempted to develop descriptions of bands of proficiency across the different skills areas and to use these bands as guidelines in program planning. The proficiency concept was said to offer "an organizing principle that can help teachers establish course objectives, organize course content, and determine what students should be able to do upon completion of a course or program of study" (Bragger, 1985,43).
Hadley proposes five principles for a proficiency-oriented teaching:

- opportunities must be provided for students to practice using the language in a range of contexts likely to be encountered in the target culture.
- opportunities should be provided for students to carry out a range of functions (tasks) necessary for dealing with others in the target culture.
- the development of accuracy should be encouraged in proficiency-oriented instruction. As learners produce language, various forms of instruction and evaluative feedback can be useful in facilitating the progression of their skills toward more precise and coherent language use.
- instruction should be responsive to the affective as well as the cognitive needs of students, and their different personalities, preferences, and learning styles should be taken into account.
- cultural understanding must be promoted in various ways so that students are sensitive to other cultures and prepared to live more harmoniously in the target language community
  (Hadley, 1993, 77)

The notion of English as an International Language has prompted a revision of the notion of communicative competence to that of *intercultural competence,* a goal for both native speakers and language learners and with a focus on learning how to communicate in ways that are appropriate in cross-cultural settings. At the same time it is now accepted that models for oral interaction cannot be based simply on the intuitions of applied linguists and textbook writers but should be informed by the findings of *conversation analysis* and *corpus analysis* of real speech. These have revealed such things as:

- the clausal nature of much spoken language and the role of *chunks* (sense or tone groups such as "the other day/ I got a real surprise/ when I got a call/ from an old school friend")
- the frequency of fixed utterances or *conversational routines* in spoken language (e.g. Is that right, You know what I mean)
- the interactive and negotiated nature of oral interaction involving such processes as *turn-tasking, feedback*, and topic *management*
- the differences between *interactional talk* (person oriented) and *transactional talk* (message oriented)

Then

- Speaking and oral interaction seen as ways of mastering basic patterns and structures
- Native-speaker usage the model
- Models based on author intuition
- Grammatical and situational syllabus
- Drills, dialogs, substitution exercises were basic classroom activities.
- Accuracy was the primary goal. Little tolerance of errors.

- Oral proficiency viewed as dependent upon mastery of structures
- Teacher-fronted instruction predominated

Now

- Speaking and oral interaction is seen as the basis for learning
- Non-native usage as well as native usage as models.
- English for cross-cultural communication a goal
- Models informed by corpus analysis
- Functional or other type of communicative syllabus
- Both accuracy and fluency a primary goal. More tolerance of errors.
- Oral proficiency viewed as dependent upon mastery of lexical phases and conversational routines.
- Cultural awareness addressed
- Pair and group activities predominate.

Buzzwords
chunks, communicative competence, communicative syllabus, conversation analysis, conversational routines, cooperative learning, communication strategies, corpus analysis, feedback, fluency, functional syllabus, information-gap, interactional talk, intercultural competence, negotiation of meaning, notional syllabuses, proficiency, task, task-based syllabus, text-based syllabuses, Threshold Level, topic management, transactional talk, turn taking,

Teaching reading

In the seventies, second language reading ability was viewed as the mastery of specific reading subskills or *microskills*, a view that to some extent continues to inform approaches to the teaching of reading today. Skills formed the basis for second language reading instruction and these included:

- Discerning main ideas
- Understanding sequence
- Noticing specific details
- Making inferences
- Making comparisons
- Making predictions

These skills were often taught separately. As with listening, bottom-up views of reading dominated theory and pedagogy and reading tended to be taught by providing texts (usually contrived texts written to word lists) which student students read and then answer comprehension questions about. In many classrooms there was little difference in approach between teaching reading and testing reading. Advanced reading served as a form of cultural enrichment rather than any real-world goals.

In the last 30 years the fields of psycholinguistics, cognitive science, discourse and text analysis as well as the field of second language reading research have considerably enriched our understanding of second language reading processes. Research has examined such issues as the role of *scripts* and *schema* in L2

comprehension, the nature of *coherence* and *cohesion* in texts, the effects of cross cultural difference in schematic knowledge, the role of *prior knowledge* in comprehension, and how knowledge of *text structure* and *discourse cues* affects comprehension.. Research has demonstrated that L2 readers can benefit from the understanding of text structures and from the use of text-mapping strategies that highlight text structures and their function.

The role of vocabulary in reading has also been extensively researched. Issues that have been examined include:

- the number of words needed to read L2 texts
- the role of context in understanding news words in texts
- the relationship between language proficiency and reading ability
- strategies for remembering words
- effective dictionary use
- incidental learning of vocabulary through reading

With respect to the last issue, Hu and Nation (1992) found that a vocabulary of 5000 words was needed to read short unsimplified novels for pleasure, while Hazenberg and Hulstijn (1996) found that twice as many words as that were needed to read first-year university materials. Both studies emphasize the need for vocabulary development a s a component of a reading course, since L2 learners typically are under prepared for reading unsimplified texts.

Differences between proficient and non-proficient readers has been another focus of research and generated interest in the value of strategy instruction. The teaching of reading has been one area where strategy training is seen to be teachable, particularly with less proficient readers. Better readers seem to actively control their reading and their use of reading strategies. Current thinking on the teaching of L2 reading strategies suggests (Janzen 2000):

- The teaching of strategies should be contextualized
- Strategies should be taught explicitly through direct explanation, modeling, and feedback.
- There should be a constant recycling of strategies over next texts and tasks
- Strategies should be taught over a long period of time.

Grabe suggest the following research findings should inform approaches to L2 reading:

- the importance of discourse structure and graphic representations
- the importance of vocabulary in language learning
- the need for language awareness and attending to language and genre form
- the existence of a second language proficiency threshold in reading
- the importance of *metacognitive awareness* and strategy learning
- the need for extensive reading
- the benefits of integrating reading and writing
- the importance of Content-Based Instruction

(Grabe 2002, 277)

Although L2 reading programs are often designed to serve the needs of learners needing reading for academic purposes, the role English plays as the language in the Information and Communication Age is also prompting a rethinking of approaches to

the teaching of reading in many parts of the world. Students must now learn to be able to apply what they have learned, to use knowledge to solve problems, and to be able to transfer learning to new situations. Educationists argue that learners need to develop effective analytical *processing skills* through reading, problem solving and *critical thinking,* and to develop *technical reading skill*s rather than those used for literary reading. These should be based on the use of authentic texts. In addition information-literacy skills are needed, i.e. the skills needed to access, analyze, authenticate and apply information acquired from different sources and turn it into useful personal knowledge (Jukes and McCain, 2001).

Then:

- Reading is viewed as skill development
- Language deficiency seen as the major obstacle to reading ability (e.g. vocabulary and grammatical knowledge)
- Learning is text driven
- Comprehension is a process of decoding texts
- Reading skills developed through graded and specially written texts
- Literary reading skills the focus at higher levels and the reading of poetry, drama and literature
- Effective comprehension is seen as developing automaticity in basic skills
- Reading based on print materials and primarily serves the purpose of obtaining information

Now:

- Reading viewed as a mix of bottom-up and top-down processing
- Successful reading depends on strategy use
- Learning is learner driven.
- Reading skills developed through the use of authentic texts
- Comprehension is a creative and interactive process
- Technical reading skills and information processing skills the focus at higher levels
- Reading based not just on print materials but on hypertext and other source of information
- Critical reasoning skills a priority for learners to be able to apply their understanding to solving real world problems

Buzzwords
authentic texts, coherence, cohesion, critical thinking, language proficiency threshold, microskills, metacognitive awareness, prior knowledge, processing skills, scripts, schema, strategy training, technical reading skills, text structure

Teaching Writing

The status of writing within language teaching and applied linguistics has risen considerably in the last 30 years. The idea that writing is simply "speech written down" and therefore not worthy of serious attention has been replaced by a much more complex view of the nature of writing with the growth of *composition studies* and the field of second language writing. In the seventies learning to write in a second language was mainly seen to involve developing linguistic and lexical knowledge as well as familiarity with the syntactic patterns and cohesive devices that form the building blocks of texts (Hyland, in press). Learning to write involved imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher and was closely linked to learning grammar. The sequence of activities in a writing lesson typically involved:

- **familiarization**: learners study grammar and vocabulary, usually through a text
- **controlled writing**: learners manipulate fixed patterns, often from substitution tables
- **guided writing**: learners imitate model texts
- **free writing**: learners use the patterns they have developed to write a letter, paragraph etc

Activities based on *controlled composition* predominated during this period that sought to prevent errors and develop correct writing habits. One of my earliest efforts at textbook writing, *Guided Writing Through Pictures*, was firmly rooted in this tradition.

Later the focus in teaching writing shifted to the *paragraph-pattern approach* with a focus on the use of *topic sentences*, *supporting sentences*, and *transitions* and practice with different functional patterns such as narration, description, comparison-contrast and exposition. It became apparent that good writing involved more that the ability to write grammatically correct sentences. Sentences need to be *cohesive* and the whole text needed to be *coherent*. And the field of *contrastive rhetoric* examined different conception of coherence across cultures. The study of model texts was central with the paragraph-pattern approach. Students would study the features of a model text and then write their own paragraphs following the model.

In the 1990s *Process writing* introduced a new dimension into the teaching of writing with an emphasis on the writer and the strategies used to produce a piece of writing. Writing is viewed as "a complex, recursive and creative process that is very similar in its general outlines for first and second language writers: learning to write requires the development of an efficient and effective composing process (Silva and Matsuda, 2002, 261). The *composing processes* employed by writers were explored as well as the different strategies employed by proficient and less proficient writers. Drawing from the work of first language composition theory and practice, ESL students were soon being taught such processes as *planning, drafting, revising* and *editing* and how to give *peer feedback*.

More recently second language writing instruction in some parts of the world has been influenced by a *genre approach*. This looks at the ways in which language is used for particular purposes in particular contexts, i.e. the use of different *genres* of writing. Writing is seen as involving a complex web or relations between writer, reader, and text. Drawing on the work of Halliday, Martin, Swales and others, the

genre approach seeks to address not only the needs of ESL writers to compose texts for particular readers but also examines how texts actually work. *Discourse communities* such as business executives, applied linguists, technicians, and advertising copywriters possess a shared understanding of the texts they use and create and expectations as to the formal and functional features of such texts. Genre theory has generated a great deal of research into different types of written genre, including both general types of writing (e.g. narrative, descriptive, and argumentative writing), as well as different *text types* (e.g. research reports, business letters, essay examinations, technical reports). According to Hyland, contemporary views of L2 writing see writing as involving composing skills and knowledge about texts, contexts, and readers. Writers not only need realistic strategies for drafting and revising but also a clear understanding of genre to be able to structure their writing experienced according to the demands and constraints of particular contexts.

The field of second language writing is hence a dynamic one today and one that is generating an increasing amount of research. Hyland (in press) identifies current research interests in L2 writing according to three categories – writers, texts, and readers, and includes the following in a list of issues in L2 writing research:

- revision strategies employed by writers
- transfer of composing strategies from L1
- students preferences for feedback
- sources of feedback students make use of
- lexical/syntactic/discoursal features of particular genres
- effectiveness of instructional strategies for genres
- readers' views of the effectiveness of texts
- strategies to help students address audiences in writing

Then:

- Focus on grammar and sentence construction
- Learning by imitating and practicing models
- Little difference between teaching of writing and teaching of grammar
- Attempts to avoid errors through controlled and guided writing
- Feedback provided by teacher
- Mastery of functional patterns the goal at higher levels (narrative, exposition, description)
- Product-based approach
- Personal writing often emphasized

Now:

- Focus on composing processes
- Focus on genres
- Focus on text types and text organization
- Use of peer feedback
- Focus on effective writing strategies

Buzzwords
Composing processes, composition studies, contrastive rhetoric, coherence, cohesion, discourse community, drafting, editing, explanations, genre, genre approach, paragraph-pattern approach, peer feedback, planning, process writing, supporting sentence, text types, topic sentence, transitions,

7. How can we assess students' learning?

In the 70s testing was something relatively new to applied linguistics. Techniques for testing grammar and the four skills were being developed and criteria for the construction of good test items. We can characterize the goals of testing in this era as measuring "competence" or underlying ability. "Assessment tended to take the form of proficiency testing, based on general ability constructs, which was largely unconnected to the curriculum" (Chapelle and Brindley 2002, 284) The basis for teaching and testing was generally one of the four skills and testing was based on the content that was covered or taught. The test developer or teacher in preparing tests of the different skill areas was required to sample from among the content that had been covered in the course. The statistics of sampling thus became a very important component in traditional quality test design. Tests were *norm-referenced*, that is they measured the performance of learners in comparison with other test takers whose scores were given as the norm. The information obtained from tests was converted into marks, which were accumulated during the learning of a subject, and at the end of a course the student and the teacher were expected to be able to draw some inferences about the learner's ability from the marks obtained: Grammar, C +; Listening, B; Reading B -; Writing, A, and so on. The criteria that were used to evaluate tests up to the 1980s were mainly (Schmitt 2202, 8):

- *validity* (did the test really measure what it was supposed to measure?)
- *reliability* (did the test perform consistently from one administration to the next?)
- *practicality* (was the test practical to give and mark in a particular setting?)

Since then the concept of validity has been subject to a considerable expansion and a number of criteria added to the notion of validity including (Messick 1989):

- user-suitability (for what kind of user might the test be useful)
- *washback* (the positive or negative effect the test might have on teachers and other *stakeholders*)
- test method (how did the test method used affect the scores?)

New goals and procedures

However there has also been a substantial refocusing of the goals and procedures of language testing. In terms of goals the qualities of *criterion-referenced* or *competency-based assessment* are often preferred rather than traditional approaches. Nitko (1983:444) observes:

> For many instructional decisions, the information required consists of knowing such particulars as the kinds of skills a learner has already acquired and the degree to which these skills can be performed, the patterns of errors a learner habitually makes with respect to performing an assigned task, or the

cognitive process a learner can or cannot use to solve relevant problems. Test performance referenced only to norms does not provide such specific information about what individuals can do or how they behave.

Criterion referenced testing seeks to measure performance, rather than competence, measuring the learners performance according to a *standard* or *criterion* that has been agreed upon. The student must reach this level of performance to pass the test and his or her score is interpreted with reference to the criterion score rather than to the scores of other students. McNamara describes this kind of *performance test* as follows (1996:6) comments:
A defining characteristic is that actual performance of relevant tasks are required of candidates, rather than more abstract demonstration of knowledge such as that that required by tests of ability.

Alternative assessment

In the current period attention has also shifted to *alternative assessment*, referring to approaches to testing that are seen as complements to traditional standardized testing usually based on *qualitative assessment* rather than *quantitative assessment*. Traditional modes of assessment are said not to capture important information about test takers' abilities in a second language and are also not thought to reflect real-life conditions for language use. Assessment procedures now include a variety of methods for assessing learners' performance in more authentic circumstances including *self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolios, learner diaries, journals, student-teacher conferences,* interviews, and *observation*. However alternative assessment is not without its concerns, since some have doubts about the reliability of the procedures that are used as well as the administrative feasibility and cost effectiveness of alternative assessment (Chapelle and Brinley 2002, 282).

Current approaches to testing reflect "a widespread recognition of the need for close links between the desired outcomes of instruction, curriculum content and assessment, and this new emphasis is increasingly reflected in assessment policies, materials and methods (op.cit.284)". Today's teachers are thus advised to follow principles such as the following in assessing their learners' abilities:

- Test what was taught in the same way learners practiced it
- Use authentic materials as test stimuli
- Prepare integrative tests that reflect the type of activities done in class
- Provide opportunities for learners to use global language skills in a naturalistic authentic context
- Provide a model to illustrate what learners are to do
- Develop a grading system that rewards both linguistic accuracy and creativity

Then:

- Tests served to measure student achievement
- Tests focused on discrete-point grammar items
- Primarily paper-and-pencil testing
- Norm-referenced testing
- Four skills tested separately
- Tests involved artificial tasks
- Learners provide one right answer

Now:

- Tests serve to assess progress in meeting goals
- Tests serve to improve instruction
- Criterion-referenced testing
- Greater use of alternative assessment
- Assessment strategies seek to integrate skills in meaningful contexts
- Tests involve real-world tasks
- Self-assessment by learners
- Stronger links between teaching and testing

Buzzwords

alternative assessment, authentic assessment, competency-based assessment, conferences, criterion referenced test, journals, learner diaries, norm-referenced, performance assessment, portfolio assessment, qualitative assessment, quantitative assessment, self-assessment, standard, peer assessment, stakeholder

8. How can we prepare language teachers?

In the early 1970s, learning to teach English as a second language was a process of acquiring a body of knowledge and skills from an external source, i.e. from experts. It was a kind of top-down process based on modeling good practices, the practices themselves built around a standard or recognized teaching method. Becoming a language teacher meant acquiring a set of discrete skills - lesson planning, techniques for presenting and practicing new teaching points and for teaching the four skills. The approach that dominated graduate courses at this time consisted of a limited diet of theory courses, mainly confined to linguistics (syntax, morphology, semantics), phonetics, English grammar and sometimes literature, plus the study of methodology.

Second language teacher education

Between the 1970s and the present period a sub-field of language teaching has emerged now known as *second language teacher education (*Roberts, 1998). This refers to the study of the theory and practice of teacher development for language teachers. In the last thirty years there has also developed a substantial industry devoted to providing language teachers with professional training and qualifications. The knowledge base of language teaching has also expanded substantially although there are still significant differences of opinion concerning what the essential knowledge base of language teaching consists of. Experts arrive at different answers to questions such as the following:

- Is language teaching a branch of applied linguistics or a branch of education?
- How much linguistics do teachers need to know and whose linguistic theories are most relevant?
- What are the essential subjects in a pre-service or in-service curriculum for language teachers?
- Do teachers need to know how to carry out research? If so, what kind of research?

Due to this lack of consensus as to the theoretical basis for language teaching, the kind of professional preparation teachers may receive varies considerably from country to country or even from institution to institution within a country, as a comparison of MA TESOL degrees in Canada and the United States reveals.

Training and development

From the seventies to the present period there has been a marked shift in our understanding of what we mean by teacher preparation. In the earlier period *teacher training* dominated but beginning in the 1990s *teacher development* assumed a more central role (Richards 1998). *Teacher training* involves processes of the following kind:

- Understanding basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching
- Expanding one's repertoire of routines, skills and strategies
- Trying out new strategies in the classroom
- Monitoring oneself and getting feedback from others on one's practice

Teacher development serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of the teacher's general understanding of teaching and of himself or herself as a teacher. It often involves examining different dimensions of one's own practice as a basis for reflective review, and can hence be seen as "bottom-up". The following are examples of goals from a development perspective:

- Understanding how the process of second language development occurs
- Understanding how teachers' roles change according to the kind of learners he or she is teaching
- Understanding the kinds of decision-making that occurs during lessons
- Reviewing one's own theories and principles of language teaching
- Developing an understanding of different styles of teaching
- Determining learners' perceptions of classroom activities
- Acquiring the skills of a mentor

Comparing the two perspectives on teacher education Freeman observed (1982, 21-22):

> Training deals with building specific teaching skills: how to sequence a lesson or how to teach a dialogue, for instance. Development, on the other hand, focuses on the individual teacher – on the process of reflection, examination, and change which can lead to doing a better job and to personal growth and professional growth. These two concepts assume different views of teaching and the teacher. Training assumes that teaching is a finite skill, one which can be acquired and mastered. The teacher then learns to teach in the same way s/he learned to tie shoes or to ride a bicycle. Development assumes that teaching is a constantly evolving process of growth and change. It is an expansion of skills and understanding, one in which the teacher is responsible for the process in much the same way students are for learning a language.

Teacher development is not seen as a one-off thing but a continuous process. The teacher is engaged in exploring his or her own teaching through *reflective teaching* in a collaborative process together with learners and colleagues. Learning from

examining one's own teaching, from carrying out classroom research, from creating teaching *portfolios*, from interacting with colleagues through *critical friendships, mentoring* and participating in *teacher networks* , are all regarded as ways in which teachers can acquire new skills and knowledge. This reflects the prevailing educational philosophy of *constructivism* which is currently popular in education including language teacher education: knowledge is actively constructed and not passively received. A constructive view of teaching involves teachers in making their own sense of their own classrooms and taking on the role of a reflective practitioner.

Then:

- Teachers trained to use a method
- "Training" emphasized
- Teacher competence viewed as skill mastery
- Technical aspects of teaching emphasized
- Limited theoretical knowledge base in teacher preparation programs
- Teachers learn from experts

Now:

- Teachers trained in a variety of methods or approaches
- Both "training" and "development" emphasized
- Constructivist philosophy of teacher development
- Teachers encouraged to develop their own personal approaches to teaching
- Broad knowledge base in language teaching
- Teachers learn through collaboration and self-reflection

Buzzwords
action research, constructivism, critical friendship, teacher decision-making, mentoring, portfolios, reflective teaching, second language teacher education, teacher development, teacher training, teacher networks

Conclusions

In discussing change in education Kuhn's (1970) notion of paradigm shift is often referred to (Jacobs and Farrell 2001). According to Kuhn new paradigms in science emerge rapidly as revolutions in thinking shatter previous ways of thinking. Reviewing changes in language teaching in the last 30 years, while some changes perhaps have the status of paradigm shifts (e.g. the spread of Communicative Language Teaching and Process Writing) most of the changes documented above have come about more gradually and at different times. In some contexts some of the changes may not even have started. But once the message is heard there is generally pressure to adopt new ideas and practices and so the cycle begins again. What prompts the need for change?

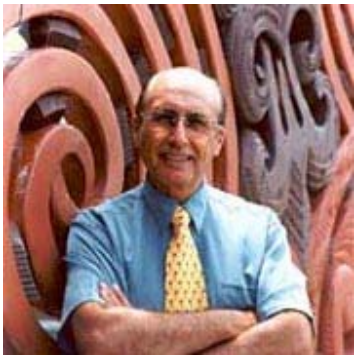
Probably the main motivation for change comes from dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs. Despite the resources expended on second and foreign language teaching worldwide in almost every country results normally do not match expectations, hence the constant pressure to adopt new curriculum, teaching methods, materials, and forms of assessment. Government policy often is the

starting point for change when requirements are announced for a new curriculum or syllabus or for some other change in goals or the delivery of language instruction.

In planning directions for change, language teaching draws on a number of influences (Richards and Rodgers 2001). These include:

- trends in the profession such as when particular practices or approaches become sanctioned by the profession
- guru-lead innovations such as when the work of a particular educationists such as Krashen or Gardner becomes fashionable or dominant
- responses to technology such as when the potential of the World Wide Web catches the imagination of teachers
- influences from academic disciplines, such as when ideas from psychology, linguistics, or cognitive science shape language pedagogy
- leaner-based innovations such as the learner-centered curriculum

Once changes have been adopted they are often promoted with a reformist zeal. Previous practices suddenly become out of fashion and positive features of earlier practices are quickly forgotten. Doubtless the new directions described in this paper will be similarly so regarded in a similar review 30 years hence. In the meantime it is hoped that the overview given here will enable language teaching professionals to assess the currency of their own educational practices as well as reflect on the changes they have experienced or are preparing for in their own institutions.



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I am grateful to Mr. Ao Ran, who provided considerable assistance with the content analysis of the journals.

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