FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS: SOME ISSUES AND NEW MOVES

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Summary

In this article, I have considered the main FLT methods still in use at schools and presented the theory of language and learning underlying them, their main features, activities and techniques, their foundation and decline, as well as a general assessment of all of them. The following methods have been analysed: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Structuralist Methods, and the Communicative Approach. After paying some attention to innovations in education, the Task-Based and Process models are offered as an alternative. Finally, a relationship is established between curriculum innovation and change and teacher development.

1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this article is to provide a critical assessment of the role played by methods in the educational process, though there is also an account of the main different methods of foreign language teaching (FLT) that are in use today. A knowledge of the different methods gives foreign language teachers a good background reference to their own stand on pedagogical matters and classroom practice, and in addition helps them understand the process that FLT has undergone, particularly through this century. To consider FLT as a process means that teaching is not static but changing to respond to new needs and demands as teachers, applied linguists and educationists can prove.

This article deals with the differences between approaches, methods and techniques, as well as the three major issues which are recurrent in FLT. Then, the main characteristics, the psychological bases and the pedagogical features of the principal FLT methods are considered chronologically, presenting the contributions and limitations of the different approaches and methods. Finally, as a conclusion, a connection is established between FLT methods, innovation and classroom research, as a way of teacher development and of learning improvement.

2 THE CONCEPTS OF APPROACH, METHOD AND TECHNIQUE AND THE THREE MAJOR GENERAL PROBLEMS IN MODERN FLT

Its seems worthwhile, first of all, to clarify briefly the concepts of *approach* or principles, *method* and *technique*, which are mutually and hierarchically related. They represent, in fact, three levels of analysis and teacher's decision making for teaching and learning English in the classroom. An *approach* or *strategy* is the most abstract of all three concepts and refers to the linguistic, psycho- and sociolinguistic principles underlying methods and techniques. Actually, every teacher has some kind of theoretical principles which function as a frame for their ideas of methods and techniques. A *technique* is, on the other hand, the narrowest of all three; it is just one single procedure to use in the classroom. *Methods* are between approaches and techniques, just the mediator between theory (the approach) and classroom practice. Some methods can share a number of techniques and, though some techniques have developed autonomously, the most important ones start from the main methods (Hubbard et al. 1983: 31).

Now it seems oppropriate to mention the three major language learning issues that language pedagogy and ELT have dealt with through this century and that always concern researchers and the teaching profession. Stern (1983: 401-5) labels them as follows:

1. *The L1-L2 connection*, that is, the disparity in the learner's mind between the inevitable dominance of the mother tongue and the weaknesses of the second language knowledge.

2. *The explicit-implicit option*, that is, the choice between more conscious ways of learning a foreign language and more subconscious or automatic ways of learning it. This issue remains to a great extent unresolved and has very often posed a dilemma to the FLT profession and research, as, for example, during the debate between cognitivism and audiolingual approaches

in the 60s, and later on with Krashen's Monitor Theory, which makes a distinction between language learning (explicit and conscious) and language acquisition (implicit and subconscious).

3. *The code-communication dilemma* has become a major issue recently. It refers to the problems that learners have to cope with when learning a new language, as they have to pay attention on the one hand to linguistic forms (the code) and on the other to real communication.

3 METHODS AS DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY OF LINGUISTS, RESEARCHERS AND TEACHERS

In this section we will take a look, first, at methods as part of a paradigm or model of FLT, second, at the main methods still in use in this century as archetypes and, third, at other proposals of foreign language teaching.

3.1. Methods as part of a paradigm
Each of the main FLT methods that we present here was not superseded by a subsequent one as soon as it appeared but, rather, it went on living, the new one superimposing on the former. We can even say that the appearance of a new method corresponds with a loss of expectation of the former one along with the progressions of theory, research and the experience of school practice. There is not, broadly speaking, a marked line between different methods, but often an eclectic mixture between methods is present.

In this sense methods are considered representations of language knowledge for pedagogical purposes and are part of a paradigm (a unit of theory, research and practice), which means a predominant way of building up theories, doing research and carrying out classroom activities. In fact, FLT methods have appeared as a result of the application of the new theoretical findings. Methods are also conditioned by educational philosophy, approaches about language nature and how it can be taught and learnt, and conceptions about classroom interaction. All this pervaded by those values concerning society and human relationships. When these aspects start to change it can be said that a shift of model is taking place (Alcaraz 1990: 10-14).

3.2. The Traditional or Grammar-Translation Method
This method applied the study of Latin and Greek grammars to the study of foreign languages from the XVIIth to the XXth centuries. In the

19th century this method was rather widespread for learning foreign languages, though by the end of the century moves towards the Direct Method were noticed. Even today, in spite of its obsolescence, it has not entirely died out as some textbooks still in use and the practice of some classes are there to prove.

a) The principles of the Grammar-Translation Method.

The most relevant principles of this method can be summarised as follows (based on Larsen-Freeman 1986, and Richards and Rodgers 1986):
1) It emphasises the study and translation of the written language, as it is considered superior to spoken language.
2) Successful learners are those who translate each language into the other, though they cannot communicate orally.
3) Reading and writing are the main language skills.
4) Teachers play an authoritarian role in the classroom and the predominant interaction is between teacher-student.
5) Students must learn grammatical rules overtly and deduce their applications to exercises.
6) Students have to know verb conjugations and other grammatical paradigms.
7) The basic unit of teaching is the sentence.
8) The student's native language is the medium of instruction and used as well to compare with the language studied.

b) The main techniques used by the Grammar-Translation Method.

The Grammar-Translation Method focuses on the teaching of the foreign language grammar through the presentation of rules together with some exceptions and lists of vocabulary translated into the mother tongue. Translation is considered its most important classroom activity. The main procedure of an ordinary lesson followed this plan: a presentation of a grammatical rule, followed by a list of vocabulary and, finally, translation exercises from selected texts (Stern 1983: 453).

Other activities and procedures can be the following:
-reading comprehension questions about the text;
-students find antonyms and synonyms from words in the text;
-vocabulary is selected from the reading texts and it is memorised; sentences are formed with the new words;
-students recognise and memorise cognates and *false* cognates;
-fill-in-the-blank exercises;
-writing compositions from a given topic.

c) The major disadvantages of the Grammar-Translation Method.

Retrospectively, there are some very obvious disadvantages of this method, which are summarised next (see Roulet 1975):

1 No account of present-day language usage is presented. Norms are imposed from the great literary authors.
2 Secondary grammatical points, lists of forms and examples receive a lot of attention; some definitions and explanations are often incoherent because of their heterogeneous criteria. As a result facts about the language are confusing for the students.
3 It gives a predominant place to morphology but neglects syntax. Therefore, rules enabling the learners to construct systematically correct complex sentences are not presented.
4 It gives an exaggerated importance to faults to be avoided by the learner and to exceptions, emphasising the prescriptive and mechanical aspect of language.
5 Translations are often unsatisfactory as they are done word by word.
6 Students have to learn a lot of grammatical terms and too much weight falls on their memories. Frustration on the part of students and lack of demands on teachers are effects of this method.

Fig. 1 Disadvantages of the grammar method

3.3. The structuralist methods

The different methods analysed in this section share a common conception of how to learn a foreign language as a process of acquiring the structures or patterns of it through habit formation. We will examine the approach as well as the origins and the subsequent development of these methods: the Oral or Situational Approach and the Audiolingual Method.

a) Approach: theory of language and learning

The theory of language underlying these methods is structural linguistics, and though there are some differences between British and American structuralism, both movements saw language as "a system of structurally related elements for the encoding of meaning, the elements being phonemes,

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morphemes, words, structures, and sentence types" (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 49). Grammar no longer consists of a collection of rules, but a list of structures. Consequently, learning a language means mastering all these building blocks of the language and the rules to combine them.

One of its main features is the importance given to the oral aspects of language, breaking with the relevance of the written language. In fact, these conceptions appeared to offer a *scientific* basis for FLT, which claimed to have transformed teaching from an art into a science. They are summarised in the following five ideas (quoted in Stern 1983: 158):

1. Language is speech.
2. A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say.
3. Languages are different.
4. A language is a set of habits.
5. Teach the language, not about the language.

Both schools based their theory of learning in behaviouristic habit-forming conceptions. Behaviourism, an American school of psychology represented by Skinner, had an antimentalist and empirical approach to aspects of social life, like structuralism with regard to language. Behaviour can be conditioned by three elements: a *stimulus* -which elicits a behaviour-, a consequent *response* and a final *reinforcement*.

b) The Oral Approach.
The Oral Approach was the first move in what can be called structuralist direction and has its origin in the British applied linguistics of the 1920s and 1930s, represented by Palmer and Hornby. It was the first attempt to apply a scientific foundation to FLT and was dominant from the 1930s to the 1960s. In the 1960s this approach was referred to as the Situational Approach, due to a bigger emphasis on the presentation and practice of language situationally. The main difference with the American structuralism lies in the British notion of "situation" and purpose (rooted in Firth and Halliday's notions of meaning, context and situation), clarified by Pittman (cited by Richards and Rodgers 1986: 35):

Our principal classroom activity in the teaching of English structure will be the oral practice of structures. This oral practice of controlled sentence patterns should be given in situations designed to give the greatest amount of practice in English speech to the pupil.

Situations that always have an underlying purpose from the part of the speaker and give more attention to meaning.

The characteristics of the Oral Approach are the following:
a) its syllabus is organised structurally in sentence patterns, gradually sequenced;
b) vocabulary is considered a very important aspect of FLT;
c) the teacher is the model, creates the situation and teaches through questioning and eliciting the learners' answers;
d) students are expected to deduce word meaning from context, without translations or explanations in the mother tongue;
e) grammatical structures are learnt with oral procedures: repetitions, substitutions, drills, reading aloud...;
f) grammar is learnt by an inductive process, as in the Direct Method, graded from simple to more complex forms;
g) correct pronunciation and grammar are considered crucial, so students must avoid errors;
h) oral language comes first, then written language:
i) the textbook and the visual materials are very important.

The teaching units of a situational textbook could be the following:

My new school
My friends like playing football
At Bill's birthday
Christmas presents
New year's resolutions ... ...

c) The Audiolingual Method

The Audiolingual Method corresponds with the USA structuralist tradition of FLT, which became the dominant orthodoxy after World War II. Its origin can go back to the seminal work of Bloomfield, who set up the bases of structural linguistics segmenting and classifying utterances into their phonological and grammatical constituents. Fries, Brooks, Rivers, and Lado went on applying these principles up to the 1970s with a close relationship with behaviourism. Bloomfield (1942) became a basic source for the Army Method, which was a response to the need of army personnel after the USA entry into the Second World War. Its main procedure was imitation and repetition.

The most important assumptions about FLT in the Audiolingual Method are the following (see Ellis 1990: 21-25):

The main concepts of Audiolingualism

1. Foreign language is the same as any other kind of learning and can be explained by the same laws and principles.
2. Learning is the result of experience and is evident in changes in behaviour.
3. Foreign language learning is different from first language learning.
4. Foreign language learning is a process of habit formation.
5. Language learning proceeds by means of analogy (habit-formation involving discrimination and generalization) rather than analysis (deductive learning of rule, as the Grammar-Translation Method).
6. Errors are the result of L1 interference and are to be avoided.

Fig. 2 Main concepts or audiolingualism.

As a consecuence from the approach and assumptions considered above, the main procedures put into practice by Audiolingualism give a primary emphasis to an oral approach to FLT and focus on an accurate speech, but grammatical explanations do not have an important role. Teaching units are organised following these three methodological points:

Nothing will be spoken before it has been heard.
Nothing will be read before it has been spoken.
Nothing will be written before it has been read.

A typical lesson would have the following procedures (adapted from Richards and Rodgers 1986: 58-9):

1. Students first hear a dialogue with the key structures of the lesson, repeat and memorise them. The teacher pays attention to pronunciation and fluency. Correction is immediate.

2. The dialogue is adapted to the students' interest or situation.

3. Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as the basis for repetition and pattern drills, first practiced in chorus and then individually. An example of a pattern drill could be this:

To elicit: There's (a man watching TV)
    Teacher: There's a policeman. He's standing near a car.
    Student: There's a policeman standing near a car.
    Teacher: There's a girl. He's knocking at our door.
    Student: There's a girl knocking at our door.

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4. Students may refer to their textbook, and follow-up reading, writing, or vocabulary activities based on the dialogue may be introduced.

5. Follow-up activities may take place in the language laboratory, where further dialogue and drill work is carried on.

The central unit of the lessons are, therefore, language structures, which are graded and sequenced. An example of how lessons may be organised around structures is this partial index from a very known textbook (Alexander 1967):
-Is this your...?
-What make is it?
-What's your job?
-Look at...
-Whose is this/that...? This is my/your/his/her...
-What colour's your...?

d) Decline and assessment of structuralist methods
In the 1960s the structuralist methods were widespread, but those years saw as well the beginning of criticism from different sides: first, their ideas about language and learning theories were questioned; secondly, teachers did not fill their expectations, and, finally, students had a lot of difficulties to communicate outside the classroom and sometimes found the learning experience boring and discouraging.

The main criticisms may be the next (see Roulet 1972):

Criticisms of Structuralist Methods
1. Its description of the grammatical system is rather incomplete. It does not provide the rules needed to construct an infinite range of grammatical sentences.
2. It gives excessive weight to grammatical facts of secondary importance, and thus neglects important generalizations.
3 Slight treatment is given to syntactic relations.
4. It does not provide the teacher with criteria to determine grammaticality of utterances, and thus it does not provide appropriate criteria for error treatment.
5. The exclusion of the treatment of meaning by American structuralists prevents the necessary information for the systematic teaching of lexis and of oral and written comprehension.
6. The accent placed on formal criteria at the expense of situational and semantic aspects and on habit-formation teaching leads teachers and students to manipulate structures as an end in themselves while neglecting their application in real life.
7. It leads teachers to consider language as the only variable and to neglect the problems of language teaching and learning.
8. It leaves teachers and learners without a creative approach towards the language study.

Fig. 3 Criticisms of the structuralist methods

There are, anyway, some positive aspects contributed by the structuralist methods (see Widdowson 1978):

1. They were the first methods to recommend FLT based on linguistic and psychological theories.
2. They tried to extend language learning to a great deal of people but with a small intellectual abstraction.
3. They emphasised syntactic progression, while the preceding methods were more concerned with vocabulary and morphology.
4. There was a development of the different skills.
5. They promoted the use of simple techniques.

3.4. The Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching

This approach is usually called *communicative*, though other labels -particularly *functional* or *notional* at its early stages- have also been used as synonyms. The term *communicative*, in relation with language teaching, denotes a marked concern with semantic aspects of language (see Wilkins 1978). ·

a) Some background

The crisis of the structuralist methods had begun with Chomsky's criticisms, particularly in his book *Syntactic Structures* (1957), where he clearly explained the incapability of structuralism to take into account the fundamental characteristics of language. The Situational Method was criticised by the British applied linguists because it lacked the functional and communicative potential of language. Applied linguists made use of the British functional linguistics (Firth, Halliday...), American sociolinguistics (Hymes, Gumperz, Labov), as well as philosophy (Austin and Searle).

This wave of criticism and new conceptions was parallel to a growing dissatisfaction among the FLT profession with the emphasis laid on the mastery of language structures and the manipulation of grammatical forms. FLT along these lines tended to produce *structurally competent* but *communicatively incompetent* students, unable to transfer outside the classroom the amount of classroom work on repetitive habit-forming exercises. Dissatisfaction showed as well from the new educational realities created by the development of the European Union and a great mobility.

The Council of Europe decided to face the new reality and asked some experts to study the needs of the European students. A valuable contribution came from a document by Wilkins which "takes the desired communicative capacity as the starting-point... We are able to organize language teaching in terms of the content rather than on the form of the language. For this reason the resulting syllabus is called a *notional syllabus*" (1976: 18). Instead of starting from the grammatical forms or the language structures as the preceding methods did, Wilkins developed an analysis of the functional meaning which underlies the communicative uses of language. He described two types of meaning: one referred to notional categories (concepts such as time, quantity, location, frequency...) and the other to categories of communicative functions (approval, prediction...).

This work culminated in the document called *Threshold Level* of the Council of Europe. This document includes lists of situations, functions, topics, general and specific notions and adequate language forms, as well as some methodological

implications. The *Threshold Level*, together with the contributions of some applied linguists (among others Widdowson, Brumfit, Johnson, Trim, Richterich y Chancerel), text-book writers, educationists, etc., led to the consolidation of the new approach known as Communicative.

However, this process does not imply a coherent community based on the Communicative Approach, as there is no single text, nor any single model. The understanding of the approach differs from some authors to others and several models for syllabus design with different central elements have developed (see Richards and Rodgers 1986: 64-75):

Type	*Reference*
1. structures plus functions	Wilkins (1976)
2. functional spiral around a structural core	Brumfit (1980)
3. functional	Jupp and Hodlin (1975)
4. notional	Wilkins (1976)
5. interactional	Widdowson (1979)
6. task-based	Prabhu (1983)
7. learner generated	Candlin (1976)

The differences between the models are so important that some authors (Breen 1987) consider that a new FLT paradigm is emerging -the *procedural (process and task-based) approaches*-, as an alternative to propositional (formal and functional) approaches. We will refer to this aspect further on. There are, however, some distinctive features of the Communicative Approach that distinguish it from Audiolingualism and give a better understanding of it, as Finnochiaro and Brumfit suggest (see Fig. 4, based from quotation in Richards and Rodgers 1986: 67-8).

b) Approach: theory of language and learning
The Communicative Approach draws upon some changes and innovations coming mainly from applied linguistics, so I am going to give a summary of changes about language nature and its knowledge. Language is considered a social phenomenon by this approach, as it is a means of communication and interaction between members of a community. The goal, then, of FLT is to develop students' *communicative competence* (Hymes 1972), term coined in opposition to the Chomskian concept of *competence* that refers to the abstract grammatical knowledge speakers have for producing correct sentences in a language.

Communicative competence, on the other hand, extends Chomsky's concept to the ability to understand and produce messages appropriate to a socio/psycho/cultural situation, so that language users can relate their linguistic knowledge to everyday conventions. Later on this knowledge of language use was extended to the capacity to participate in discourse and to the knowledge of pragmatic conventions governing that participation. It was also added the competence to be creative with these rules and conventions, and to negotiate them during communication. This is then a set of language knowledge competencies which interact during real communication.

Audiolingual	Communicative Approach
1. Attends to structure and form more than meaning.	Meaning is paramount.
2. Demands memorization of structure based dialogs.	Dialogs, if used, center around communicative functions and are not normally memorized.
3. Language items are not contextualized.	
4. Learning language is learning structures, sounds or words.	Contextualization is a basic premise.
5. Mastery is sought.	Language learning is learning to communicate.
6. Drilling is a central technique	Communication is sought.
7. Native-speaker-like pronunciation is sought.	Drilling may occur, but peripherally.
8. Grammatical explanation is avoided.	Comprehensible pronunciation is sought.
9. Communicative activities only come after a long drilling.	Any device that helps the learner is accepted.
	Communication may be encouraged from the beginning.
10. Use of L1 is forbidden.	Judicious use of L1 is accepted.
11. Translation is forbidden at early levels.	
12. Reading and writing till speech is mastered.	Translation may be used.
13. Linguistic competence is the desired goal.	Reading and writing can start from first day.
14. The squence of units is determined solely by principles of complexity.	Communicative competence is the desired goal. Sequencing is determined by any consideration of content, function or meaning
15. "Language is habit" so errors must be prevented.	that maintain interest. Language created through trial and error.
16. Accuracy, in terms of formal correctness, is a primary goal.	Fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: accuracy is judged not in the
17. Students are expected to interact with the language system.	abstract but in context. Students are expected to interact with other people.

Fig. 4 Features of audiolingualism and the communicative approach

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Canale and Swain (1980) describe communicative competence as integrated by four parts:

-linguistic competence -the grammatical, lexical, semantic and phonological competence;

-discourse competence -the linguistic and meaning relationships within the discourse (cohesion, coherence, gesture...);

-socio-linguistic competence or the understanding of the functional aspects of communication (including role relationships, personal factors, social and cultural context...);

-strategic competence, referred to the coping strategies developed to solve the learning problems and to be autonomous.

The Communicative Approach can be considered rich and eclectic at the level of language theory, because it advocates the following main features (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 71):

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1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

Fig. 5 Main features of the communicative approach

The learning theory underlying this Approach is not very much developed, though some main elements emerge from its practice. Learning improves when these forceful ideas are applied to classroom activities (see Johnson 1982):

-Relationship of activities to real communication.

-Activities use language for meaningful tasks.

-Language used is meaningful to the learner.

-Language is used communicatively, rather than practicing language skills.

c) Activities and techniques of the Communicative Approaches

Communicative approaches make use of a variety of materials which are selected and viewed as a way of improving classroom interaction and a communicative use of the language. Some criteria in which these materials are based -and some activities and techniques derived from them- are the following (see Jonhson 1982 and Larsen-Freeman 1986):

-*The information transfer principle* which refers to the ability to understand and produce language making transferences from one medium of the language to another. Activities based on the information transfer can be: write some purposeful notes from a listening comprehension, write sentences from diagrams, give a personal opinion about some pictures...

-*The information gap principle* takes account of the different levels of information between people when communicating, which allows to do a good number of exercises: students have different pieces of information and have to exchange them through questions and answers; students can choose different answers, which means negotiation when talking...

-*The correction for content principle* means more emphasis on the communicative content expressed than on grammatical accuracy. Errors and mistakes, therefore, receive a very different treatment than in the preceding methods.

-*The use of authentic materials* exposes the students to real uncontrived language, so that the learner is faced with language as it is.

-Join scrambled sentences (or a conversation, a picture story...) into their original order, a good way of dealing with cohesion and coherence and other aspects of discourse.

-Language games are communicative as they have three features of communication: information gap, choice, and feedback.

-Role-plays allow students to be aware of the different social contexts and roles, attitudes, mood...

-Problem-solving activities.

-Pair and group work are a procedure very much used.

Some textbooks claiming to be communicative combine functions, situations and topics. Many others have their units organised into a functional basis -as the example in the table below:

Talking about yourself
Identifying people
Describing my town
Giving directions ... ...

d) Some assessment of the Communicative Approach

It is difficult to assess the Communicative Approach as it is not a totally defined method and has been subject to several interpretations -as we have seen above-, specially at the levels of design and classroom procedures. It has had a strong impact on language teaching and the importance of its contribution is shown in this summary (see McDonough and Shaw 1993):

1. Increasing concern with the meaning potential of language.
2. The relationship between language form and function is of a rather complex character.
3. The concept of communication goes beyond the sentence to texts and conversations.
4. Appropriacy of language use is considered alongside accuracy, which has implications for error correction, materials and activities.
5. It provides realistic and motivating language practice.
6. The concept *communicative* is applied to all four language skills.
7. It can use learner's knowledge and experience with their mother tongue.
8. It has introduced a better level of language reflection and awareness in its later times.

But, on the other hand, it is evident that there are still some unresolved problems with the Communicative Approach:

a) Too much emphasis has been given -particularly in its early stages- to speaking and listening, to the detriment of reading and writing.
b) There has been a lack of reflection on language aspects.
c) It is not clear the criteria for selecting and grading the chosen functions and grammatical exponents to be taught.
d) Critics have pointed out that it is not appropriate to foreign language situations, so advocate more emphasis to language awareness.
e) Again, not all the teachers whose mother tongue is not English are confident enough to work with this approach.
f) In fact, some of the proposals imply a new selection of language through functions, as the structuralists did with structures.
g) Its advocacy of a meaningful use of the language is not always clear, as the activities or tasks to be undertaken are not always really meaningful.

3.6. New moves: the procedural approaches
In the last decade there have been important innovations in theory, research and classroom experience, which are introducing sound changes in FLT and represent a challenge to the dominant model. We can say that at the moment two major paradigms coexist: the propositional (structural and functional approaches) and the procedural (task-based and process approaches). We have considered the propositional models above as ways of teaching and learning through formal and systematic statements (expressed as structures, rules, functions...), though they differ in the main element they focus on and in how they sequence the content (Breen 1987).

The most important changes and innovations in education refer to (see Breen 1987: 157-60):

1) views of language (considered above when dealing with the communicative approach);
2) views of teaching methodology, which recognise the necessary balance between planning objectives and content with close attention to the development of classroom implementation;
3) views of learners' contributions, which consider the process of classroom interaction and context the basis for learning, not the content of a lesson;
4) views of planning, which assume that the teaching-learning process, activities and roles are the significant substance of lessons for those who participate in them, instead of the content of lessons.

Fig. 6 Changes in ELT

These innovations mean a change of emphasis from the subject to be learnt to the learning process and imply interesting consequences of negotiation, evaluation and retrospective planning. If we contrast some aspects of the alternative models, we can have the following list (Gray 1990: 262):

What is to be learnt?	*How is it to be learnt?*
Subject emphasis	Process emphasis
External to the learner	Internal to the learner
Determined by authority	Negotiated between learners and teachers
Teacher as decision-maker	Learners and teachers as decision-makers
Content= what subject is to the expert	Content= what the subject is to the learner
Objectives defined in advance	Objectives described afterwards
Assessment by achievement or mastery	Achievement in relation to learner's criteria of succes
Doing things to the learner	Doing things for or with the learner

Procedural models exemplify this alternative drawn on these innovations and represent how something is done. They consider linguistic forms and functions as partial aspects of what is to be learnt and regard the task as the central element of learning. The use of tasks tries to achieve some objectives in the target language through a process which will give a result or will solve a problem, as it is usually done in real life. These models have a flexible way of curriculum design, as they take account of a set of goals and plan content and tasks simultaneously, so that content can suggest tasks and vice versa; the results of the evaluation are introduced back into the planning process.

Contrary to propositional models, procedural ones find rather difficult to establish a long term planning for content and results. Therefore, their planning is more retrospective than prospective, emphasising evaluation and the classroom process. Retrospection is presented as reports referring to learning objectives, nature of content and way of work, explanations required and given and by whom, kind of interaction, time planned and spent... All this is based on classroom research - observation, diaries, etc-, which is a reflection on all the process, advantages and disadvantages for the participants, difficulties... This model of planning and evaluating promotes not only teacher development and learning but curriculum development (Candlin 1984).

Task-Based models, on the one hand, organise learning in terms of *how* a learner applies his or her communicative competence to undertake a selection of tasks. A Task-Based syllabus may be organised in terms of two syllabuses: *communication tasks* (the actual tasks a person undertakes when communicating) and related *enabling tasks* that facilitate a learner's participation in the former (tasks which explicitly focus upon the rules and conventions of the language system, the interpersonal knowledge and meaning). Tasks are cyclic and sequenced from those which are familiar in terms of learners' competence to the less familiar and more complex ones.

The roots of Task-Based models can be found in several sources: the Situational Approach, the use of project-based materials, and the use of problem-solving activities. Practical contributions come specially from the Bangalore Project, developed by Prabhu (1987) and his coleagues in India. There has also been an increase of project work, which involves the achievement of a range of tasks, and a great concern with the development of tasks for ESP.

Process models go further than Task-Based ones and focus on three processes: communicating, learning and the classroom social activity. How things

are done in the clasroom are the means through which communicating and learning can be achieved. The Process model is a plan for classroom work which provides 1) the major decisions that teacher and learners need to make jointly in an on-going and negotiated way, and 2) a bank of classroom activities and tasks, as a Task-Based plan but not sequenced.

Classroom decisions appear in the plan as related questions referring to three important aspects of classroom work:
* participation ("Who works with whom?": individual, pair, group or whole class work and the teacher's role);
* procedure ("Which particular activity or task will be undertaken?", "How will it be worked upon and for how long?", "What resources should be used?", "How shall we share and evaluate the outcomes of the activity?"...;
* subject-matter ("What shall be the focus of the work?" and "For what learning purposes?" (see Breen 1987: 166-7).

The roots of the Process plans are found in educational thought and practice coming from humanistic approaches (Dewey 1974, Holt 1976, Freire 1970), the importance given to learning in groups, learner reinterpretation of new knowledge, as well as arguments against the need to plan a syllabus of content. These plans are variously implemented, though the main known are Allwright's (1982) programme with adult learners and in-service training by Breen et al. (1989). Finally, we can say that procedural approaches represent a good response to the new frames of reference within the teaching profession and an interesting means of developing classroom research by teachers.

4. SOME CONCLUSIONS

We have considered the main approaches and methods of FLT as models or paradigms of theory, research and school practice. Some of them may be considered obsolete from a scientific point of view, some others seem to be more current, but in fact all of them have introduced innovations at a given moment, superimposing on the former ones in an eclectic way. However, all methods have at least two things in common: 1) thier belief to be the best one, and 2) a set of prescriptions that teachers have to follow necessarily.

I do not suggest then -from the assumptions in this article- that teaching should be approached following a particular method as a set of prescriptions, but on the contrary as a dynamic and reflective process, which means a permanent interaction

among the curriculum, teachers, students, activities, methodology, and instructional materials. What actually happens in the classroom, alongside careful planning and evaluation, becomes the most important thing teachers have to reflect on and then relate to theory or to other experiencies. I propose, therefore, an active role for teachers, who design her or his own content and tasks, classroom interaction, materials, methodology, evaluation, etc., instead of a passive role which means dependence on other people's designs and methods. The expression *classroom researcher* clearly represents the new role considered above. Then, instead of an uncritical and eclectic way of teaching, teachers should introduce a constant analysis and interpretation of what is happening in the classroom. Certainly it is the best way of curriculum, teacher and learner development (see Nunan: 1986).

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