A Short Communication: On the Jargons of Language Pedagogy

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Abstract: *Teachers of English participate in discussions which always pertain to the situation specific behaviours of teachers or that of students in English as second language classrooms; as the discussions centre around language teaching and the myths associated with it one easily gets confused with the innumerable jargons of language pedagogy. The teachers explore their teaching beliefs in the classrooms and many a time wonder under what category their classroom practices come. Likewise, discussions, on the nature of approaches, theory, methods, and techniques would invariably confuse the novice teachers and researchers. For the benefit of the teacher and researcher fraternity, the present paper submits the knowledge gathered from different sources.*
Keywords: *language pedagogy, approaches, theory, methods, techniques*

I.   Introduction

Second language acquisition and learning have acquired synonymous properties in the English language teaching context of the Indian subcontinent. The customised practices that applied linguists had advocated have been so adaptive that the ESL teachers all over the world have adopted them with in any theoretical frame work, they found suitable. While promulgating the achievements of the Indian linguists like N.S. Prabhu and B. Kumaravadivelu, we should also recognise the second language acquisition researches that are fervently carried on in the West, especially in the European countries. The second language acquisition context is not necessarily learning English; the practical difficulties in the learning and acquiring processes of different languages have shed light on teaching and learning English as foreign language or English as second language, across the world. The conflicting terminologies used in the English language teaching pedagogy are quite bewildering to novice teachers and researchers.

1.1. Theory, Approach, Method, Technique

It is worthwhile to know, what exactly the English language pedagogy means by such terms as theory, approach, method, and technique. To start with the theory, the meaning of which as Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary states, is a formal set of ideas that is intended to explain why something happens or exists. In the second language acquisition context the various theories related to language acquisition are the linguistic assumptions that have been believed and tested over the years. For example, it is believed that language is human and the result of habit formation; it is aural-oral; symbolically meaningful; as the medium of communication language is part of human life and as such language and culture are inseparable. These assumptions are fundamental to the philosophy of language teaching and are held as theory and principle in the language pedagogy.

The American applied linguist Edmund Anthony (1963) briefly describes the trio of terms. He states that he is trying to relocate the scheme of definitions in a hierarchical order as approach, method, and technique. For him "the organizational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach". He further continues that an approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning and that an approach is axiomatic. An approach gains significance with the success of the methods which carry out the proposition they hold best for the context. Anthony defines "method as an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts and all of which are based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic and method is procedural". (ibid p. 200)

It is a grounded view that there can be many methods within one approach, because these methods are customised for the learners. The learners are categorised acceding to their first language which is their mother tongue, their age, cultural background, their experience with the target language, the need for learning the language and the time available for learning. The teacher's experience in teaching and the place of the target

language in the curriculum also decide the methods used in the classroom. Likewise the techniques used also depend on the teacher's ability and innovative attitude. Techniques are implemented, as such they give procedural assistance to the teaching methodology and therefore they should be "in harmony with an approach as well". Anthony talks about the methods like mim-mem (mimic memorise) and pattern practice which share the same goal of oral communication of the students and each could function well in any class room condition, where participants are primarily adults. To say precisely, mim-mem method and the pattern practice method are quite helpful with in the communicative approach which is communication oriented. Role- plays which also use the situational- specific language and pre- fabricated language chunks are techniques to accomplish the goal of communicative competence within or without the task based language teaching method within the communicative approach.

Communicative approach

In view of the global placements, the English language could offer, the universities have framed their curriculum and syllabus with communicative approach. As such the syllabus incorporates the theory of language as social behaviour and the approach, they feel fundamental to learning English as second language is to learn to use the language to communicate appropriately to the context and participants. The communicative approach believes "that learners will be communicatively competent outside the classroom itself with the second language as the main means through which the classroom culture is managed (Breen and Candlin 1980); Breen1985; Hymes's (1971) (Savignon, S.1983)

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is a method which incorporates Hymes's (1971) concern for "the integration of linguistic theory with a more general theory of communication and culture" (Savignon, S. 1983 p.12). It believes in the theoretical sophistication, the teachers possess on account of their knowledge and their practical ability to observe the learners and the means to achieve the goal of communicative competence to their wards. CLT acquires a multidisciplinary perspective like linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology and educational research. As Savignon says, "Its focus has been the elaboration and implementation of programs and methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events." (2001: pp.16)

The basic principle underlying communicative approach is that learners must learn not only to make grammatically correct propositional statements but also develop the ability to use the language to get things done. CLT underpins the need for the focus on the components of communicative competence; language forms are not focused upon but those aspects of language such as pragmatic, authentic and functional use of the language are given importance for meaningful interaction. Fluency and accuracy are considered as complementary to communicative techniques and at times later is dispensed with for fluency. Furthermore the teacher is a facilitator and guide to channelize the classroom activities towards the learners attaining proficiency in the target language. It is the source for co-operative learning wherein a learner is responsible for his own and that of other members in his group. Self-dependent learners are encouraged to use different communication strategies to determine their learning progress and evaluate their own production.

Communicative competence

Communicative competence in language teaching is both theoretical and practical. The terms second language acquisition and communication seem to be synonymous as both cannot happen without human interaction. Human interaction is essentially communicative interaction which provides a whole range of social and professional relationship. Communication is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of ideas, thoughts, feelings and values (Rizvi,M. A 2005). Communication happens when two or more individuals negotiate meaning in a given context through a language which operates as medium in the same speech community or culture. In the global context, English being the medium of business communications and technological interpretations, and no less important for academic and professional growth, a non- native speaker is extrinsically motivated to learn English as second language.

Oral Communication Hypothesis

In such a context, the claims flaunted by Lightbown (1985:176-180) are:
- Adults and adolescents can acquire second language (as opposed to Chomsky's innate LAD and universal grammar)
- Knowing a language rule does not mean one will be able to use it in communicative interaction.
- One cannot achieve native like (or near native like) command of a second language in one hour a day.
- A learner's ability to understand language in a meaningful context exceeds his or her ability to comprehend decontextualized language and to produce language of comparable complexity and accuracy.

These hypotheses seem to encourage and discourage both the teachers and learners of English in the non- native Indian context; however, it will warn a teacher in the communicative language classroom from having unreasonable expectations in her students. Above all, it is the teacher's innate ability to teach and interest in teaching alone raises a teacher above the rest. CLT classrooms do not impose restrictions on a teacher, rather the teacher is at liberty to use a number of CLT classroom procedures such as group activities, language games, role plays, etc. Communicative classrooms tend to be noisy and because of their learner centred atmosphere, the possibility of unruly students and disinterested ones speaking in their mother tongues and taking undue advantages of group activities is more; Hilles, and Sutton(2001) opine that given to the psychological and cultural domain the ESL learners are placed, the ESL teachers need to have warmth, compassion, empathy, and kindness along with a keen ability to observe and respond to the needs of their wards.

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