TEACHING LANGUAGE STRUCTURES

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Abstract

Research in language teaching leads to new methodologies, which may deal with comprehensive approaches to language or satisfy certain needs, such as quick acquisition of the fundamentals, or of business English. Teaching grammar is an essential aspect since, without learning the basic structures, no further skills can be efficiently developed. However, what the best way of teaching the grammar rules may be has forever been debated. This article reviews some of the latest orientations in this direction, which exhibit completely different approaches to language acquisition. It also insists on the greater contribution expected from the teachers, who are supposed to adjust their teaching procedures to classroom needs.

***Keywords**: the Communicative Approach vs. the latest methodologies, The Thinking Approach, the Global Approach*.

Introduction

A universal truth which applies to education is that, while theory can inform classroom practice, it is basically practical classroom realities that should inform theory and should prompt further research and adjustments on behalf of the teachers. This affirmation is the more valid since classroom environments can place extraordinary constraints upon authentic use of the foreign language, to the extent that contents and methods used in one part of the world may prove inadequate in other parts. As a result, the last few years saw a movement away from what had been the main preoccupation of the previous century – devising newer, more appropriate methodologies to language teaching – towards more complex views: "In what has been called 'the post-method era,' attention has shifted to teaching and learning processes and the contribution of the individual teacher to language teaching pedagogy" (Richards, 2002: 5).

Whether it is called grammar or language structure or simply language, at some point, every teacher of a foreign language, has to deal with those rules which turn words, phrases, idioms into a meaningful, functional means of communication: nobody can master a language unless they know how to put words together. Both at lower secondary level, where the acquisition of all the basic "grammar rules" is supposed to happen and at upper secondary level, where recycling triggers better understanding of the way the language works and, consequently, facilitates its manipulation, teachers often find themselves in need of better contextualized, interesting materials that would give stronger motivation for the learning of grammar structures and that would avoid the practice of boring drills. Less motivation means less learning, therefore the emotional component plays an important role in the process. If meaning and context are not attached to the structures that are taught, the usefulness of the practice is greatly decreased. Language

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structures are numerous, however, the good teacher will keep a balance between the time allotted to teaching them and dealing with other classroom activities that develop fluency or reading, writing, or listening skills. Insisting too much or for longer periods of time on any particular activity while neglecting the others means impoverishing the learning process instead of consolidating it and forgetting the larger picture, the final purpose of secondary language acquisition. This article reviews three of the methodologies used nowadays when it comes to teaching second language structure.

The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching *versus* the latest trends

More than twenty years ago, under the circumstances of freshly democratic societies in Central and Eastern Europe, the educational systems also underwent great changes. The new political regimes allowed for much freedom in the choice of the teaching material but this also meant greater responsibility on behalf of the teachers who, from that moment on, directly underwent the consequences of their choices.

In many countries, Romania among them, it seemed appropriate and, without any doubt, the best choice for teaching English as a second language to adopt the Communicative Approach since what Romanian students lacked was not knowledge of basic language structures or cultural information either, but the ability to use the language in real social situations. This was a source of frustration for students and a lot of times for teachers themselves who, not having the possibility of sufficient exposure to the language, suffered from the same limitations when it came to the ability of using it fluently, in the most common social situations or even in relaxed, friendly conversations. It was this lack of versatility in communication that the approach supposed to make up for and it did brilliantly, helped along by television grids which included a fairly great number of mostly American broadcasts, being subtitled but not synchronized.

The Communicative Approach had replaced the Situational Language Teaching in the British educational system in the 1960s as a result of observing the fundamental condition that could turn English into a truly international language: the necessity of a change of focus from the mastery of structures to communicative proficiency. Therefore the new trend, while not neglecting the other skills, made it its declared purpose to develop communicative performance and, as such, it placed the correct emphasis on social communication skills.

At first shyly, awkwardly and lacking spontaneity, but sooner than expected, students' communication skills skyrocketed and, also forced by the internet, with its forever increasing number of chat rooms, forums and social networks, students found themselves able to perform in the real world. This has been a remarkable achievement since nowadays communication in most domains takes place in the English language. An even greater achievement since, with the borders having opened up, practically all economic transactions happen in English.

But, as it usually happens, there was a catch.

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Very soon, in the bliss created around the possibility of efficient global language performance, conveying meaning became more important than performing in a flawless way, and speaking fluently, to a great extent, shadowed accuracy. Linguistic competence is nevertheless a triangle where appropriacy of language, fluency and accuracy should share equal sides. While the latter two are basic requirements, the former is to a greater extent category determining, being situationally, temporally and register-wise binding. There is no such thing as an "ideal speaker," even in one's mother tongue, nevertheless, the following performance markers are to be taken into consideration: the student is supposed to be able to relate correctly, formally or informally, to a certain social situation he/she is involved in, at a given time and to a specific type of interlocutor whose age and sex will intervene in his/her decision making. And, while the Communicative Approachscored *high* – on the fluency side and *well* – on the appropriacy side, it fell short of expectations when it came to achieving significant levels of accuracy.

Two major points where the Communicative Approach and today's tendencies mark major differences and even a slight return to language-focused teaching are: the teaching of vocabulary and grammar. These are issues which the Communicative Approach seemed to take as largely looking after themselves while the latest methodologies have reintroduced them full status in the teaching program.

How to teach grammar effectively without getting boring and ruining motivation for language learning has been one of the most controversial problems. While some authors argue that teaching grammar does not contribute to preparing students for real life situations and communication, others, on the contrary, insist that the latter cannot even exist without acquiring at least the most necessary basics of the language.

The Communicative Approach relies on inductive acquisition of language points connected with a broader notion of language awareness. The whole paragraph/passage/text is used as a unit of meaning, within which grammar and lexis function together. The teaching/learning process evolves from simple to complex, from mechanical to challenging, building on and expanding previous material. Grammar for grammar's sake seldom appears, and only at lower secondary levels. Competence at upper levels is based on task work during which the already acquired grammar points are recycled. Nunan considers the communicative task as

> a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right (1989 :10).

Consequently, the mastery of a language's grammar rules was not regarded uniquely responsible for students' communicative competence, which also involved how to use them in concrete formal and informal situations. Through exposure to communicative environments (conversations, problem-solving, expressing opinions during which language functions were implicitly practised, *etc.*), which needed the

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development of communicative skills, students were supposed to somehow reach an acceptable standard of language performance.

Lately the role of grammar or "form-focused instruction" has been revalued, its necessity reappraised, and the question now spins around how to teach the rules effectively? which items to teach? in what order? is inductive better than deductive? and so on, rather than on teaching grammar at all. Ellis points out that "formal grammar teaching has a delayed rather than instant effect" (2002:167). Choosing the best opportunities for introducing and practicing grammar points is important since, as Richards noticed, even task-based approaches where grammar points were intended to be the main issue could easily be solved if students bypassed the language difficulties by communicative strategies. The absence of a mastery of grammar rules causes communication to happen outside language, not through it. To illustrate his point, Richards gives the following example of miscommunication during a role-play task at secondary school level, where one student is a doctor, the other a patient.

S.1: I'm thirty-four . . . thirty-five.
S.2: Thirty . . . five?
S.1: Five.
S.2: Problem?
S.1: I have. . . a pain in my throat.
S.2: [In Spanish: What do you have?]
S.1: A pain.
S.2: [In Spanish: What's that?]
S.1: [In Spanish: A pain.] A pain.
S.2: Ah, pain.
S.1: Yes, and it makes problem to me when I . . . swallow.
S.2: When do you have . . .?
S.1: Since yesterday morning.
S.2: [In Spanish: No, I mean, where do you have the pain?] It has a pain in . . .?
S.1: In my throat.
S.2: Ah. Let it . . . getting, er . . .worse. It can be, er . . . very serious problem and you are, you will go to New York to operate, so . . . operation, . . . the seventh, the 27th, er May. And treatment, you can't eat, er, big meal.
S.1: Big meal, I er, . . . I don't know? Fish?
S.2: Fish you have to eat, er fish, for example (2002: 156).

Not giving up on task-based practices, Richards examines ways in which to focus on grammar and accuracy through language-awareness tasks prior to, during and after the task itself. Nevertheless, the tasks offered by Richards as examples of good practice are to a great extent the ones used by practitioners of the Communicative Approach. He admits:

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> Although it provides an appealing alternative to grammar-based teaching, the use of communicative language tasks plus ad hoc intervention by the teacher to provide corrective feedback on errors that arise during task completion may not be sufficient to achieve acceptable levels of grammatical accuracy in second language learning. Hence there is a need to consider how a greater focus on grammatical form can be achieved during the process of designing and using tasks (2002: 164).

To this purpose, Ellis proposes, as a better alternative to traditional grammar exercises, tasks that would raise students' consciousness and whose purpose is to create a kind of automatic control of language problems, which students are supposed to spontaneously recreate when needed. The use of conscious-raising tasks means forwarding acquisition of implicit knowledge, which Ellis calls "the kind of tacit knowledge needed to use the structure effortlessly for communication" (2002: 171). This acquisition involves three steps which are quoted below for the reason that they, as well as the example of tasks Ellis gives, are similar to the types of tasks developed within the Thinking Approach to language teaching, dealt with further below in this article. These steps are:

1. noticing (the learner becomes conscious of the presence of a linguistic feature in the input, whereas 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 (the learner integrates a representation of the new linguistic feature into her mental grammar) (2002: 171).

When enumerating the benefits of the approach, Ellis concedes that there are also limitations to this kind of instruction. First of all, while preparing the student for the integration of the new linguistic material and also contributing to the first two steps mentioned above, that is noticing and comparing, integration will, however, not happen until the student reaches a stage in his development which allows integration. Secondly, even if the new feature is not integrated as implicit knowledge, the student is able to construct explicit representations, which are stored and accessed when he/she is able to handle the new feature and which serve to help the student to notice subsequent occurrences of the feature input until it is acquired.

Building lessons on language awareness tasks actually seems to gain a well-deserved place during the process of language acquisition and is beneficial for both students and teachers, as Bolitho and Tomlinson assert:

> Language awareness work seeks to bring to the surface and challenge myths, preconceived ideas and intuitions about language, pulling together the descriptions of linguistics, the needs of teachers and the insights of every language user. In this sense, language awareness uses methodologies which draw on other awareness raising traditions to empower language teachers to take a more active and conscious part in decisions which are crucial to their lives

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> as professionals and to develop in them a healthy spirit of enquiry which will support their classroom work throughout their careers (1995: iv).

Two other comprehensive strategies for language teaching were developed, which integrate the teaching of grammar structures, though in a completely different way. They have had a longer process of germination and are both fathered by individuals rather than groups or national systems but, since they become wider in use with every passing year, they are outlined below.

The Thinking Approach to Language Teaching

The first one, the Thinking Approach (TA) to language teaching has a comprehensive agenda, attempting to develop thinking skills and creativity together with language versatility. Created for educational purposes by Alexander Sokol, the approach is based on TRIZ (the Russian acronym for Theory of Inventive Problem Solving) and OTSM (the General Theory of Powerful Thinking), both devised for facilitating the process of producing inventions on a regular basis. The necessity of the new approach rests on the obvious truth that, by the time students graduate each stage of their school program, the information explosion will have made useless part of what they have learned while, at the same time, leaving them unprepared for what is to come. Therefore language teachers' responsibilities are extended beyond just teaching language skills since good thinking skills will help students, to use a common idiom, not with the fish for the day but with fishing for a lifetime.

The Thinking Approach has developed technologies for integrating the two processes, namely for achieving the purpose of language acquisition together with developing problem solving competences in students. Along its three vectors: 1) language as the object of study (Creative Grammar Technology); 2) communication as the object of study – language used as one of the means for solving problems (Text and Film Technologies); 3) learning as the object of learning (Self-Study Technology and Research Technology), the TA is organized around modular courses instead of the usual linear curriculum and integrates the development of life-long learning skills. The technology contains model systems and procedures for using them. Concrete learning situations in the classroom are devised to be free of the regular classroom constraints and as close to real life as possible.

When it comes to teaching language structures, the main idea behind the Creative Grammar Technology is to provide a systematic vision of language. Seeing language as a system allows students, on the one hand, to become aware of its hierarchic nature and of the various functions of language elements, which they are supposed to integrate in a network and, on the other, to apprehend the primordial role of the context and of language being a constantly evolving social instrument.

The Creative Grammar Technology relies on systems of tasks rather than individual tasks. These are grouped into several types, all of them backed up with a solid theoretical description as to their function within the system. The main difference

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between this technology and other approaches to the teaching of grammar is that, while students are working with the systems of tasks, they are building and checking their own models of the language.

In a nutshell the tasks are as follows :

1. *Sorting out tasks*. The students are asked to organize a list of sentences under different headings of their choice, the more the better. The sorting out process is made difficult by the accumulation of several parameters to be taken into account. For example, instead of the simple active-passive difference, which would create two headings, both voices will refer to different tenses, for example a sentence may be active in the present or passive in the past, and so on. Mentioning the criteria used for sorting is also part of the task. It may happen that students identify more categories than were initially envisaged by the teacher and, in such a case, these should be taken into consideration as valid responses.

2. *Concept questions*. The students are asked to answer a number of questions related to a given sentence, the purpose being that of highlighting semantic meaning through the personal models of the differences in meaning, built by the students themselves. For example, the sentence:

"They are taking their exams next Monday."

is followed by the following questions:

Is the speaker implying specific time when the action will take place?

What is the basis for the speaker's statement?

Did anything happen in the past for the action to take place in the future?

(the examples, here and below, are taken from www.thinking-approach.org)

Parameters involved in the example sentences refer to *time of action, vision of action, factuality of action, attitude to action* and all their possible values. For example, *factuality of action* will have *factual; non-factual; possible (different degrees); hypothetical* as values.

Working with concept questions allows students to start drafting their own rules which they will improve within further tasks.

3. *Enhanced grammar*. While this type of task seems to fulfil the role of the well-known "fill in the gaps" exercise, there is a major difference in the fact that the solution is considered incomplete until choices are explained by using the models students have previously constructed. In case the model doesn't work, either the filled-in item is incorrect or the model will go to the student's *grammar bank* as a problem yet to be sorted out. This type uses the OTSM concept that sees all the elements of the world as being defined in terms of the ENV model: element-name of the element (feature/parameter)-value. For example:

"Fine!" she repeated, swinging the bag over her shoulder and almost knocking Ron off his chair. "I give up! I .....!" (leave)

Name of feature:_____

Value(s) of feature:_____

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It is obvious that while the tasks above may resemble some practice also available in other grammar books and courses, in the case of TA, however, they perform different functions and develop extra abilities in the students working with them.

4. *Meaning based tasks*. These tasks are much more complex since students are asked to create their own contexts around a few input sentences. If the given examples are:

I'm getting a new job.

I'm going to get a new job.

they may come up with contexts such as the ones below. The more complex, the better.

"What does the letter say?" "I'm getting a new job."

"I'm quite fed up with being stuck in the office the whole day. I'm going to get a new job."

In devising their contexts, the students use their models and build others if additional structures are introduced.

5. *Feature training tasks*. Used only in the TA, this type of task provides feed-back to both students and teachers as to the progress that has been made. Learners are expected to produce accurate sentences on the basis of a set of parameters and values. This is another opportunity for them to check their models and others' models if they work in pairs. For example, using the input below:

Time of Action: future; Attitude to Action: inevitable

students may produce the following utterance: *It's going to rain*.

Further tools include:

1. The student's *grammar banks*. Bank 1 includes utterances that exemplify different grammar structures. Bank 2 helps learners to construct models which can be permanently improved.

A possible example of a filled-in Bank 2 model looks like below:

Continuation of Action (possible; impossible)

Structure	**Model**	**Example(s)**
DID	Continuation of Action (impossible)	My brother lived in Nancy and then moved to Strasbourg.
HAVE DONE	Continuation of Action (possible)	He hasn't had a cigarette for a week. The boy is hoping to quit.

2. *Reflective tasks* which are essential for the whole Grammar Technology to work. They are organized into four groups: Goal formulation tasks, Model development tasks, Model improvement tasks and Tasks connected with evaluation and development of plans for further learning. Each of these groups fulfil a well-defined purpose within the system of tasks.

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3. *Progress tests*. These are administered twice: an initial test is given before the students start working on a certain system, whose purpose is to show both students and teachers how much attention that system needs to be allotted and, a second time, after finishing work on the system, in which case the test becomes a marker of progress.

As general observations about the TA approach, three things should be mentioned. Firstly, being quite tedious in its conception, the TA model for teaching language structures offers results in case of using the method over a longer period of time and a learner who goes through all the parts of the system along his schooling years. It is successfully applied, though, in quite a few schools in Latvia and Russia and other, mostly Northern countries, such as Finland, Denmark, or Norway.

Secondly, students working with the systems have to be in possession of at least basic language knowledge; the teacher, on the other hand, has to handle language in complete awareness of its peculiarities and idiomatic uses. Otherwise, a sentence like "I'm lovin' it," as well as many others that apparently break well-set norms, would be discarded as ungrammatical.

The third observation has to do with the fact that this approach seems to neglect the basic tenet of the communicative one. Most, if not all of the activities, are conducted as written tasks, almost no real communication taking place in the classroom. The same way, using the site of the approach allows students to practise their written language skills and thinking abilities.

The Global Approach to Language Teaching

Another methodology – the Global Approach – brings a completely new outlook on the way language structures should be taught and does a great deal to solve the same problem of use and usage mentioned above. Already very effective when teaching business English, the approach has chances of becoming the prevailing methodology when it comes to rapid, natural, purpose-oriented acquisition of a foreign language, English in this case.

The Global Approach is the result of Rita Baker's more than thirty years of experience as an English teacher working with groups from pre-school children to adults, both in her country and abroad. The method was perfected and tested starting with 1985 when, in her own private school, she started teaching business professionals of all nationalities who needed rapid acquisition of skills and a varied range of functional and professional vocabulary that could ensure fluency and accuracy in manipulating the language. This led to devising a "comprehensive set of tools which enable learners to make *informed* choices to accelerate their learning" (Baker, 2007).

The Global Approach fundamentally contradicts the very basis of traditional language teaching and dismisses it as inadequate. The latter systematically "deconstructs" (Thornbury, 2000: 59-67) language into chunks and discrete bits that are easier taught and manipulated on their own and the teaching of which will make the subject of separate, individual lessons. The teacher of foreign languages relies on the set of rules perpetuated

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by former teachers and course books and tries to fit new examples into the old rules. What doesn't fit is treated as an exception. This way, Baker says, students learning a second language never get the whole picture, they never come to an overall understanding of how the language really works. The system she has developed places the big picture before the details. The necessity of the whole picture is illustrated in different other places: when we assemble jigsaw puzzles, while dealing with the different pieces, we constantly refer to the original picture; when we try out a new dish, we do not memorize the recipe but constantly refer back to it; when we learn to drive, the different systems of the car have to be operated together. The approach plays on the human necessity to organize into and operate, consciously or not, with patterns. As speakers of a first language, we may or may not know the grammar rules underlying our everyday utterances within our purposeful communication but we surely recognize the patterns.

Exposure to a target language speaking medium is not always enough. This is proved by the fact that it often happens that people spending years in adopted countries and being permanently exposed to the new language model still make mistakes, largely caused by interferences and false correspondences they make with their mother tongues. In (Baker, 2005) several examples are given of which I mention one: inferring from the fact that "une personne très ***importante***"translates into English as"a very ***important*** person," a French speaker may translate "un nombre ***important"*** with "an ***important*** number" instead of "a ***considerable or significant*** number,"which is the correct translation since"important" is not used to express relative number in English. The same way, he may translate "une ville ***importante"*** incorrectly since "important" does not refer to relative size in English.The correct translation being "a ***big*** city." "By presenting whole patterns and laying bare the underlying systems instead of giving isolated rules, the Global Approach reduces the incidence of learners making similar incorrect assumptions"(Baker (2), 2005).

One common problem all traditional approaches suffer from is the fact that it is basically impossible to provide authentic contexts for all the grammar rules that have to be taught. In lack of a comprehensive set of different situations, it is impossible to draw conclusions as to the way language works. Therefore, the environment in which students are exposed to the Global Approach is one that recreates common but authentic situational contexts. The approach uses both visual and kinaesthetic strategies and appeals to both left and right side learners. Relying on the importance of metaphors in the process of thinking and communicating, the approach largely emphasizes the role of the emotional component in the process of acquisition.

The best illustration of how this works is the teaching of verbs and tenses, one of the problematic areas of English, for both students and teachers. Simple matrices made up of coloured triangles allow for the formation of all verbal tenses (including interrogative and negative forms), as well as of modal verbs. A heart in the middle signifies the continuous form which always has an emotional dimension.

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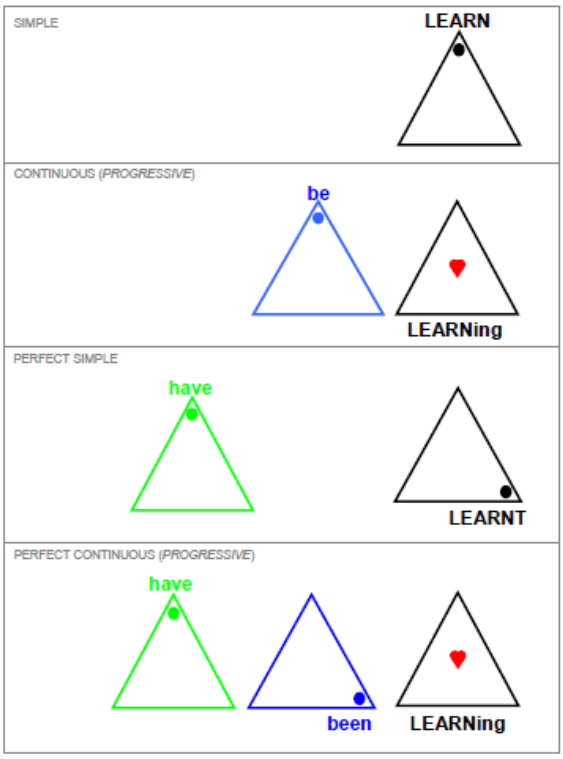


Fig.1 The matrix for the Present Tenses (reproduced by permission of the author)

The same way, the "symbolic extensions" (Baker, 2005) of the present simple and present continuous are as follows:

SIMPLE	**CONTINUOUS**
Distant focus	Close-up/zoom focus
Big picture	Partial view
Overall outcome (static view)	Event in progress (dynamic view)
Overall neutral observation	Explanatory/high-lighting detail
Objective	Subjective
Emotionally detached	Emotionally engaged
Formal	Informal
Permanent	Temporary

Such a description classifies the phrase "I look forward to meeting you" as more formal than "I'm looking forward to meeting you" and makes the present perfect passive a perfectly valid option, *e.g.* "She's been being prosecuted" (source of the latter sentence being a BBC radio broadcast). It also gives a polite, outgoing dimension to the sentence "Were you wanting to visit the castle?" which horrified some assiduous novices in language learning, but were the actual words by which the guard to Dunham castle addressed the late visitors arriving after closing hours.

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One of the great advantages of such a method is that, due to its multiple strategies, it considerably accelerates the learning process and can be used at all levels, for both general and specific purposes. And here comes the reason why it will still be some time before the approach is adopted unreserved: the necessity of native or native-like proficiency of the teacher.

In between such distinct attitudes to grammar teaching, I will quote Swan who says: "Grammar is important, but most of the time, in most parts of the world, people probably teach too much of it" (2002: 145). To support this statement, Swan gives seven bad reasons why grammar is taught and the result of such practices, which could also be clearly noticed in the Romanian educational system before 1989:

> Where grammar is given too much priority the result is predictable and well known. 'Course books' become little more than grammar courses. Students do not learn English: They learn grammar, at the expense of other things that matter as much or more. They know the main rules, can pass tests, and may have the illusion that they know the language well. However, when it comes to using the language in practice, they discover that they lack vital elements, typically vocabulary and fluency: They can recite irregular verbs but cannot sustain a conversation (2002: 151).

Swan also gives good reasons for teaching grammar, but only two and only for carefully selected language points. These are: "comprehensibility," which includes an acquisition of the basic points of grammar, the absence of which would make communication impossible; and "acceptability," towards which students should aspire in order not to be considered ignorant or uneducated in certain social circles, or in order to be accepted by potential employers or examiners.

The last point, "acceptability," is, in my opinion, the strongest incentive once students' self-consciousness is raised, this being the reason why it mostly happens in case of adolescents and young students. Nevertheless, as Harmer notices, at all levels,

> both positively motivated students and those who do not have this motivation can be strongly affected by what happens in the classroom. Thus, for example, the student with no long-term goals (such as a strong instrumental motivation) may nevertheless be highly motivated by realistic short-term goals within the learning process (1991: 9).

Conclusion

All three methodologies for language teaching that have been reviewed above start from the same basic assumption: teachers nowadays, just like their students, have more opportunities for being exposed to environments, whether media or real life situations, which turn language acquisition into a more direct and enjoyable process. Moreover, with open borders nowadays, more and more young teachers will make the choice of spending time in the country whose language they embark upon teaching and, in some cases, their language performance will be a close approximation of native-like proficiency. A direct consequence is the possibility of a larger implication on their behalf when it comes to

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devising personal methods to be used in different circumstances, instead of the prescriptive earlier methodologies.

This is the reason why Brown replaces the term "method" with the term "pedagogy." While the former is based on a "static set of procedures," the latter involves a "dynamic interplay between teachers, learners, and instructional materials." He gives four reasons for a "requiem" for methods: without a previous identification of the context, they tend to become prescriptive and over generalized; they tend to lose identity between the early and the later stages of the learning process; they cannot be empirically tested in order to find the best one; they may become vehicles of a "linguistic imperialism" (2002:10).

Developing individual approaches is all the more important since, as mentioned above, motivation can be different from one student to another, for the same student at different moments of the teaching process, within the same classroom, and surely in different learning communities. Nunan summed this up in the following way:

> It has been realised that there never was and probably never will be a method for all, and the focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities which are consonant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself (2002: 10).

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