Pedagogical Reflections on Learning Languages in Instructed Settings
To Gerardo and Rodrigo, for their patience
and understanding
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Over the last decade, significant progress has been made in our understanding of how languages are likely to be learned and subsequently taught. Such an advance has been prompted by the pedagogical reflections derived from research in a variety of areas within the discipline of language learning. Therefore, language teachers need to be aware of the latest pedagogical reflections if they are to responsibly cater for their students’ needs. It is the aim of this book to provide language teachers with those reflections by reviewing significant research, on the one hand, and by presenting the variety of pedagogical implications that stem from such research, on the other hand. The volume has fifteen chapters that are grouped in five main sections.

Section I, “From Teaching to Learning Languages in Instructed Settings: A Theoretical Overview”, includes three chapters which outline past approaches to language learning and highlight advances in our understanding of how languages are likely to be learned and taught. The chapter by Villanueva focuses on the definition of eclecticism, as an approach that allows for the construction of new concepts that act as a link between the socio-constructivist paradigm and communicative approaches, and between the psycho-pragmatic and socio-cultural trends that characterise current ideas in the field. Then the chapter by Alcón explains the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) paradigm as a set of changes influenced by research directions in language studies. It goes on to present new directions as part of the paradigm and finally it argues that the CLT paradigm shift is not over; rather, it presents new challenges to the teaching profession.

Riley and Duda’s chapter closes this section. This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the term autonomy, paying special attention to the reasons that have brought this concept to the foreground in current pedagogical practices. Educational, philosophical, psychological, political, sociolinguistic and technological contributions to the reformulation of the concept are explored.

This introductory section provides the theoretical grounding for the rest of the volume by underlining three core concepts in the field, that is, eclecticism, communication, and learner autonomy. These central tenets motivate the reflections presented in the rest of the chapters included in the volume.

Section II, “New Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Languages” contains three chapters which explore new directions in the field that have recently caught the attention of language researchers and practitioners. The major focus of the chapter by Ruiz-Madrid and Sanz-Gil is on the integration of
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in language learning, which involves the effective use of the ICT in the L2 learning and teaching process. Pivoting on the concept of learner autonomy, it discusses the new roles language teachers/researchers and learners might play in order to make the most of the new possibilities afforded by the ICT.

The introduction of the ICT and the focus on learners’ needs have also made corpus-based approaches central issues in language pedagogy and interlanguage studies in recent years. Cortes’ chapter focuses on this topic by discussing the need to reconsider the very nature of the term *corpus*. It first reviews the central issues of corpus methods by following two principles, namely appropriateness and usefulness. It concludes by suggesting clear directions in the corpus methodology.

This section closes with the chapter by Pérez, which focuses on the use of the portfolio as a new language assessment tool responding to new pedagogical demands based on two central needs in current educational proposals, that is, a learner-centred approach and plurilingualism. It presents the Spanish adaptation of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) project and its connections to the Common European Framework of Reference. After presenting its three main standard functions and parts, it illustrates different ways of implementing an ELP, using the Spanish one designed for the 12 to 18 age group as an example.

Section III, “Issues in Teaching and Learning Languages,” looks into the learner-centred approach. It consists of three chapters which discuss the role of a variety of individual variables of learners for understanding the nature of language learning and subsequently improving its teaching practice. The chapter by Arnold focuses on the significance of affect as a key learner variable in language learning. It argues that since the main goal of most second language learning is to promote the ability to communicate in the target language, it is essential to deal with the affective side of speaking the language and with ways of developing willingness to communicate. After discussing these issues, some implications and applications for language classrooms are set forth.

The next chapter by Chapelle and Cárdenas-Claros refers to the limited theoretical grounding that exists on learning styles as the reason for the difficulties encountered when attempting to define instructional approaches focused on individualised learning in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). It first concentrates on the definition and measurement of one cognitive style, field independence/dependence, and then it presents two studies, in which findings on CALL and the cognitive style of field independence/dependence are described. It concludes with practical examples and suggestions aimed at ultimately defining instructional approaches for learners with different learning styles.
Finally, Manchón’s chapter focuses on language learning and language use strategies, which are essential in the process of learning a language. The chapter first presents a review of research on the topic approaching the analysis from an *epistemological* and an *applied* perspective. It then ascertains some of the instructional implications that derive from research and, finally, it discusses a future research agenda in the field.

Section IV, “The Four Language Skills and Assessment” includes five chapters. Each of the first four chapters is devoted to a language skill, that is, the chapter by Martínez-Flor is devoted to listening, the chapter by Salazar to speaking, the chapter by Usó-Juan to reading and the chapter by Palmer-Silveira and Ruiz-Garrido to writing. The aim of these chapters is to provide insights into the advances in understanding the nature of each particular language skill and subsequently its teaching. To that end, each of them first addresses the nature of the particular language skill the chapter is dealing with. They then review exemplary research on each skill and highlight the major pedagogical implications that derive from it. Finally, they draw some conclusions about the topic and suggest directions for future research to gain a more complete picture of the instruction in a particular language skill. The reason the four language skills have been dealt with in different chapters is for the sake of practicality. Nevertheless, the four chapters should be considered as being interrelated with one another, as they are actually used in real life settings.

Bocanegra’s chapter closes the section by addressing the issue of assessment with the aim of increasing awareness on the duality teaching/assessing and its pedagogical dimension. In so doing, it first reviews a variety of issues of relevance to language learning classroom-based assessment and testing. Then, attention is drawn to how attainment of language and skills learning is assessed.

The last section of this volume, Section V, is entitled “Concluding Remarks” and includes a single chapter written by Räisänen, which pulls all the aforementioned topics together. It situates language teaching and learning in Higher Education by addressing two main questions: How well does the university prepare students for the communicative challenges of their future professional workplaces and how well are language teachers attuned to the complexity of those workplace discourses and practices? An integrated content and language programme serves as an example of how to face these two questions in the practice.

If this volume has helped practising language teachers to update their teaching methodology and has made researchers more aware of issues that need to be addressed in order to fully understand language learning and teaching, it will have achieved its aim.
SECTION I:

FROM TEACHING TO LEARNING LANGUAGES IN INSTRUCTED SETTINGS:
A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW
CHAPTER ONE

ECLECTICISM OR COMPLEXITY? CONCEPTS OF CONNECTIONS AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OLD AND NEW LANGUAGE TEACHING-LEARNING PARADIGMS

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Principles of strategy should be taught which make it possible for risks, the unexpected and the unknown to be tackled and development to be modified depending on the information acquired along the way. We need to learn to sail in an ocean of uncertainties through archipelagos of certainties.

Edgar Morin

1. Introduction

Pascal said that the last thing you think of when you are writing is the part that needs to go at the beginning. Following his advice, in this introduction I will include some conclusions about the linking concepts which I hope to argue for in the reflection that follows.

The start of the millennium encourages us to take stock in order to detect lines of progress in the different areas of knowledge. In the field of language teaching-learning, to speak of eclecticism when defining the situation is starting to become a commonplace used polysemously depending on the context of the different arguments. In this explanation, I will try not to conceal the fact that any assessment is always made from a particular point of view. So, arguing for eclecticism as the aim of the tendencies dominating the third millennium is a consequence of a certain critical view of cognitivism or the communicative approach, and it is this view which leads us to postulate the degree to which these will survive. Because of this, in this approach, an effort will be made to make the viewpoints involved in the assessment explicit and turn them into linking concepts which help to relate and to connect, but also to separate and distinguish, as stated in complex theory of thought (Morin 1993), whose epistemological paradigm will serve as a reference for us. The linking operators referred to by Edgar Morin are something quite different from some conceptions of eclecticism. It is not a question of making a simple juxtaposition of concepts but rather of constructing links and distinctions, allowing a reconceptualization of problems from an ecological perspective, taking the variation in contexts into account. Today, in the era of the technological revolution, the history of language teaching-learning methodologies offers an experience in reflection which should be used in order to rethink issues such as the relationship between learning and acquisition; the role of and types of previous knowledge; the relevance of communicative approaches; the relationship between languages and cultures, and the role of self-assessment.

Attempting to make a historical assessment of these issues, I will try to construct new linking concepts between the socio-constructivist paradigm and communicative approaches, and between the psycho-pragmatic and socio-cultural trends that characterize current ideas. These linking concepts, which are the result of the reflection that follows, have been shown to carry a certain duality, which is complementary rather than contradictory:

- personalization and socialization.
- universal psycho-pragmatic factors and the ecology of learning.
- inter-subjectivity and interculturality.
- introspection and mediation.

Finally, I would like to point out that some aspects of this study were presented during the Foreign Language (French and English) Methodology Postgraduate Course that took place at UJI during the 2003-2004 academic year, within the module dealing with a historical-conceptual approach to the language teaching-learning paradigm. However, for this publication I have given priority
to the conceptual aspect, so references to authors are not intended to be anything like exhaustive, but rather to give certain co-ordinates that help to position those archipelagos of certainties referred to by Morin in the opening quotation.

2. The bottom of the empty bucket

When we say we want to learn a language, what we clearly want to do is to be able to take part in a conversation, to be able to establish agreements in order to carry out a common project, or to enjoy reading a novel or a poem in the original version. And this happens in a relatively automatic way, except, of course, when it concerns certain conscious decisions that enable us to avoid making the other person feel offended. In these cases, reflections on the use of certain turns of phrase, courtesy formulas or expressions that could give rise to misunderstandings are involved. For everything else, in general, we would like to be able to use the foreign language without having to concentrate all the time on how things have to be said. Really, it is when we are capable of acting like this that we can say that we have acquired a language. So, according to this approach, the desire we really want to express is that we want to acquire a language.

What is learning a language, then? Learning activities are conscious activities carried out in an organized way with the purpose of increasing our knowledge about various aspects of the language, related to the skills we want to possess. However, not all learning leads to acquisition and, still less to full acquisition. Making mistakes does not necessarily mean having learned badly, but rather shows that learning and acquisition are two different things.

What is known today about the process of language acquisition means that it can be stated that in order to acquire new knowledge and new skills in a second language, it is necessary to experiment with those we already possess in a sufficient variety of situations, allowing us to tackle various problems in putting our new acquisition to the test, identify our limitations and obtain new information enabling us to reorganize the image we have of the operation of the language we are learning.

In fact, these statements are valid not only for the learning and acquisition of languages, but they also serve to characterize human learning in general. The language learning process in particular is neither linear nor cumulative in the sense of simply superimposing knowledge. Instead, it is a process of constructing knowledge and skills during which there are continuous restructurings, advances, retreats and vacillations corresponding to the student’s internal processing of the information obtained. In this process, previous linguistic knowledge plays a fundamental role because learned languages do not work as sealed compartments. Instead, the bilingual or multilingual individual
is, in fact, a meeting point of all the languages he or she is learning and has acquired (Weinreich 1964).

Naturally, these positions mean a negation of the “empty bucket theories”2 (Popper 1972) belonging to Skinner’s behaviourist paradigm and applied for audiolingual and audiovisual approaches conveniently supported by a structuralist conception of language, according to those postulated by Bloomfield.

In opposition to the empty bucket theories, constructivism suggests that to learn is to develop an active process of internalization and integration of the linguistic experience. It is in this context that it makes sense to be interested in the ways in which language learners process information, in how they learn, in their cognitive styles and in their strategies. Within the framework of the constructivist paradigm, it is coherent to state that the teacher becomes a researcher studying the learners and a designer of teaching-learning situations that will theoretically favour acquisition. On the other hand, whether or not learning methods are taken into account, all language learners establish more or less conscious hypotheses based on information from their experience, and these hypotheses lead them to develop strategies for practically experimenting with their conclusions on the operation of the language they are learning. These strategies, which are to some degree conscious, are implicit in the hits and miss that mark the learning process. The deductions our brains make based on a situation are not always the right ones; this is why it is so important to have the opportunity to test the hypothesis created in other situations, and the richer and more varied these new experiences the better.

In the process of knowledge construction, the instruments language learning uses for capture correspond to previous knowledge internalized as a representation of the operation of languages and as pragmatic outlines which have a role in structuring the capture and processing of the new linguistic experience (Piaget 1969; Schank and Abelson 1977; Kintsch 1982; Bruner 1984; Bronckart 1985; Fayol 1985; Mayer 1985).

These pragmatic-cognitive patterns have universal shared features on which mutual comprehension is based, but they are also impregnated by emotional and cultural experience. They are tools, in the active sense of this word, which also act as lenses or filters in methods of capturing linguistic experience. Their universal dimension encourages communication and interaction, but cultural and subjective variation is the source of both creativity and misunderstanding.

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2 “The bucket theory of the mind” was a phrase coined by Popper to refer to learning theories considering students as empty buckets that have to be filled with information before they can know anything. Popper, Karl, *Objectif knowledge: an evolutionary approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).
Negotiation, co-operation, elucidation, reformulation strategies and others reflect the tension between these centripetal and centrifugal communication forces.

In addition, in a teaching-learning situation it must be borne in mind that previous experiences have an influence on representations of the roles of teacher and student and on the representations the student has constructed about himself/herself and others in the learning and communication process (Rogers 1961, 1992).

Researching how students form operational rules, establish analogies and inferences and schematize the linguistic experience allows the teacher to move towards teaching strategies that help to develop the students’ spontaneous knowledge, relaunching it through richer and more complex systematic representations. Research into learning and teaching and support strategies is research in action, and what is valid for the language student’s learning process is equally valid for the researcher’s learning process (Villanueva 2000a; Breen 2001). At the origin of this conception of the teacher’s or adviser’s role is clearly Vygotski and Bruner’s mediation theory (Vygotski 1962, 1979; Bruner 1984). Both authors give great importance to the function of consciousness and reflection, to human beings’ capacity to develop consciousness of what they are doing, to go back to their own plan and to reorganize their knowledge. This capacity is not egocentric, but rather is encouraged by communication and interaction.

Today, the relationship between learning, consciousness and communication is shared by many researchers in the field of language learning (John-Steiner 1990; Hickmann 2001) and it could be stated with Bruner that the development of learning consists of “prolonged series of jumps forward, made in co-operation, each of them marked by an increase in socialization and consciousness”. Significant learning is learning integrated into the students’ pragmatic-cognitive structures and becomes an instrument for capturing new knowledge and creating new representations. Bruner invented the notion of scaffolding to refer to the way teachers and adults structure tasks to foster learning. The production of knowledge is, then, closely linked to reproducing this knowledge, to communicating it.

This point of view is, from my understanding, very important in the language learning field because it allows an argument in favour of the close relationship between cognitive learning strategies and social knowledge communication strategies. Making explicit patterns for organizing discourse and texts, enriching representations and comparing and negotiating them with others

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is a way of constructing **significant learning** of the language and about the language (Coste 1985).

Around the socio-constructivist conception of language learning is a constellation of concepts which today form operations that are necessary for thinking about issues such as the learning of strategies, learning styles or the development of autonomy (Cembalo 1993). In fact, the development of research into language methodology that started in the ’70s is characterized by an increasingly clearly formulated tendency to consider the acquisition of a language as a personal appropriation of knowledge and skills. The slide in the centre of gravity of methodological reflection from the teacher to the student leads to a growing concern to observe the strategies deployed by learners. The notion of learning style describes the cognitive and emotional behaviour reflecting the learner’s characteristics and ways of learning, interacting and responding to the learning context (Wenden and Rubin 1987; Willing 1989; O’Malley and Chamot 1990; Little and Singleton 1990; Wenden, 1991). We might say that the notion of style operates as a heuristic instrument, making possible the analysis of the behaviours observed by the teacher or self-observed by the student. What has been revealed as being important in teaching practice is analysis of how a set of strategies is related to one another in a particular student. From this perspective, it makes more sense to look at what the learning strategies students use are and to wonder if there are strategies whose learning can be made easier (Willing 1989; Widdowson 1990a).

The interest in personalizing learning methods must not be identified with individualism, as the construction of knowledge and skills, co-operation and communicative action are concepts that are related in a socio-constructivist paradigm. **Personalization** does not contradict diversity, interaction and cooperation, it complements them. All these notions in fact make up many other points of attraction for methodological thought in the past few years (Coste and Zarate 1997; Trim 1997, 1998; Hickmann 2001)

### 3. The current position of Humanism

Before taking a general view of communicative approaches in Europe, I would like to take a look at a series of proposals related to cognitivism that developed, particularly in the USA, in the ’70s and ’80s, because in them we can find aspects that were incorporated into the communicative approach itself and which particularly influenced the development of the concept of autonomy. Perhaps I could indicate as an archipelago of certainty left behind by the cognitive revolution the fact that today we cannot speak of language learning without taking into account that the learner has prior knowledge, in declarative, conceptual and procedural terms, as well as cultural representations concerning
teaching-learning and the social operation of language. This whole baggage of concepts, notions and representations plays a role whose importance is still inescapable in the capture and elaboration of experience.

An aspect which undoubtedly undermined certainties about the audiolingual and audiovisual method was Chomsky’s questioning of structuralism and behaviourism. At the same time, it is usually stated that the Chomskyan revolution had a decisive influence on the development of psycholinguistics. But it must also be borne in mind that, in the ’70s and early ’80s, the ideas of Vygotski and Piaget were being translated and publicized and Carl Rogers’ (1961, 1992) ideas of humanist psychology were spreading.

In the US, in the ’70s and ’80s, there was no compact alternative to audiolingualism, but there was a gradual loss of prestige and a change of paradigms that was important in language teaching and learning. Ideas appeared, influenced by the cognitive revolution of the 70s, by psychoanalysis, by constructivism, by humanist psychology etc., that all have in common an emphasis on the learner’s point of view. Ideas appeared like Carroll’s Cognitive Code learning (1966), which introduces reflection as against the creation of habits; Asher’s Total Physical Response (1965) from the state university at San José in California, influenced by Piaget; Curran’s Community Language Learning (1976), developed at Loyola University in Chicago, based on applying psychological counselling techniques to learning (Counselling-Learning) and which redefined the teacher’s role as that of counsellor. This was also the approach of Carl Rogers’ (1951) humanistic psychology, which conceived language learning as a process of integrated development of the subject.

Laforge, a follower of Curran, developed his ideas around language learning as a social process, also taking into account the emotional dimension. Remember that the concept of a language as a unit of thought, words and communicative action was the cornerstone of Vygotski’s socio-constructivism and, for Bruner, the teacher’s role as a mediator has a great deal to do with the cultural process of socialization and support for the learner in achieving independence as a person and as a critical citizen.

In the wave of cognitive revolution, there were also other ideas like the Suggestopedia and the Silent Way which were applied with many variants. The Suggestopedia, developed by the Bulgarian educator and psychiatrist Lozanov (1978), had many adaptations in which different rituals were used with a certain placebo effect. Gattegno’s Silent Way (1972-1976) influenced by discovery teaching, by Bruner’s ideas and by problem-solving approaches to learning, highlighted the role of consciousness in learning. Nowadays, the development of metacognitive capacity stands at the centre of the development of language learning capacity and autonomy (Oscarson 1978, 1979, 1984). Let us move forward on this subject.
As we have already indicated, in the US in the '70s and '80s there was no notional-functional approach nor, in the strict sense, was there reflection on the communicative approach. Yet there was an interesting initiative which to some degree combined the communicative approach with the cognitive perspective. At the University of Southern California, Tracy Terrell, a Spanish lecturer, and Stephen Krashen, a linguist, suggested an approach called the Natural Approach (1977, 1982). It has been said that the Natural Approach, when it was formulated at the end of the '70s and beginning of the '80s, was the only American method including both communicative and cognitive aspects. Krashen himself indicated in 1983 that the Natural Approach was similar to other communicative approaches. However, some of its hypotheses, which many studies have provided evidence against, are today in considerable doubt. Some of its most uncertain positions are the following:

- The rejection of explicit grammar: it considers that the existence of a theory of language is not important.
- Its rigidity in declaring that the mother tongue must not be used.
- The Input +1 theory, which led to the rather inflexible establishment of the programme (I+1 Input Hypothesis).
- The idea that the acquisition of grammatical structures occurs in a predictable universal order (Natural Order Hypothesis).

However, it must be recognized that other aspects have now been incorporated into general thought about language teaching. These are the following hypotheses:

- The emotional filter hypothesis.
- The monitor hypothesis: conscious learning acts as a monitor between the acquired system and production.
- The acquisition/learning hypothesis. Although today it is presented by different authors in a somewhat watered down form compared to the stricter formulations of the natural method.
- The importance of comprehension.
- The acceptance of a latency period.
- The most adapted aspects of the input information theory: in fact, this theory is related to acquisition and not to learning. In it, there are elements that give greatest importance to meaning and to the learner’s

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4 This must not be confused with the Natural Method, although they both come from the same tradition: use of the language in communicative situations without resorting to the mother tongue.
comprehension of the input: what is understood can be better comprehended. In addition, input information must always be a little above the current level of competence. In fact, reading some of these proposals it is impossible to avoid recalling Vygotski’s Zone of Potential (or Proximal) Development Theory.

Nowadays, the study of the learners’ cognitive and socio-cultural representations covers a growing interest in the multiplication of inter-cultural relations, the modification of textual supports and the appearance of new genres (cybergenres) and generic variants deriving from the use of hypertext and computerised media. The importance of reconceptualizing the culture of learning is also undergoing a new impulse due to a multiplication of the sources of information and the possibility of establishing multiple relationships between learners (Puren 2004; Ruiz-Madrid and Villanueva 2003; Sanz, Villanueva and Ruiz-Madrid 2004). Current proposals on interactive writing and the collaborative learning, which have been relaunched through the introduction of computer technology and by active teaching, take on their full humanist importance if they are put back in the paradigms of socio-constructivism, in the theory of mediation and in humanist psychology. In this context, the concept of autonomy in learning takes on a cultural and educational dimension.

4. Universal psycho-pragmatic factors and the ecology of learning

In the functional notional proposals, there is a reaction to the structuralist-type audiolingual method dominant in the US in the ’60s (it was developed at the end of the ’50s and patented by Brooks in 1964). But there are still many structuralist-type influences, above all in its early formulations.

From my point of view, the development of the communicative approaches is rightly marked by two aspects:

- The gradual overcoming of the structuralist view of language focused on the study of the sentence. And, later, the overcoming of the conception of discourse as a sum of statements. That is: the gradual opening up of discourse and text as units of communication with their own rules of coherence and cohesion and within whose framework it makes sense to talk about strategies.
- The gradual focus on the learner as an active subject of learning, with specific needs as a foreign user of the language he or she is learning.
It could be said that the development of the communicative approaches is none other than the development of a basic approach that was already present at the origins of the functional notional method: the conception of the language in pragmatic terms of communicative action. The origins of this pragmatic conception of the language and of learning it should be sought in various sources:

- European reflections criticizing the rigidity and artificiality of the language suggested by audiolingualism.
- The spread of Piaget’s ideas of constructivism and Vygotski’s and Bruner’s socio-constructivism, particularly in as far as the latter two give a top-level role to the pragmatic communicative dimension in the construction and communication of thought.
- The spread of the ideas of Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian (1968) concerning specific learning and curriculum renewal. And, in general, the supremacy of constructivist thought in curriculum theory and in the sphere of psychopedagogy.
- Reflections on autonomy in the theory of education and, in particular, in the area of language learning (Holec 1979, 1996).
- The changing educational and political situation in Europe and the need to create a committee of the Council of Europe to draw up European frames of reference for language teaching-learning.

It is necessary to take these different factors into account in order to understand:

- The origin of notional-functional ideas and the beginning of the communicative approach.
- The development of the communicative approach and its progressively psycho-pragmatic dimension.
- The importance of the gradual focus on the learner and on studies of the development of autonomy.
Perhaps it is a good idea to go back into history a little before answering the question about the validity of the communicative approach and before declaring that today everything is going down the path of an eclecticism with ill-defined borders, under which recalling a few certainties would be a demonstration of old-fashioned dogmatism.

Faced with the rigidity of the American approaches (Bloomfield at Yale and Fries at Michigan), European thought was manifested in two ways towards the end of the ’60s which sent audiolingualism and the audiovisual method into crisis. These were two attempts to make the learning of structures less artificial by inserting it into a communicative context. Partly we are referring to the Situational Approach proposed by Firth, who belonged to the London School of African and Oriental Studies, influenced by the studies of Malinowski. Also, in France, the structuro-global audiovisual approach (SGAV) was developed, put forward by the CRÉDIF at St Cloud and by Galisson, among others. In general, in the European approaches the idea was to take the situational context of the communication into account. The progressive breaking up of the rigidity of the images of the audiovisual method is shown in methods like the Méthode Orange, in which simulations of genuine documents (letters, advertisements, newspaper cuttings, etc.) appear along with photographed characters, contrasting with the schematic or drawn characters from the audiolingual and audiovisual approaches of the ’50s and ’60s. This interest in authenticity not only reflects a desire to provide the communicative episodes with socio-cultural context, but also offers the opportunity to mobilize language learners’ psychopragmatic and cultural representations and turn them into tools for formulating hypotheses. Authenticity and the development of autonomy begin to appear, above all in teaching-learning practice, as two linked concepts.

However, in the theoretical formulations of these European proposals, rigidity was maintained in lesson development phases: presentation, listening and memorizing of the dialogue; staging the dialogue; repetition and practice of the structures from the dialogue (repetition, substitution, reformulation, transformation and transposition exercises, etc.); application; production and appropriation: directed imitative production, free production based on what has been learned (depending on levels). With all this, and although the weight of grammatical structure in the conception of the curriculum and rigidity in the lesson phases in maintained, the progressive questioning of the directivism of audiovisual methodology based on Skinner’s operant conditioning theory, and

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5 Perhaps a difference between the French and English proposals is that in the French ones the drills (structuralist approach to the study of sentences inspired by Hockett’s box) were less important. Remember that, just as Bloomfield and Fries proposed the application of structuralism to the learning of English (Army Methods), Saussure always showed skepticism about the possibilities of applying his theory to language learning.
above all the criticism of the lack of authenticity of the dialogues and situations, began opening the way to new approaches.

The effective spread of notional-functional methodology and the communicative approach throughout the ’70s and ’80s is closely related to the formulation of Threshold Levels for European languages (first for adults and then for school contexts) carried out by the Council of Europe’s Living Languages Project Committee. This project, which began in 1971, produced the different ideas for the threshold levels from 1975 down to the end of the ’80s. In the 1975 formulations for English (The Threshold Level, by Van Ek and Alexander) and those of 1976 for French (Un Niveau Seuil, by Cost, Courtillon, Ferenczi and Baltar), the notional-functional approach was initially very much marked by the idea of drill and by the weight of a structuralist conception of language. The first ideas for adapting the Threshold Levels to school contexts appeared in 1977 for English (Van Ek) and in 1979 for French (Porcher, Roulet). The existence of an assessment of the application of the threshold levels for English meant the suggested French syllabus was based on the speech acts notion, which involves a communicative synthesis of notional and functional criteria. It is interesting to consider Galisson’s reflections on the differences between structuralism and functionalism (Galisson 1980). So in the proposal Adaptation d’un Niveau Seuil pour des contextes scolaires, a certain desire to make the notional-functional syllabus more flexible can be seen.

In 1982, a very important article appeared by Henri Holec (1982), Council of Europe expert and at the time director of CRAPEL at the Univ. of Nancy: “L’approche communicative, cru 1982”, appearing in the journal Mélanges Pédagogiques. Holec indicated the risk of reducing speech acts to lists which would be still-lifes. He underlined the need to approach communication as a process and not as a list of pre-designed mechanical moulds. The key features of any communicative act are the notions of context and interactive process, so in every communicative exchange the participants renew and reconstruct the speech acts. From this, the need to develop strategic competence in students is deduced. The article once again takes up a paper by Holec himself, presented at the third GREDIL conference at Laval University, Quebec, which took place from 14 to 16 October 1982: “La classe de langue française face aux recherches en pragmatique” (and which appeared in the Congress papers in 1983). In the article in the journal Mélanges, Holec refers to the document by the Council of Europe’s Living Languages Project group: Rapport de synthèse concernant les études consacrées à l’analyse de l’apprenant comme communicateur et comme

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*apprenant*, which appeared in the same year, ’82, and which repeated the importance of integrated *negotiation strategies* into communicative learning that would ensure *inter-comprehension* and *co-operation* between the interlocutors in the communication process.

It is the very development of reflection on the communicative dimension that led to the discursive consideration of language (Peytard and Moirand 1992) and to interaction strategies and the variety of uses, users and learners being taken into account. Today, the communicative approach cannot be identified with a list of prescriptions, but the interactional paradigm is still valid. Within its framework and since at least the end of the ’80s, the psycho-pragmatic and socio-cultural dimension of learning has been insisted on along with an ecological, contextual and personalized conception of learning plans. Concerning the possibility that there is a new approach which might historically come to replace the communicative approach, Daniel Coste (2000)\(^7\) puts the emphasis on the *plurality, flexibility and adaptation of communicative methodologies to different contexts and needs*, and highlights the integration of the cognitive dimension into the communicative approaches to the teaching-learning of languages. *Complexity* and *diversity* would therefore be the features defining communicative methodologies at the beginning of the 21st century:

Disappearance of methodologies? This is not so clear. Should it not be valued more highly that the communicative approaches (plural and upholding general orientations rather than imposing specific principles) have gradually spread and cover the whole landscape, covering the rough edges? As a polymorphic doctrine, the communicative approach is, even if only tacitly, the subject of a flexible consensus covering everything and, on the way, even including some contributions from cognitivism.\(^8\)

## 5. Inter-subjectivity and interculturality

In Canale’s theoretical model from ’83, communicative competence is defined as: grammatical, socio-linguistic, discursive and strategic competence. The approaches by Canale and Swain of 1980, together with the aforementioned

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\(^8\) Ibid. French original: «Disparition des méthodologies? Pas si sûr. Ne faut-il pas plutôt estimer que les approches communicatives (plurielles et prônant plus des orientations générales qu’imposant des principes spécifiques) se sont répandues en douceur et recouvrent, en masquant les aspérités, l’ensemble du paysage? Doxa polymorphe, le communicatif fait l’objet, même tacitement, d’un consensus mou et attrape-tout, allant jusqu’à récupérer au passage certains apports cognitivistes.»
one by Canale in 1983, include the descriptions by Hymes in 1971 and Widdowson in 1978. All of them highlight the consideration of the language student as a “user”, as an active subject of the communicative act in a situation of interaction. The cultural dimension appears in Canale’s and Swain’s model as a socio-linguistic component of communicative competence, while in Sophie Moirand’s 1982 model it appears as a socio-cultural component. It can be concluded that the socio-cultural and strategic component of communicative competence is a constant in the approaches from the ‘80s and ‘90s.

The myth of unilingualism brings with it the false opinion that to understand another person in an intercultural communication situation it is sufficient for one interlocutor to learn the other’s language, as this knowledge in itself opens the way for discourse. The conception of a Lingua Franca that would in itself enable communication in the business world, at meetings between scientists, in political negotiation, etc. is currently very widespread in a more or less implicit way due to the frequent use of the so-called languages of international communication. However, for some time many studies in the communication field have shown that the use of a language in a discursive situation is inseparable from what has been called socio-cultural and strategic competence (Gumperz 1982; Widdowson 1990a). The learning of a language requires, then, competence in three dimensions which need to be integrated: linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic, as communication is a process of permanent negotiation depending on the situations and the actions of the interlocutors.

It has been said that to communicate is to dramatize a relationship; it is to update some social and cultural items through verbal and non-verbal behaviour, simultaneously basing oneself on strategies of conformity and transgression of the rules of the social group, as well as on references supposedly shared by the different members of a community. From this derives the fact that, in intercultural communication the use of language and negotiation of social and cultural identities are inseparable aspects, as has been shown by Dolonina and Cecchetto (1998: 167-181) of the University of Ontario among others. Because of this, the linguistic competences of the user/learner of a foreign language must be developed within the framework of the acquisition of other more general competences: declarative knowledge (socio-cultural and intercultural, about the world); practical and intercultural skills and behaviour patterns; existential or attitudinal competence; and learning skills.

The methodology for teaching-learning languages has incorporated the teaching of the code, contributions which are not only linguistic but also psychological and ethnographic. As Abdalah-Pretceille (1996)⁹, indicates, the

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question raised is a complex one: must we learn to get to know other languages and other cultures or rather learn to understand others, particularly through their language and culture (their languages and cultures)? This question leads us to the very heart of multilingualism and interculturalism, as, together with learning the linguistic code, it is a question of developing the cultural skills likely to provide access to the meaning of the communication. It is not a question of acquiring cultural knowledge. Instead we must know how to distinguish, in a given situation, the elements referring to cultural features and those which are an expression of individuality. This is why Abdalah-Pretceille (1996) indicates: “It is not culture that determines linguistic behaviour but rather the way in which an individual uses culture to talk and talk to himself or herself.”

From the learning point of view, what matters, then, is the complexity of intercultural systems interiorized by individuals and, from the point of view of mediation counselling, it is a question of trying to help to make the cultural references explicit, as in order to communicate in a language other than their own, all individuals construct their own expression not only with reference to the code and culture of the mother tongue but also with reference to their internalized image of other languages they know. And they will do this however varied their experience of the world is.

Speakers of two or more languages construct an intermediary or inter-language system including representations belonging to each language they know. This integrated representation forms a cognitive and linguistic filter acting as a monitor in resolving tasks, problems and discursive conflicts. That is, it forms the source of the psycho-linguistic patterns that allow us to assimilate the data from a communicative experience.

Research into the features of intercultural communication allows us to begin to define the new educational challenges in the teaching-learning of foreign languages. Some of the features of what we will call intercultural or complex communicative competence may be described in the following way:

- The greater the use of lingua franca (the so-called languages of international communication), the greater the need to use courtesy strategies that protect the positive image of the interlocutor or prevent it being damaged.
- The greater the incidence of international communication, the greater must be the capacity for relating linguistic data to the variety of

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10 Ibid., 36 original version «Ce n’est pas la culture qui détermine les comportements langagiers mais bien la manière dont l’individu utilise la culture pour dire et se dire.»
possible interpretations according to different cultural assumptions. This involves flexible patterns and the capacity for defocusing (being able to look at things from different points of view).

- Capacity for intercultural and exolingual communication must bring with it a capacity for situational learning, capturing the subtleties of contextual use of the language and supra-segmental phenomena (intonation, rhythm, gestures).
- The capacity to build common ground for understanding, based on the elements provided by the communication dynamic means capturing the elements that are being raised in the other’s arguments as important and suggesting their renegotiation in the case of conflict.
- The capacity to capture the need and degree of explicitness in a sentence in a discursive context means an ability to integrate the dimension of the misunderstanding as a part of communication and not as an exceptional dimension or a breakdown in communication.
- The capacity to collaborate in the other’s discourse through the joint elaboration of a phrase based on a lexeme comes through being capable of offering possible expansions and reformulations, going around the subject and paraphrasing, etc. It is a case of constructing a common language during a given communicative episode.
- The capacity to change the form of a speech act: changing the imperative form for the interrogative, changing the affirmative form of a question for the negative form, changing the subjective orientation of a sentence: humour, level of emotional involvement, etc. are some other intercultural competence strategies.

All these skills (Trim 1998) are based on a multilingual representation of communication, even when only one language is used in a particular situation. This multilingual understanding of intercultural communication presupposes:

- the development of an ethic of negotiation and argument.
- the development of sensitivity to cultural variation.

According to the Council of Europe\(^ \text{11} \) (1996), there can be various ways of developing multicultural and multilingual competence from the point of view of

the multicultural European situation, but all these forms of development must include *training in the autonomous learning of languages*.

### 6. Introspection and Mediation

It can be said that the development of the communicative approach is gradually adopting a change in viewpoint, putting the learner at the centre of learning, and this involves important consequences for the definition of objectives, the concept of assessment, the definition of competences, the role of error, the handling of diversity and the consideration of *communicative competence as a complex strategic and socio-cultural competence*.

Already at the beginning of the ‘70s, at the time when Trim was publishing the guidelines for learning systems for the learning of living languages in Europe, Holec and Dickinson suggested a transformation in the consideration of the elements making up the learning process. The notion of self-assessment transforms the role of the learner, who becomes an active, free subject, conscious of his or her own learning process. To learn to learn, the language student must integrate self-assessment into all points of the process. One function of self-assessment is the verification of acquisition, but it also has the role of *re-mediation*, of motivation and acquisition of strategies.

In 1977, Oskarson, within the work of the Council of Europe in his work *Self-assessment in Foreign Language learning*, made the learner the subject for enunciating self-assessment: “I know...”, “I am capable of...”, etc. In 1991, Bachmann presented an empirical model for assessing communicative competence taking into account the learner’s communication skills and metacognitive capacity: Plan, Do, Assess/Monitor. The consideration of the learner as a language user who must develop strategic competence stems from the consideration of the student as a learner who must develop a capacity for self-assessment. Little has referred to the capacity for learning to learn or learning competence as a strategic competence (Little 1998), and Carton has declared that self-assessment is the very heart and driving force of autonomy (Carton 1993).

The notion of self-assessment could be useful for us to make a first approach to the European language portfolios whose 1996 and 2001 approaches are attempting to open a new stage in the common orientation for teaching-learning of languages in the European Community.

It must be remembered that, since the ’70s, the impulse for the application of methodological innovations in different teaching contexts is closely related to the proposals and projects of the *Committees of the Council of Europe* proposing a common framework for the teaching and assessment of European languages. In addition, the experts who have taken part and continue to take part