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Preface

The language teaching profession has witnessed great and drastic changes in the last few decades. The changes that have been rooted in philosophy, linguistics, psychology, pedagogy, and other fields of applied linguistics have influenced theoretical and practical aspects of language education.

Philosophically, language teaching once followed the principles of positivistic philosophy. Based on these principles, any human activity was assumed not only to be observable and measurable, but also could be manipulated through certain instructional procedures. Out of this view evolved the psychology of behaviorism according to which language was a kind of human behavior and not different from other human activities. Therefore, the followers of behaviorism assumed that language was observable behavior and could be learnt as any other human activity. During the course of years, however, the conception of language has changed from an object-like, static, and behavioral phenomenon to a dynamic, interactive, and mental process that is different from other human activities. Language is considered a humanistic phenomenon and is looked upon through humanistic views.

Linguistically, an important question to be answered is what language is since any definition requires its own characteristics. For instance, once language was defined as a set of patterns. Following this theoretical definition, the textbook materials and classroom procedures would consist of presenting language and thus learning language through a set of patterns. On the other hand, defining language as a set of rules would definitely influence the structure and presentation of the materials in class. This means that

developments in linguistics lead to different definitions of language, which in turn result in the formulation of different methods and materials. In this regard, linguistics has been quite rich with many theories such as the structuralist, generative transformational, case, and functional. Although the subject matter to be studied in all these theories has been “language”, the theoretical perspectives have in one way or another influenced the practitioners’ view of the concept of language.

Psychologically, there have been great changes as well. The most significant contribution of psychology to language education is to provide guidelines for how learning takes place. When learning is defined as a change in behavior, for example, the practitioner would try to make students form habits of language performance. However, when psychologists hold the view that learning is a mental activity and that it should be meaningful in order for the materials to be internalized, classroom procedures should change to avoid habit formation and attempt to help learners to get involved in the process of learning.

Pedagogically, language teaching has been under the influence of theories. Following different theories in linguistics, psychology, and other related fields, language teaching procedures have drastically changed. Once considered a set of bits and pieces, language was taught in the form of concrete and observable bits and pieces. The assumption was that when learners acquired the bits, they would assemble the pieces and get a holistic picture of the language. However, when the conceptualization about language changed and it was believed that language is a set of functions, for example, the teaching activities changed from dealing with bits and pieces of language to presenting the language in the form of chunks to fulfill language functions.

Practically, all teachers and teacher educators try to implement the findings of linguistics and psychology in classroom activities. For example, teaching in general, and language teaching in particular, was once considered

as a one-way process. That is, it was assumed that the teacher is the only knower and teaching is the transference of information from the teacher to the student. At present, however, language teaching is an interactive process utilizing teacher-student and student-student interaction in class. That is, teacher-centered education has faded away and student-centered activities are popular. Students assume heavy responsibilities towards their own learning. The teacher is supposed to assume a facilitating role in class. In fact, the most important responsibility of the teacher is to teach learners how to learn rather than being the source of information. Peer work, group work and team projects are now assumed to be more fruitful than teacher-student interaction only.

The above-mentioned changes along with modifications in different fields related to language teaching and learning have made the field of TEFL a professionally dynamic one. It is no more acceptable to follow a particular school of thought in methodology and apply it to classroom without paying attention to constant changes in the field. Of course, a word of caution is in order here. The implementation of a new method of teaching in a large context of a country entails so many accommodations and changes. From the textbooks, to teacher training and education programs, to classroom environment, and to teacher-student behavior in class, all and all require a huge amount of investment for the adaptation and adoption of the principles of the method in the context of teaching. Therefore, great care should be exercised not to apply the changes that are still at the experimentation level. Language teaching authorities should be quite cautious in issuing prescriptions for a change in the educational system of the country without solid support from comprehensive research.

Another significant dimension of change in language teaching is related to changes that are not directly related to the language itself but other aspects of modern life. Scientific developments, technological advancements, political challenges, economic enterprises, and fast and easy communication

among nations have become an inevitable part of modern life. Developments in science have made it a universally shared phenomenon. Scholars from different countries in different locations share the knowledge and exchange the information available because science cannot be limited to a particular person or a particular nation.

Furthermore, the universality of technological advancements has been of great help in enabling people from around the globe to communicate easily in order to accomplish their objectives. Physical distance for cooperation is replaced by distance-free cooperation among nations through telecommunication, thanks to the advancements in technology. Political challenges facing governments require a close connection and interaction among the nations. Sometimes, even a minute on the time scale may serve an important purpose in critical circumstances. Finally, economic enterprises, that make interaction among nations inevitable, have been playing an increasing role in determining the parameters of international relations. To accomplish all these challenges of the new world, there needs to be a common language of communication.

For some reasons, English has become a widely accepted language as an international means of communication. One main reason is that technological advancements have been mostly developed in the western countries where English is predominantly the native language in these nations. Following such a trend and to cope with advancements in science and technology, English is taught as either a second or a foreign language in almost all parts of the world. There are reports that over 80 percent of the published materials in the world are in English. People around the world need to keep abreast of the new developments in various areas of science, politics, economy, etc. Therefore, people feel the urge to learn the language of international communication as rapidly and accurately as possible.

Different countries in the world have been investing a considerable amount of time, money, and energy in order to provide the facilities needed

for individuals around the world to learn English in order to be able to communicate with people around the world. Furthermore, all nations have been seeking efficient ways of helping people to learn English within a reasonable period of time and with an acceptable degree of fluency. To accommodate the needs of the practitioners, scholars have been trying to devise effective ways of teaching English. Regardless of the success or failure of the plethora of methods and procedures that have been designed for language teaching around the world, it has become clear that no single prescription exists for all the ills of the complex task of teaching and learning a foreign or second language. It is now an agreed-upon principle that many factors, other than the teaching method itself, contribute to the success or failure of a particular methodology.

This means that a particular teaching method would be successful if the effects of other factors are taken into account. For instance, the purpose of learning, the needs of the learners, the affective factors regarding both learners and teachers, the political, social, and economic conditions of a country, educational facilities, and many other factors influence the efficiency of a particular method in a particular context. Therefore, the findings of research, developments in theory, and recommendations made thereof, though valuable, should not be taken for granted. In fact, it has been an unfortunate case in the past to assume that if a method works well in a particular context, it would necessarily succeed in other contexts as well. It is common knowledge that not only every context requires its own methodology, but also every individual might need his/her own style and strategy to learn a language conveniently.

By the same token, as one single method may not prove fruitful for all contexts, a single textbook on methodology may not prove appropriate for all contexts either. A particular textbook would succeed if the conditions of the context of instruction were taken into account. Despite the fact that there exist some well-designed books by famous and popular authors in the

market, adding another book on methodology should not be assumed redundant. It should be born in mind that every textbook is written with a certain context, certain learners, and certain variables in the minds of the authors. The point is that a book on teaching methodology cannot be taken as one-size-fits-all situations.

As far as teaching L2 is concerned, our country is no exception in this regard. All of us are familiar with language teaching-related textbooks by great authors such as Finnachiaro, Rivers, Chastain, Richards and Rodgers, Larsen-Freeman, and Brown. It is to be noted, however, that the textbook selection at different universities depends, to some extent, on the teacher's previous background knowledge as well as his/her personal taste. This is precisely why students graduating from different universities often do not share common core knowledge about methodology in TEFL. Therefore, we have tried our best in this book to rectify this imbalance. We have aimed at incorporating, in as simple a language as possible, much of the necessary information to provide students across the nation with a solid grounding of the major issues in TEFL. This should not imply, by any means, that this book could replace the existing books on the market. On the contrary, in our quest to learn and reflect more on methodology and various humanistic aspects of language teaching and learning, we will have to embrace the excellent textbooks that are available on the market to further our knowledge in the field beyond the basics of language teaching and learning covered in this introductory book.

This book, however, has certain features the explanation of which might be helpful to the readers. Firstly, every effort has been made to use as simple a language as possible because we believe that the complexity level of the language of the textbook should measure up to the English proficiency level of the average undergraduate student in this country. We have learnt through experience that frequent reference to the dictionary by students is time-consuming and a major source of boredom and frustration. Therefore, we

have done our best, to the extent possible, to lessen the burden and make reading the book as convenient as possible.

Secondly, we have incorporated and introduced a reasonably efficient and effective amount of materials to familiarize the learners with fundamental theoretical perspectives in TEFL. We believe that in the absence of a sound understanding of the theories underlying teaching methodology, a systematic work on the practical aspects of language teaching will not be fruitful. To this end, the major theories introduced here follow a chronological order. That is, they begin with the early days of the grammar translation method and extend to the present communicative methods. A relatively comprehensive background in language teaching theories will ultimately enable the learners to frame their own preferences regarding a particular method or a combination of methods.

Thirdly, we have aimed at dealing with topics that directly relate to the learners' immediate needs at the undergraduate level. Materials deemed unnecessary are avoided due to time constraints imposed by a 4-credit course in the universities. We are convinced that this textbook can be conveniently covered in a 16-week semester period. We hasten to add, however, that the materials are recommended to be presented in the order that appear in the book, since the ordering is based on our experiences in teaching the course at different universities and with different groups of students.

Fourthly, the book includes certain unconventional exercises at the end of each chapter. These exercises aim at consolidating the learnt materials and providing the learners with safeguards to monitor their comprehension of the materials. In other words, the unconventional exercises provide the learners with the opportunity to make sure that they can (a) demonstrate their comprehension of the concepts, (b) describe the major points of the materials in each chapter, (c) discuss the controversial issues in the field with their peers, and (d) apply the principles of the methods they study to the cases that are introduced in the form of scenarios extracted from real-life experiences.

The Organization of the Book

The book is organized around historical developments and trends in TEFL methodology. Therefore, it is divided into four sections. Section One is devoted to the clarification of certain important topics that we believe are essential to understanding and then consolidating major principles of different methods of language teaching. It is our strong belief that a firm grasp of these fundamental issues will facilitate the students' understanding of the principles of a given method. Chapter 1, which deals with the basic concepts related to language, language learning, and language teaching, is to accomplish this goal. It is at the level of providing the learner with simple definitions of complex concepts in the field. The major objective of this chapter is to provide the learners with a common understanding of the major concepts.

Undoubtedly, one of the mysterious accomplishments of human beings is the easy and natural acquisition of their mother tongue. It has always been an intriguing question among the scholars as to how a child acquires a first language without much of an effort and instruction. The question whether the processes of L1 and L2 acquisition are the same or not has always been one of the controversial issues in the field. Understanding the processes of first language acquisition would help practitioners to identify the nature of the activities involved in L1 acquisition and attempt to employ similar activities in the context of L2 learning to facilitate the process. In fact, the developments in L1 acquisition and the correspondence between the processes of L1 and L2 acquisition have had significant effects on the formulation of language teaching methods. Therefore, to provide the students with the principles and procedures of the first and second language acquisition and learning, a brief account of the theories of L1 and L2 acquisition and learning is given in Chapter 2.

The similarities and differences between the first language of learners and the second language they intend to learn have significant contributions to

the implementation of a particular method of teaching. Some scholars recommend the use of the mother tongue in class, while others frown upon such an activity. In order to be able to take an appropriate position on the issue, the teachers should be equipped with the ways of comparing and contrasting the characteristics of the mother tongue of the learners and those of the language they want to learn. This background would help the teachers to decide on how, when, and to what extent they can and should effectively use the mother tongue of the learners in class. Furthermore, understanding the nature of the errors made by the students plays an important role in the procedures of language teaching. Whether the errors are due to interference from the learners' mother tongue or they are the natural outcome of the complexities of the target language would enable the teachers to deal with the errors systematically and effectively. To this end, Chapter 3 is devoted to contrastive, error, and discourse analyses in the context of language teaching.

Section Two deals with the topics related to the early developments in the field of methodology. Concepts such as approach, method, and technique, which are the defining terms in methodology courses, are treated in Chapter 4. A major reason for the inclusion of this chapter is to provide a chance for the students reading the book to share common definitions of the major concepts in language teaching methodology. There has been confusion on the use of these concepts in the field. Some scholars have used these concepts interchangeably, while others have made clear distinctions among them. Therefore, it seemed necessary to clear the confusions regarding different terminologies used for methods of teaching, right at the beginning of the discussion.

When common definitions are introduced and a workable framework is developed among the students, a brief account of the history of the methods is provided. In chapter 5, an attempt is made to provide the readers with a clear picture of the methods in the field. The approach taken here is to help the students understand the interrelationship of the methods without being

forced to memorize it. The connections are introduced within a network of relationships regarding the principles of the methods. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to introducing what is referred to as traditional and modern methods, respectively. Of course, the classification made is for the sake of convenience. Traditional methods include the grammar translation, direct, and reading methods that are believed to have started without any firm theoretical or scientific foundations. When the fields of linguistics and psychology appeared to influence the field of language teaching methodology, the audiolingual and then cognitive methods emerged as the consequences of implementing the principles of these fields in language teaching.

Section Three deals with the methods that appeared after the cognitive method though their principles are rooted in cognitive theories. These methods, referred to as innovative methods, are often categorized into two groups. One group, presented in Chapter 8, includes the methods that are rooted in psychology. Another group, presented in Chapter 9, covers the methods closely associated with the theories of second language learning and acquisition. Chapter 10 deals with the notional-functional approach, which is the starting point for focusing on communication in language teaching. Finally, Chapter 11 covers what is popular nowadays as post-method era or communicative approach to language teaching.

Last but not least, Section Four is devoted to the issues which we believe are so important that no method can succeed without paying due attention to them. Chapter 12 is an introduction to the variables influencing language learning and language teaching. These factors are beyond the selection of any particular method; they are, in fact, method-independent. Finally, Chapter 13 is an attempt to provide teachers with the procedures and principles of a lesson plan. Without a clearly designed and detailed lesson plan, no matter what method is used in class, it will be difficult to manage the instructional context and achieve the objectives of the instruction.

To claim, however, that this textbook is flawless and immune to criticism is outright shortsightedness. On the contrary, all textbooks on teaching methodology need to be consulted to gain a comprehensive view of a field of study as complicated as teaching methodology. We, as the authors of this book, however, can claim that our book is somewhat different, because we think we have had a fresh look at the issues in language teaching methodology with the Persian students' needs in mind. Finally, we will appreciate comments from our intellectual teachers and readers, which may prove to be invaluable for future improvement of the textbook.

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