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## МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПРОЦЕССА ПОДГОТОВКИ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЕЙ НЕЯЗЫКОВОГО ВУЗА К ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ УЧЕБНОГО ПРОЦЕССА НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

Научная статья

Мерхелевич Г.В.\*

Учебно-методический комплекс иностранных языков АРПИ, Донецк Донецкая Народная Республика;  
Донецкий национальный университет Донецк Донецкая Народная Республика

\* Корреспондирующий автор (info[at]arpi.com.ua)

### Аннотация

В настоящей статье рассмотрены методы обучения преподавателей вуза иностранному языку с целью их подготовки к организации полноценного обучения студентов на иностранном языке неязыковыми дисциплинам их специализации. Приведены психологические и педагогические ресурсы, применение которых позволило успешно провести подготовку целого ряда учебных кафедр университета к переходу на обучение иностранных студентов на английском языке по всем учебным дисциплинам, включенных в состав образовательной программы вуза.

Описанные в статье методологические подходы являются универсальными, вследствие чего применимы для обучения преподавателей любых неязыковых специальностей с целью их подготовки к организации учебного процесса на любом иностранном языке.

В статье приведены результаты сравнения методики обучения и учебно-методических материалов, используемых на Западе с таковыми, которые применялись и применяются в странах ближнего зарубежья. Рассматриваются в статье также другие психолого-педагогические подходы и методические приемы, опробованные автором и рекомендуемые при организации учебного процесса на иностранном языке. К таковым относятся перевод на английский язык материалов учебно-методического комплекса, а также дополнительные материалы, способствующие освоению международных норм и стандартов, относящихся в организации учебного процесса на английском языке.

**Ключевые слова:** английский, методика, обучение, овладение, подход, прием.

## LEARNING-CENTERED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO NON-NATIVE UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

Research article

Merkhelevich G.V.\*

The ARPI ELT & Translation Agency, Donetsk, Donetsk People's Republic;  
Donetsk National University (DonNU), Donetsk, Donetsk People's Republic

\* Corresponding author (info[at]arpi.com.ua)

### Abstract

This paper discusses methods that can be used to turn non-native university teachers into skillful foreign language users thereby enabling them to conduct classes on their particular subjects to students in a foreign language.

Also discussed are some resources that had been used to successfully prepare university professors from a few dozen faculty departments to start offering a full scale higher education programme in English.

The English language teaching approaches described in this paper are applicable for other foreign languages or with professionals of any specialization area. The West-developed and former USSR invented methodologies and teaching materials are compared.

This paper also touches upon other services rendered as applicable to delivering classes in a foreign language, The services are mostly related to the translation of academic forms to English and including international norms and standards in the academic courses of studies delivered.

**Keywords:** approach, English, learning, method, teaching, technique.

### Introduction and Case History

In 2002, the ARPI ELT and Translation Agency (hereinafter referred to as ARPI), managed by the author, entered into a 12-year agreement with the Donetsk National Medical University of Maxim Gorky. The main aim of the agreement was to train staff of the university to give lessons and render other medicine-centered education services in the English medium.

### Choosing the Teaching / Learning Experience To Follow

While making a decision on a methodological approach which would fit the objective of the project to the greatest extent possible, we had to consider it by its national, or geographical, origin first. That meant making a choice between two potential options, the one used in the West against that used by former U.S.S.R. countries. To minimize a risk of failure, the decision was made by comparative assessment of the average teaching approach effectiveness reached to date in each of the two geographical and educational areas.

#### ESL History Background

A reason for focusing first on the teaching experience gained by the West rather than that possessed by *non-native* educators was understanding that results reached by the Western educators have proved to be much more sound than those of their *non-native* colleagues historically reached to date, as the learning outcome.

While making the choice, we took into account the fact that ESL education had first been launched by the British Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was aimed at establishing communication in English with their *non-English speaking* colonies for functional purposes by making the English language a common tool for their communication [3]. Being no evidence of anybody's good will, but initiated by British government for exceptionally functional purposes, ESL education could in no way fail in getting the government-set goal reached.

Since that time, English has been spreading worldwide used as a second language. As a follow-up to the above language development, a new generation of ESL learners was formed by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as more and more Europeans were leaving for the United States. Flocking to the U.S.A. in millions, immigrants sought a working knowledge of the English language to survive. At that time, bilingual and *non-native* instruction of English popped up in schools across the United States.

As compared to the above, for nearly a century following the October Revolution in Russia that gave birth to the U.S.S.R., another methodology of foreign language teaching had been built and used throughout the nation. The foreign language teaching methods and methodologies, which had been developed and were still in use in former-U.S.S.R. (NIS) countries, were created in isolation from those where each particular foreign language taught in school was the mother tongue. This is probably one of the few reasons why no proper learning outcome has been achieved, on the average, in any of the NIS nations in question.

#### Choosing a Methodological Approach

The first step to get prepared for teaching the Medical University's teachers (*hereinafter referred to as* the learners) was choosing a methodological approach.

As stated by B. Kumaravadivelu, "knowing an L2 may be considered as having linguistic knowledge/ability and pragmatic knowledge/ability required to use the language with grammatical accuracy and communicative appropriacy", the main goal to be reached by teaching the learner English shall be looked at in terms of what (knowledge and/or skills) he/she has acquired rather than what and how well the teacher has been teaching him/her the language [4, p. 25].

In other words, the learner outcome/output is to be a main concern of those who provide the teaching, with the final result measured not only by quality and amount of knowledge of the language theory. It should also be measured by prior development of the learner's ability to communicate by understanding someone else's speech and by being understood when heard or listened to by someone else [4]. Another main concern is of psychological origin which is hard to be understood and therefore focused upon by native speakers. By that, the learner's ability to preserve and maintain the skills acquired in a *non-English* setting of his/her everyday life and living was meant. *Native-speaking* teachers of English as well as those of any other language they teach as foreign or second are very likely to pay no special attention to that problem due to their permanent stay within *English-speaking* environment. But *non-native* learners do not.

On the basis of the above, a choice was supposed to be made among the three methodological approaches to teaching English known by British and some other *native* educators rather than those developed and currently used by their *non-native* counterparts. The three approaches included: *language-centered methods*, *learner-centered methods*, and *learning-centered methods*.

Since the *language-centered methods* are those mainly concerned with linguistic forms they are looking on the language development to be provided more on an intentional than incidental basis, with learners concentrated mainly on linguistic features. As for the *learner-centered methods*, they "are those that are principally concerned with learner needs, wants, and situations" [4, p. 91]. Thus, these methods were found to be designed mostly to enable the learner to practice communicative notions/functions by participating in meaning-focused classroom activities. By this, the learners were allowed to make use of both their formal knowledge and functional skills to fill their communicative wants occurring in a non-classroom setting.

Lastly, the *learning-centered methods* of teaching/learning English were recognized to be aimed at creating opportunities for "open-ended meaningful interactions" between the learners "through problem-solving tasks in class" [4, p. 92]. These methods assume that "a preoccupation with meaning-making will ultimately lead to target language mastery" [4, p. 92]. Unlike the other two types of methods, the *learning-centered methods* are more incidental than intentional. Therefore, the latter was decided to be the approach of our choice.

#### Deciding on the Language of Instruction

While making a decision on whether or not the L2 learner mother tongue (*hereinafter referred to as* L1) should be partially used during the L2 instruction, we had to remember that there were two reasons why L2 shouldn't be used. Firstly, because this approach had historically proved its effectiveness for each of the former British colonies which were initially *non-English* speaking countries but were turned into fluent and competent L2 users. Among them, were India, Nigeria, Ghana and a number of other countries, each belonging to different mother tongues [6]. Another reason for not using L1 during L2 teaching was widespread, solid evidence of children's ability to acquire their L1, whatever the language is or whatever nation a child belongs to, without any other language used to assist their mother tongue development.

Since the role of L1 in L2 teaching/learning was still under discussion, another proof against L1 use referred to internal psychological mechanism and external emotional conditions of the learner's communication skills development. By that, creation and further maintenance of a monolingual setting in the classroom and beyond it was meant, with comfortable learner environment maintained to facilitate his/her gradual adaptation to the target language-based atmosphere. This was to be

exercised by removing psychological barriers to learning and developing ability of indirectly understanding the meaning of new phrases via teacher's and other learners' activities that accompany those phrases.

Anyway, it should be mentioned regarding L1 that this language was planned to be used as a means to provide the teacher and other educators involved, with feedback from the learners received immediately before the class and between the classroom hours, but in no way used during the classes. This was expected to be done by interview, teacher-to-learner and reverse view exchange discussions as well as by other activities where the learner's L1 was not yet strong enough to be of help, with more discussion on the issue given below.

### **Deciding on the Method and Methodology of Teaching**

With the decision on the methodological approach we arrived at in the *Choosing a Methodological Approach* section, our next step was to choose between both teaching methods and methodologies.

Since, as discussed earlier, that no L1 should be used during the entire process, an L2-based method had to be used. Therefore, the *Direct Method* (also called the *Natural Method*) was supposed to be applied, primarily because of its following features: (a) only target language is used; (b) meanings are communicated directly by associating speech forms with actions, objects, mime, gestures, and situations; (c) reading and writing are taught only after listening and speaking; (d) grammar is only taught inductively, i.e. without the learners being exposed to grammar rules as such. Thus, the *Direct Method* refrains from the way the learner's mother tongue was used.

Anyway, there was one thing to be taken into account regarding the language of instruction to be chosen, which means that since receiving a feedback from the learner during the whole process is crucial, it should be made in L1 before each particular class session has begun. The procedure was supposed to be limited by a brief discussion based on exchanging views with the learner(s), aiming at understanding his/her current mood and status, and answering yes/no questions at once, with "longer" problems he/she raised to be helped the learner with later. After a few minutes of such a discussion, the teacher has to get the class started by switching to the target (L2) language.

When chosen, the *Direct Method* was to be implemented in both classroom and outside-classroom areas by using appropriate techniques and procedures. A core classroom technique had to deal with pattern practice which also includes imitation activities. Another area to be covered by the Method, which usually appear to be missed by the Western educators, should fall within intervals between the classroom hours and, or days where the target language was supposed to be used for relaxation purposes, after the home assignment had been done. The reason why this *self-learning-for-pleasure* component of L2 learning process was usually missed or at least not considered to be of importance by *native* teachers turned out to be their being unable to put themselves into the *non-native* learners' shoes. Feeling no real need to artificially maintain their language knowledge and skills outside the classes due to their permanent stay in the *native* setting, the *native* educators happen not to be consciously aware that their learners had to build and continuously maintain the target language immediate environment on their own. This is a psychological part of the process which had to be treated as a native teachers' negative side.

### **Filling Gaps between What Textbooks Content and Methodology**

There is always discrepancy between *method* as a construct and *methodology* as a conduct, caused by *method*'s being an expert's notion derived from an understanding of the following theories: a theory of target language, as well as ones of its learning, and of its teaching. Being reflected in syllabus design and textbook production, *method* also contained recommended classroom procedures, and very rarely – *self-learning* approach giving birth to appropriate textbook-contained guidelines. As mentioned before, not those *outside-the-classroom* activities were meant by the latter, which were supposed to be limited to the textbook-based homework assignment. By the latter, an everyday self-learning activity-based programme was meant, intended for pleasure-based bringing the learner and the target language together. With this aim in mind, the language would be used in the learner's everyday life as the gateway to a cultural context within his/her area of a personal, sometimes even passionate, interest [3], [5].

A reason for getting the target language spread beyond the classroom physically and outside the teaching/learning process psychologically is to make English-language based learning a leisure part of the learner's everyday life. The activities may include reading *fiction books*, watching *videos*, listening to the *broadcast* and *TV programmes*, Internet *chatting*, and the like, held in a relaxed setting. Following this psychology-based methodological approach was thought to be nearly the only way for the learner to keep his/her English alive between the classroom hours and in the post-training future.

### **Exercising Progress and Efficiency Control over the Teaching/Learning Process**

To find effective ways to have the learner's outcome expectancies met we first had to consider the target language as a communication tool rather than just an academic discipline, with the latter approach being typical for the USSR's (formerly) and for the NIS's (currently) systems of education. In the meantime, to achieve the goal intended by our language-training project we had to enable the learners to master first skills and just then – knowledge of a fluent and competent English-language user. To continuously be confident of that we keep going the right way, certain data of the teaching process shall be monitored on the basis of intermediate learning results, with alterations or modifications made to it in a proper time and manner. Building a closed control system would suit the idea, with its operation being monitored and automatically corrected on a three-loop negative/positive stimulus-activated feedback basis.

The feedback loops were intended to present *psychological*, *pedagogic*, and *linguistic* component parts of the teaching/learning process, with the data coming via each particular loop to be obtained from different sources. Among them were teacher-to-student pre-class discussions, the data withdrawn from appropriate questionnaire forms filled by students at least on a quarterly basis, various test work assessment, some indirect data obtained via casual and/or intended observations, and the like. The results collected had to be processed and analysed in order to be further turned into a following impulse of methodological correction applied to the system input. All the above required a team-based regularity, with not only the teacher and learners but also teacher trainer and analysts involved.

The team approach in doing the above procedures seems to be unusual for *English-speaking* educators who typically consider the teacher as both the only decision maker and teaching resource. Following that *one-man-show* way might have put us at risk of losing control over the process due to be too much dependent upon the teacher's individual features, views and

qualities, unaware of the work progress, thus being unable to make necessary altering interventions in the process. As a result, failure to arrive at a proper learner's output might be very likely to occur.

Use of the closed control system allowed us to monitor, maintain and improve quality of the teaching process, with the feedback helping to make required adjustments to the teacher's activities, exercised on the basis of the learning outcome analysis.

### **Dividing Labour and Splitting Responsibilities between Non-Native and Native Teachers**

Discussing and determining roles of the teacher and learner in the language teaching/learning process, we also had to define features and qualities to be possessed by the language teacher as the leading party of the process. To be more specific, pluses and minuses of both *native* and *non-native* teachers had to be identified, with further developing and offering a suggestion concerning their roles in the whole teaching/learning process. On the basis of the above, we had to guess what features and qualities we found to be most important and crucial for successfully bringing the learners to the expected output, and which of them are likely to be possessed by an average *native* and *non-native* teacher. Further on, we had to decide on who our teaching team should consist of.

Focusing on that issue, most important components of the learner's outcome shall be felt, identified and formulated.

According to B. Kumaravadivelu, there is "the carefully cultivated belief that, when it comes to teaching English as a second/foreign language, somehow, *native* speakers are far superior to *non-native* speakers, in spite of the latter's *expertise* and *experience* in learning and teaching the English language" [4]. As a follow-up to the above, he states that it was common knowledge that most candidate learners "even prefer to hire semi-qualified *native speakers* over fully qualified *non-native speakers*" [4]. Since either of the two teacher categories have both strong and weak sides we were facing a problem of choosing between the two options and to reason the one to be chosen. While giving our comments upon the above-mentioned, we had to note that those whom B. Kumaravadivelu referred to as "the fully qualified *non-native speakers*" usually turned out to be not qualified enough to be able to teach the language they are thought to be qualified in. A reason for our being doubtful about its being true is based on the rule that anybody who decided to be a language teacher shall first become the language user, but actually it does not necessarily or always happens that an average language user can be a good teacher of the language. With the above in mind, we as those who live in a non-English speaking area also had to recognize that those whom the Western educators call as fully qualified *non-native* teachers do not actually possess all the language teaching qualities to an extent expected by the *native* speakers.

On the basis of the above we could argue that those considered as "fully qualified *non-native* teachers" were not actually qualified to the full, or at least, necessary extent because of two causes. Firstly, because the textbooks *non-native* teachers studied their English with as students were written by *non-native* writers and therefore contained serious linguistic mistakes, unidiomatic word combinations and some other imperfections. Secondly, because of the *non-native* teachers' too small vocabularies due to containing only words and phrases used in the textbooks the teachers were taught as university students and are teaching with as language teachers. For the above reason, we in *ARPI* developed practice to employ and use as teachers the university immediate graduates to help them growing professionally as teachers under strict supervision and with guidance of *ARPI*'s qualified teacher trainers, gradually turning them into English-language users.

To have done the teaching in a proper manner to us should mean, as already mentioned above, the learner's absolute autonomy, in the end, from any necessity of seeking his/her teacher's and/or anybody else's assistance while working on any English-language spoken or written information. This was the ultimate goal we had to reach in order to prove that our teaching venture had been performed successfully and in both a fair and honest manner towards the learner. Having the learner's autonomy reached would not only refer to the degree of language skills and knowledge possession, but also to emotional part of the learning outcome, with the latter to be formed via pleasure-based absorbing of new information, done on a regular basis and within area of the learner's personal interest which has nothing to do with his/her professional activity.

Thus, making habitual to get relaxed by using English as gateway to new pleasure-generating and relaxation-intended information will allow the former learner to keep the language alive that, in turn, will keep him able to use his language skills and knowledge for professional purposes, when and where required. By this, special importance of the psychological, or emotional, part of the matter should be clearly felt, understood and shown.

To conclude, we had to remember that the most important things related to the learner's getting a fluent command of a foreign language being acquired are those of psychological and emotional origin, with anything else being of much lower priority, even if it goes about the language knowledge and/or skill gained. Another core outcome-relevant thing to be psychology-based is to avoid losing the skills and knowledge acquired, during the class-free time intervals, by filling part of them with the language used for pleasure and relaxation purposes.

Getting back to the issue of learner's autonomy we had to recognize that in order to enable the learner to reach that condition, combined efforts of *native* and *non-native* teachers would be used. With their fluent speech and based-on-it *native* speakers' ability to build and maintain a comfortable L2-based atmosphere, *native* speakers were decided to be perfectly suitable for the second ("round-table" group discussions) and third (speaking club pair and group discussions) stages of the learner's communication skills development. The above two stages had been designed to follow, on one-at-a-time basis, each of 4-to-5 class series of the first-stage pattern-practice classes conducted by *non-natives* in the task-based instruction manner. It was realized, that the pattern practice classes were intended for developing learner's *receptive* capacities for understanding speech meanings on the basis of the speech-accompanying actions, with development of the learner's productive (i.e. speaking) skills to follow.

Those activities were governed by *non-native* teachers whose classroom input was mainly based on the materials which were contained by the core textbooks included in each particular course of studies. With Stage 2 being a set of the "round table" discussion sessions to be led by a *native* teacher, stage 3 referred to sessions of the group- and pair-based communication development, each based on dialogues and/or interviews held with *native* teachers *as well as* with other *native* and/or *non-native* speakers used as interlocutors.

In other words, the role of the *native* speakers, not necessarily as teachers, was to be engaged in revising and further improvement of the learners' understanding and speaking skills, aiming at getting lowered and finally broken the language barriers suffered by the learner.

Our general approach to understanding and describing reasonable role of *native* and *non-native* teachers was based upon common knowledge that the *native* teachers have to continuously use their language, taught to ESL learners as foreign, because of its being their only means of communication. *Non-native* language teachers' area of the L2 language application is to a great extent limited to their use of the language for their classroom activities, with no ways of possible widening area of the language use beyond the classroom having anything to do with any natural need or life demand of theirs. Therefore, naturally, the average *non-native* language teacher is not likely to be as strong language user as his/her *native* counterpart is.

While having a much better command of the English language than that of an average *non-native* teacher, the *native* speakers nevertheless would not be involved in textbook-based activities and teaching grammar, each preferred to be responsibilities of the *non-native* teachers whose knowledge of the language grammar proves sufficient for that purpose. Still other area which falls within the *non-native* teacher's responsibility is the emotional part of the language learning, which would not be directly based on the teaching process and classroom material input. That area refers to filling time gaps between any neighbouring classroom classes by getting the learner encouraged to learn through the English language whatever information he/she likes or wishes to, in a relaxed setting.

Since that type of activity has nothing to do with any mandatory elements of the teaching-based learning process, such as the classroom activities and doing relevant home assignments, a special emotional mood should be developed with the learner to make him/her encouraged to willingly stay with English by using it as a means of access to the information of personal interest rather than being treated as a subject to study. Being both a very important and sensitive part of the whole learning process, this component is believed to be within a better reach for a *non-native* teacher who previously practiced learning things of his interest through English as a second language.

To be successful in his endeavour to develop with a new role of English in the learner's everyday life, the *non-native* teacher can ultimately manage to succeed in persuading him/her to start doing it on a regular, everyday basis, by using additional means of explanation, including the mother tongue. It would allow the teacher to persuasively share with the learner cases of his own excitement, with the learner's target language being too weak to help him fully understand the teacher's feelings and pleasure.

While considering teaching roles of *native* and *non-native* speakers we had to keep in mind that an average *native* speaker/teacher used to use the English language as the only means of oral and written communication in his/her everyday life, including their teaching practice.

In the meantime, the language teachers to whom English is a second language always have to *purposely*, or *intentionally*, create the English-language based setting around oneself or *intentionally* enter any English-based information area which exists outside his/her everyday life and living. For that reason, it was highly likely that the *non-native* teachers were mainly weaker foreign-language users than those to whom the language is the mother tongue. Therefore, the above had been taken into account while distributing pedagogic responsibilities between the two teaching parties: *natives* and *non-natives*. Since, in our case, the learner outcome mainly consists of *unconscious* acquisition and *conscious* learning of the English language, we arrived at the following scheme of the teaching labour division.

**For unconscious language acquisition:**

Stage 1

*Teacher(s):* non-native

*Activities:* pattern practice, with culture elements incorporated;

Stage 2

*Teacher(s):* native

*Activities:* round-table discussions and more-culture based communication-club discussions.

**For conscious language learning:**

*Teacher(s):* non-native

*Activities:* studying grammar structures already well-felt and understood via using patterns during the role play in Stage 1.

*Summary*

On the basis on the above and mentioned earlier, the following findings were arrived at about most effective division of labour between *native* and *non-native* teachers and reasonable combination of their responsibilities. Special importance of culture in the teaching/learning process was proved true.

**Conclusions:**

1. No single language teacher shall be a decision maker in teaching and kept responsible for the learning output. It is supposed to be exercised on a team basis, with each single teacher being a tool of putting into action of the methodic approach, method and methodological techniques to be designed monitored on a tem-basis.

2. During the teaching process, its quality shall be monitored, modified, if necessary, and maintained on a feedback-based control system.

3. The core principle of language learning is one of psychological nature and focuses on the learner's acquiring full autonomy in the target language use for professional purposes through making habitual its regular use for pleasure.

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**Conflict of Interest**

None declared.

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