Combining Teaching Approaches: A Review of the Literature and an example of possible combinations to encourage cooperative learning

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Abstract:

   Generally, there are two main tendencies in modern language teaching methodologies: Methods that are centered on the teacher and give him/her the most important role in the class, as opposed to methods that focus on the students by giving them more responsibilities in their own learning, allowing the teacher to meet the individual needs of each student.As a result of these differences in beliefs, principles and practice, language teachers find themselves in a dilemma while they try to decide on which method to put into action inside their classrooms. This decision is to be based on knowledge about the existing approaches, the needs of the learners and the objectives of the teaching act. Since no approach fits all the teaching contexts and no single approach can be used alone, it is essential to combine different teaching approachesthat can help generate a teaching method able to develop the learners' four skills.

Key words: Teaching methods, teaching approaches, EFL and communication competence.

1. Introduction

Commonly, it is believed that no single method can meet the needs and the goals of all learners and syllabi. Following the same stream, we will make use of CA, IA, TBA and DAA to improve the students' oral and written communicative competence, self-confidence and vocabulary learning.

The Communicative Approach (CA) is an umbrella term that includes the methodologies which aim at teaching the students how to communicate in an effective way: It focuses on the learners' autonomy and encourages cooperative learning and oral performance. However, we do not support one of the basic principles of the CA, which is the focus on unconscious learning, since the aim ofcombining different approaches is to get the English language teaching out of the circle of learning grammar rules and rehearsing long lists of isolated words. Therefore, we do not consider language learning as "a natural process, similar to the way children develop ability in their first language . . . subconscious process

when students are not aware of the fact they are acquiring language but are using the language for communication" (Krashen 1987: 10). Thus, we do not sustain the notion, suggested by the CA, which talks about acquisition instead of learning, and explains that learners should develop a feeling for accuracy even though they are not able to give an explanation of what rule has been violated. That is, acquisition is not always possible, and conscious learning is beneficial when accuracy is the basic aim of the language user. Summing up, it is not enough to be selective when deciding on which approach to follow, more than that, it is essential to be eclectic by following only the adequate principles of that approach. In this case, the basic principles of the CA selected to be followed in the development of a communicative syllabus are the following:

- Emphasis on creative tasks that provide opportunities to learn and rehearse.
- Emphasis on active modes of learning, including pair work and group work.
- Considering errors as a natural part of the learning process.
- Increase the students' talking time.
- Use authentic resources to give the students a meaningful input as a model to follow.

Consequently, the teaching act is to provide the learners with authentic input, which can give them an opportunity to rehearse the introduced expressionsand communication strategies (CSs). No importance should be given to errors as long as they do not affect the efficiency of the message, and the assessment hasto be done orally by analyzing the level of efficiency of the produced communication to evaluate both speaking and listening as interrelated skill. To make the assessment complete and

reliable it is essential to check the learners' evolution in reading and writing by focusing on each skill at a time.

Another approach to be taken into considerationis the Inductive Approach (IA). In the context of foreign language teaching (FLT) induction is the process that goes from specific to general, namely the real language use, from which a number of patterns and generalizations emerge. According to Rivers, induction happens when the student ". . . evolves a rule . . ." from the given examples ". . . with the help of his teacher . . ."(1975: 105). This means that the student is exposed to various examples, often embedded in a context, from which s/he has to discover and formulate a rule. Other scholars define the IA to foreign language teaching as occurring only when the students have to work out the rules on their own, by doing some designed activities as Dulay, Burt and Krashen explain: "when practice precedes the explanation, and when its goal is to help the students discover . . . the form of the rule" (1982: 17). Generally speaking, the IA is based on the elicitation of the target rules from the students following guided and well-organized steps that can be either examples or activities.

Studies conducted to compare Inductive and Deductive Approaches confirm that the IA is more appropriate for young language learners than the Deductive Approach (Rivers, 1975). However, a limitation of the IA is that it does not take into consideration the learning styles and strategies of the individual learners. Therefore, during the planning and implementation of any lesson plan there has to be a great emphasis on giving the students the opportunity to discover the target of the lesson. Then, to assure that all the learners are following the lesson. Time for practice and correction aiming to support the learning and benefit every individual student in the teaching process is also essential.

The Task-Based Approach (TBA) has recently become an important element in syllabus design, classroom teaching and learner assessment. As Nunan (2004) states, this approach has been given more importance in curriculum design, thanks to all the changes that the CA caused in both methodology and syllabus design. Theorists consider CA and TBA as strongly related approaches in such a way that the latter is defined as the realization of the former. Nunan (2004), in his comparison between communicative language teaching (CLT) and the Task-Based Approach, holds that "CLT is a broad, philosophical approach to the language curriculum that draws on theory and research in linguistics, anthropology, psychology and sociology . . . Task-based language teaching represents a realization of this philosophy at the levels of syllabus design and methodology"(Nunan 2004: 10).

Littlewood (2004) also stresses the relationship between the Task-Based Approach and the Communicative Approach, by analyzing the type of tasks or activities and the tendency of both approaches to move from focus on form to focus on meaning. In this respect, task-based learning can be regarded as a development of the Communicative Approach since the communicative tasks in the Task-Based Approach serve not only as a major component of the methodology but also as organizational units of a course. These units provide a link between outside-classroom and inside-classroom pedagogy. At the interface with outside-classroom reality, communication tasks enable the course to be organized around 'chunks of communication' which reflect students' needs, interests and experiences. At the interface with inside-classroom pedagogy, these tasks provide an organizing focus for the individual components of language (structures,

vocabulary, and so on) that students have to learn in order to communicate (Littelwood 2004: 324).

This explanation of the objectives of the Task-Based Approach shows the continuity between the Task-Based Approach and the Communicative Approach. The TBA aims at teaching both form and meaning, and provides a meaningful input that enables the learners to fulfill the task successfully. This makes the TBA a modern one that encourages learner autonomy and enhances performance. However, it is worth mentioning that the weakness of this approach lies in the fact that its success is highly based on the willingness and interest of the learners, which is not always guaranteed.

All the above principles are clearly communicative and reflect the interrelationship that exists between the TBA and the CA. However, they also show that one of the limitations of the TBA is not giving the students a wide exposure to the target language. Consequently, it is highly advisable to design or at least select lessons with a variety of authentic input that includes a vast range of contexts.

Notwithstanding, the TBA has its own principles, from which we draw the following: A Need-Based Approach to context selection; an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language; the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation; the provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself; an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning and the linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom.

The above goals are attainable because the TBA provides a good opportunity of production by relating what the language user learns inside the classroom to his/her everyday life. This is due to the fact that a task in the TBA is regarded as <<. . . the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between >> (Long, 1985: 89). That is to say, tasks are transformed from the real world to classroom to become pedagogical tasks, with the aim of making language teaching more communicative through going beyond the practice of language for its own sake.

Discourse Analysis (DAA) is another basic approach in this combination. It is supposed to inspire the whole teaching act by focusing on teaching language above sentence level. It is to be considered in its widest sense, including different genres. This approach can serve language teaching in terms of forms and functions through the examination of language use inside the classroom. It involves the study of both spoken interaction and written texts. As Douglas states <<it identifies linguistic features that characterize different genres as well as social and cultural factors that aid in our interpretation and understanding of different texts and types of talk >> (2001: 1). This definition of discourse analysis holds that this area of applied linguistics is concerned with the study of the relationship between the language and its context. It aims at making the learners aware of what language is and how it is used. By combining DAA and IA we intend to make the students *discourse analysts*, who explore natural language use in authentic environments (Celce-Murcia &Olshtain 2000; Mc Carthy& Carter 1994; Riggenbach 1999). In this way, students can appreciate and understand the specific discourse of a given genre or speech event and the sociolinguistic factors that determine linguistic variation across settings and contexts. Since the adopted approach affects the presentation of the different instances of

language inside the classroom, it is essential to follow some of its basic principles presented by many researchers like Mc Carthy and Carter (1994):

- *The contrastive principle*: Understanding of how language operates in a particular situation.

- *the continuum principle*: The series of texts which are produced by a speech community do not constitute clearly separate compartments but a continuum.

- *theinferencing principle*: Any sample of real language carries a cultural load which must be taken into account in order to make sense of it.

- *thefamiliar to unfamiliar principle*: Effective learning takes place when the starting point is discourse practices with which the learners are familiar, to continue in later stages with discourse practices which are more complex, elaborated and decontextualized.

- *thecritical principle*: Language should also be presented as a means of manipulation and creation of ideology. By making the students aware of the power of language we are helping them to become free educated citizens. In other words, the DAA is not only concerned with the language but also with its use and usage. It suggests dealing with language as a whole, starting by comprehending and later producing appropriate language.

The above mentioned principles of the DAA can effective in achieving the following: To develop the students' communicative competence; to

introduce language variation through authentic data; to enable the students to negotiate intentions and to help them develop the ability of meaning interpretation.

Although it is essential for each teacher to decide on the methodological principles that will guide his/her teaching and fit the different contexts of teaching he/she may be engaged in; it is still not enough to ensure success in the teaching/learning process. It is crucial to be well informed about the existing taxonomies and metacognitive learning processes related to the target contents.

2. Speaking in a Second/Foreign Language

Speaking is perceived as the use of a sequence of words to express a specific notion taking into consideration the rules of the target language. It is generally considered as the most important part of communication, without neglecting the value of the act of listening in making any communicative situation a successful one. Developing the learners' speaking skills has become fundamental in language teaching, since mastering a language includes improving the four basic skills as mentioned in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning, Assessment* (CEFR 2001) (understanding "listening and reading", speaking "spoken interaction and spoken production" and writing). Although teaching the spoken form has been put aside during most of language teaching history, it has recently been regarded as an accepted and desired objective in the field. Actually, speaking is no longer ". . . the Cinderella of the language modes . . ." (Howe 1994: 44), since we are in the era of teaching languages as a whole, taking into consideration the needs of the learners and adapting the objectives to the teaching

context. Speaking can be divided into"various dimensions of different speaking events in order to describe different speaking genres" (Harmer 2010: 343), such as interactive, non-interactive, planned, unplanned transactional (focusing on the exchange of information) and interpersonal types (serving to establish and maintain social relations). These genres have different functions and uses which normally require a diversity of teaching methods in order to deal with each genre appropriately and to cope with the different assumptions that language users have.

3. The Spoken Form in the Classroom

Most teachers feel reluctant when the subject to teach is spoken language. It seems problematic to decide on a specific spoken variety, on the type of structures, on the nature of the spoken resources, on the communicative situation to make the input meaningful to the learners, and then, on the functions the students would be interested in giving to the learnt subject matter. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information that needs a great deal of practice and dedication to be fulfilled successfully. All the aforementioned characteristics of the spoken language make it essential for the learners to know how to produce grammatical structures, pronunciation and vocabulary, but also they are expected to understand when, why and in what ways to produce the language (Florez 1999: 1). It is difficult for teachers to control the continuous changes the spoken form is experimenting lately because of the social, political and economic movements. These changes greatly affect the "international languages" or what we normally call "Lingua Franca", as a medium of interaction between communities, and the functions the spoken form may have in explicit contexts.

The recent trends in language teaching focus on bringing the outside world into the classroom, and on selecting adequate materials and activities that can satisfy the needs of the learners, who highly influence the teacher's objectives and methodology (Scrivener 2005). However, it is also strongly believed that the general context of teaching second or foreign languages can be fused into the teaching of languages to speakers of other languages in general as Harmer explains: "With the picture shifting like this, it makes sense to blur the distinction and say, instead, that whatever situation we are in, we are teaching ESOL (English to speakers of other languages)" (2008: 20). By this argument we are not claiming that the other components of the teaching contexts are not as equally important as the students are, but we are arguing the fact that the starting point of any act of teaching should always be the students, for it to be successful.

4. Teaching Speaking in a Lingua Franca

Recently, studies on language teaching and learning are introducing a new notion based on what in sociolinguistics is defined as 'Lingua Franca'. This term, which was first recorded in English in 1678, can be defined as a mixed language composed mostly (80%) of Italian with a broad vocabulary drawn from Turkish, French, Greek, Arabic, Portuguese and Spanish. It was in use throughout the Eastern Mediterranean as the language of commerce and diplomacy in and around the Renaissance era. At that time, Italian speakers dominated seaborne commerce in the port cities of the Ottoman Empire. Franca is the Italian word for Frankish. Its usage in the term Lingua Franca originated from its meaning in Arabic and Greek, dating from before the Crusades and during the middle ages, whereby all Western Europeans were called Franks or 'Efranji' in Arabic and 'Phrankoi' in Greek during the times of the late Eastern Roman Empire.

Indeed, any language that goes beyond the boundaries of its original community and works as a means of communication between communities, with different mother tongues, can be described as a Lingua Franca.

Thus, English today is perfectly considered a Lingua Franca, or a global language, which includes numerous varieties suggested not only by its native speakers, but also created by its non-native speakers, who introduce different 'World Englishes' that should be taken into account at the time of selecting a variety to be offered to our students. There is no longer a limited native speaker model to follow, but a high and low proficiency level of speakers of English all over the world that is based on effective communicative skills as a rule to judge speakers' proficiency. Hence, the kind of English we select as teachers should be the one that satisfies the needs and the aims of our teaching context, as the contexts are unlimited and the 'Englishes' are numerous. During this new era of English as a Lingua Franca 'ELF' that includes all the existing 'Englishes' (EFL, ESL, EAP, ESP, ESOL . . .), accuracy has been a controversial concept that causes intellectual conflicts between those who focus on fluency as the basic competence, and those who stand against that model of teaching, considering it inappropriate for language learning purposes. To sum up, teaching speaking is a vast ground of choices that can be accommodated to any purpose, and the teachers' responsibility is either to select the adequate variety which fits the needs of his/her students, or to show them the 'pluricentricity' as a way of giving them the opportunity to recognize the different kinds of English themselves. This will enable them to form a general background knowledge, which may allow them to be effective users of English in different contexts. English is considered international

and so should be the teaching of this language as an international process, which can be adapted to any context, to cope with the needs of their users, avoiding all the boundaries (Harmer 2008: 21-22). In fact, as Des Fountain (1994) claims, the teaching/learning process is more productive if there is an opportunity of interaction inside the classroom and a certain level of interrelatedness between speech and learning.

While teaching/learning speaking both students and teachers deal with a tricky subject matter that needs specific resources, materials and activities. Consequently, not all teachers succeed in choosing adequate activities and methodology that can match the needs and capacities of a whole class since, as Johnson thinks, it is impossible to determine beforehand how students can perform orally in a given situation. According to him "we may have general expectations of them, but their talk may follow totally different but still relevant paths and patterns" (1994: 64).

Eventually, due to the actual standardization of academic practices and proficiency levels across the European countries, through educational policies and projects (Erasmus Exchanges, The Bologna Accords, The Context and Language Integrated Learning, The European Portfolio, The Comenius and The Socrates Program), learning languages, especially English, has been converted into a major necessity. Besides, learners express that their need to develop their speaking skills is harder to improve when compared to writing skills because of the limited opportunities of practicing communication inside the classroom. To unveil the mystery many researchers worked on communications strategies and their degree ofteachability as new aspects of FLT (Bachman, 1990; Canale and Swain, 1980 and Nakatani, 2010). Hitherto, the spoken form is still a

problematic area that requires more research and studies to decode the systematic characteristics of this competence for both learners and teachers to be able to deal with it by providing the best possible conditions.

4.1.Communication Strategies and Communicative Competence
Tarone defined communication strategies (CSs) as "a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (1981: 285). According to her, meaning structures include linguistic and sociolinguistic structures, and CSs do not make up part of the speaker's linguistic knowledge, but theybelong to his use of the TL. That is, communication strategies are considered to make up part of the communicative competence, which includes other three different components (grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence). They are believed to be put together through the strategic competence that is seen "as the capacity that relates language competence, or knowledge of language, to the language user's knowledge structures and the features of the context in which communication takes place. Strategic competence performs assessment, planning, execution and functions in determining the most effective means of achieving a communicative goal" (Bachman 1990: 107).

For Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence can be defined as the ability to use the linguistic system appropriately in a specific situation using linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. The difference between sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence is that in the first one the speaker respects the norms of the speech community with whom he is communicating; whereas, the second enables him to use certain strategies to compensate for his lack of knowledge.

The notion of strategic competence was recognized by an influential area of language education, The Council of Europe's *Common European*

Frameworkof Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment(CEFR 2001). It defines some of the student's abilities in using foreign languages and among these abilities, it tackles the communicative competence, which is described as being composed of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competence. Interestingly, strategic competence highly underpins the three competences as seen in the following extract of the CEFR:

> Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and social agents develop a range of competence. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various conditions and under various constraints to engage in language activities involving language processes to produce and/or receive texts in relation to themes in specific domains, activating those strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences (CEFR 2001: 10).

This is a wider sense of describing strategies than the linguistic and the communicative models, which consider communicative strategies as metacognitive functions that include planning, monitoring and evaluating both productive and receptive acts.

4.2. On the Teachability of Communication Strategies

The teachability of communication strategies has been a controversial topic for many decades. Therefore, many researchers have opted for strategy training as a substitution of the teaching act. The proponents of the notion that CSs are not teachable hold the fact that all the learners of a second or foreign language (SL/FL) already have their strategic competence built. That is, the cognitive mechanisms are already available in the repertoire of the CSs, and what students need is the language to shape them. For Kellerman, if a student shows that s/he is not a good

strategy user, this is due to his/her poor linguistic means that hinder his/her strategic behavior. Accordingly, he insists that "there is no justification for providing training in compensatory strategies in the classroom . . . Teach the learner more language and make the strategies look after themselves" (1991: 158).

Other researchers consider that the strategy training is essential, not with the aim of making the students use CSs, but with that of making them *better users of these strategies* (Dörnyei 1995; Faerch and Kasper 1983; Haastrup and Philipson 1983; Tarone 1984). Faerch and Kasper, for example, suggested teaching the learners CSs as a way of making them aware of their already existing strategies and guiding them towards the correct use of these communicative strategies. This idea introduced by Faerch and Kasper proved to be effective in many investigations conducted by different researchers in the field (Cohen 1998; Nakatani 2005; Nakatani 2010; O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Wenden 1999).

Therefore, many researchers, like Cohen (1998), support the notion of raising the learners' consciousness of the nature and the communicative potential of CSs, as well as, familiarizing the students with the CSs through illustrative examples that enable them to be more receptive and to make a better use of CSs. The strategy training as Cohen (1998) explains is:

> . . . predicated on the assumption that if learners are conscious about and become responsible for the selection, use, and evaluation of their learning strategies, they will become more successful language learners by . . . taking more responsibility for their own language learning, and enhancing their use of the target language out of class. In other words, the ultimate goal

of strategy training is to empower students by allowing them to take control of the language learning process (1998: 70).

Thus, since it is impossible to teach learners all the linguistic tools they might need in the future, it is essential to teach them how to deal with CSs to help them overcome, as McDonough states, "the possible breakdowns in communication and therefore keeping the channel of communication open. Their use should not be seen as an admission of failure but rather as an achievement" (1995: 82).

5. Writing in Second/Foreign Language

Writing is a means to create and communicate one's ideas and feelings; it helps students learn how to think critically and creatively, and to organize their ideas in a cohesive and flowing manner. It is "thinking-made tangible" (Dysthe 2001: 3) for both the reader and the writer to record, scrutinize and reuse. The writing process is identified as an individualized search for adequate words and expressions and joining them together to get the appropriate structure for the target reason. Although it was criticized by some philosophers as false art that would deviate students from the honest pursuit of truth, the sophists described it as a skill needed to manipulate the beliefs of others and to obtain power. However, for others writing was considered as a means to discover knowledge. Writing through history has been a controversial topic that has raised strong debates about the necessity and the usefulness of teaching this mysterious art.

Since the forties, studies on writing in English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) has seen a continuous movement of theories and approaches of teaching/learning writing that have tended to follow the changes of everyday life and the different functions composition has

gained throughout all these decades. Consequently, a succession of approaches and theories have dominated the teaching/learning of the written form and oriented the implementation of this skill inside the classroom. The Product-Based Approach (considers the written form as a textual product and a coherent organization of lexical elements by using the studied rules); the Process-Based (considers writing as a complex and individualized task which can be divided into five overlapping parts of a complex process that are repeated various times during the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing); and Genre Approach (emphasizes the contextualized teaching of writing by explaining the functions the written forms may have in the students' social life) are the most important approaches that orient the teaching of writing in the foreign or second language contexts.

5.1. Teaching Writing

Writing skills are harder to develop than other skills since they are more demanding and are not regarded as a simply "individually-oriented, inner-directed cognitive process, but as much as an acquired response to the discourse conventions . . . within particular communities" (Swales 1990: 4). The act of writing is individual but it has to fit within the social context to which it is directed, and it has to respect the cultural and intellectual norms set by the target language community. Thus, teaching writing to non-native writers requires detailed planning by the teacher in which s/he has to decide on the skill to be developed, the means of implementation and the appropriate topic to tackle which guaranties a high level of students' engagement. If the teacher manages to combine the previously mentioned characteristics in a lesson plan and integrate the target language culture as well as the supposed audience's expectations, he/she

will be sure of generating an atmosphere of effective and creative learning that leads language user to write with a 'readerly' sensitivity (Kern 2000). Teaching writing has reached a stage in which both the teacher and the learner should interact to create the input/intake. The goal of this is to relate the teaching of writing to the classroom and to the social context of the teaching/learning situation as pointed out by Bazerman: "we can no longer view writing as limited textual practice, understood only as the bounded rules of the page. Nor is writing to be understood only as the product of an isolated mind. . . writing is potentially responsive to and dependent on everything that is on the social stage" (1993: 9).

Keeping in mind that writing competence in the mother tongue is not always transferred automatically to the foreign language, though a minimal influence was empirically proved, the teacher should teach writing as a new area and avoid having great assumptions of what the students may do or know until they can prove the opposite. A good objective pre-assessment of the types of problems the learners have at the linguistic, functional and the procedural level is an essential starting point for teaching writing. According to Ellis, it is through analyzing learners' errors that we elevate "the status of errors from undesirability to that of a guide to the inner working of the language learning process" (Ellis 2000: 53).

5.2. Vocabulary
- **Principles of Vocabulary Teaching**

Vocabulary has always been given a certain level of importance in the teaching of second and foreign languages (SL/FL). Consequently, many theories about vocabulary teaching and learning were developed to improve the act of teaching/learning vocabulary either in isolation or as

part of the whole discourse. According to Wallace (1988) there is no *best* teaching method; teachers have to get a broader view of what vocabulary teaching entails, and take a proactive role in following both explicit and incidental vocabulary development. It is important to consider that vocabulary teaching should be based on long-term principles and high expectations to motivate the learners. This can be guaranteed only when the students are challenged in a positive way. Thus, teachers have to take into account that motivation may result easy to gain but extremely difficult to maintain. Therefore, vocabulary teaching activities should be designed in a way that makes them challenging but also feasible to the students. According to Wallace (1988) the principles of vocabulary teaching are:

- ➢ **Aims:** Decide on what to teach in term of number and concept.
- ➢ **Need:** Take into consideration the student's needs and expectations.
- ➢ **Frequent exposure and repetition:** Give time for assimilation through continuous

practice in different forms.

- ➢ **Meaningful presentation:** The use of clear and unambiguous denotation or reference.

These principles can be valid for any method and are useful in the selection of tasks. Nevertheless, it is obvious that those are not the only principles to follow. Some other important points can be added to these principles like: Using vocabulary in context to convey a complete message, introducing and practicing vocabulary in both oral and written forms, and having a continuous assessment of the target vocabulary to keep the student's mind active.

- How is Vocabulary Learnt?

Generally, knowing a word implies knowing the forms and the meaning of that word. In a more detailed definition, Harmer (2008) explains that knowing a word involves the abilities to know its:

- **Meaning:** Be able to relate the word to a specific object or concept.

- **Usage:** To know its collocations, metaphors and idioms, as well as style and register,

  and to be conscious of any connotations and associations that the word has.

- **Word formation:** To be able to spell and pronounce a word and its derivations

  correctly.

- **Grammar:** To use the word in its appropriate grammatical form.

- How is Vocabulary Memorized?

Researchers on the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and psycholinguists distinguished between three types of memory that learners make use of to remember words:

1. *Short-term store*: It can hold a limited number of items for very short periods of time. Learners make use of this memory to repeat what they have just heard. Therefore, this memory is not enough for vocabulary learning since learning a word involves more than just repeating it.

2. *Working memory*: It implies focusing on words and their collocations to be able to make use of them. This ability is believed to be a good predictor of language aptitude.

3. *Long-term memory*: It has an enormous capacity and its contents are lasting over time. Nevertheless, moving new knowledge to long-term memory requires a number of principles that Thornbury (2002) states as:

- *Repetition of encounters.*

- *Retrieval as another type of repetition.*

- *Spacing or splitting memory over a period of time.*

-*Pacing or giving the students enough time to do memory work individually.*

-*Use, or what Thornbury called "use it or lose it", is related to the use of words in a   meaningful way.*

-*Cognitive depth which implies making cognitive decisions about the word.*

- *Personal organizing that increases the possibility of learning the new items by making use of them in ones' own way and expressions.*

- *Imaging which is relating the words to a specific image.*

- *Mnemonics or tricks that the learners use to retrieve the stored items when necessary.*

-*Motivation that helps remember words.*

- *Attention without which it is extremely difficult, and even impossible to improve or memorize vocabulary.*

6. Assessment

All the previously mentioned methodological principles should be reflected in the assessment part of the course. To be more motivating teachers should give no importance to errors that do not affect the effectiveness of the message and that he exams should be valid (it tests what it is supposed

to), reliable (it gives consistent results) and feasible (it tests what has been taught, not new knowledge) (Harmer 2008).

To achieve this aim it is necessary to state the type of knowledge to be assessed (declarative, procedural and attitudinal), the type of task to be performed, to use clear rubrics that explain how the task should be fulfilled, and to set clear criteria for rating the students' performance through the use of analytic profiles. All in all, assessment has to vary depending on the objectives and the content of the teaching unit (CEFR 2001). So, there should be oral and written formative assessments conducted using pair work or group work inside and outside the classroom. Summative assessment is to be done following the same conditions of the formative one to avoid any intervening variables that may influence the students' performance.

7. Conclusion

If we are to help students develop their four skills, it is essential that we know how skills are learnt and the possible approaches that can help us generate aspecific teaching method for each context. I do believe this is possible and even essential from the initial stages of language teaching for teachers to equip their learners with the adequate input necessary to achieve their goals and needs. In other words, no syllabus could be effective and noteacher is competent if the teaching method that guides both is limited to develop part of the learners' skills. There is an absolute need to use a variety of teaching methods to absorb the needs of the learners in the goals of the teaching act for a harmonious and creative teaching of English to speakers of other languages. Throughout this work the focus has been on the fact that the teaching is learner-based and the teacher is a monitor who prompts and guides the learner's participation.

The whole work aims at encouraging the learner's autonomy and self-confidence in using both oral and written mediums. However, it is necessary to recognize that any teaching act has its own limitations and possible problems that are the results of different factors normally beyond the teacher's control. In this case, a specific reference should be made to the possible difficulties of working in groups outside the classroom. Students have other responsibilities and activities that may cause problems of time organization and, consequently, hinder the group work. It is also important to refer to some obstacles in terms of material because in many cases teachers are working in classes without Internet access or with a limited space that makes group work a tough task. In case the students have difficulties to work outside the classroom there will be a possibility of doing all the tasks inside the classroom (with a slight reduction in the number of tasks). In case the students have better conditions than the teacher expects there is also the possibility of working more hours outside the classroom to have constant contact with the language. Finally, it is essential to highlight the crucial role of the students' motivation and interest in what the teacher is sharing to make the teaching/learning act successful.

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