Tonya Kaushik

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Dr. Doina Kovalik

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Ch. 15: The Natural Approach

Key Words

1. <u>traditional approach</u> – language teaching approach based on the use of language in
    communicative situations without recourse to the native language or reference to
    grammatical analysis, grammatical drilling, or a particular theory of grammar

2. <u>natural</u> – when used in reference to the Direct Method: a way to emphasize that the
    principles underlying the method were believed to conform to the principles of
    naturalistic language learning in young children; when used in reference to the Natural
    Approach: a way to emphasize exposure to language in natural settings rather than
    practice using language

3. <u>input</u> – in the Natural Approach, exposure to language

4. <u>I + 1</u> – teaching concept that aims to increase student understanding by presenting them
    with structures slightly above the learner's present l

5. <u>acquisition vs. learning</u> – acquisition is the "natural" way to learn a second language that is
    parallel to the way children learn their first language; learning refers to a process in which
    students consciously learn rules about a language, usually in a formal classroom setting

Questions

1. This chapter focuses on the work of Stephen Krashen, but what made his research so ground breaking at the time?

2. How does simply being exposed to large quantities of words help L2 students understand how the language as a whole functions? How are students expected to grasp grammar and structure from exposure to words?

3. Since this approach borrows from so many other approaches and methods, what characteristics distinguish it from its predecessors?

4. This approach is designed to help beginners become intermediate speakers of a second language, but without a background in grammar, how does this approach provide beginners with a strong enough foundation to help them advance beyond the basics?

Observations

I think Krashen's work is overrated. From the chapter, it's clear that he has done a lot of research, but I'm not convinced his work is as ground breaking as the authors make it out to be. As a beginning student of TESOL methods, it appears to me that he simply combined many of the older approaches and gave them a new name. From the perspective of a former classroom teacher, Krashen's work seems like one of those fads that a school system adopts because some other school district in the state is also using it. I can't tell from this one chapter on his work why his research is seen as so fundamental to TESOL teaching today.

The sample procedure present on pages 189-190 contain techniques from several other approaches, but again, this sample lesson doesn't seem like something that would have an experienced teacher shouting, "Eureka!" Instead, it seems more like common sense teaching. You create a lesson using bits and pieces of methods from different sources in order to best teach

the students you have in class. I have adapted my own lessons over time to fit the needs of my

students, but I haven't created the "Kaushik Method" because doing this is just common sense.

Even new, fresh-out-of-college teachers know enough to realize you have to change lessons and

procedures, drawing from what has worked in the past as well as any new theories or procedures

you've learned along the way. This chapter doesn't convince me that Krashen did anything other

than adapt earlier work and then give it his name.

I think my biggest problem with this approach is that it's too obvious.   While reading

this chapter, I found myself thinking, "Well, duh. Everybody knows that," but in the early 1980s

when Krashen's work was first published, maybe not every did know that. For example, his five

major hypotheses seem too simple to have been uniquely his. Were other researchers stating

similar things at the time and Krashen just beat them to the publishers? The information is just

too obvious for me to understand how this theory could have been seen as something new and

noteworthy in the field of TESOL.

Evaluation

The authors clearly believe that Krashen's work is very important to the field of TESOL.

He is referenced in almost every other chapter in the book.   This chapter pays particular

attention to Krashen's work and almost ignores any contribution Terrell might have had in

helping create the Natural Approach.   The authors present the five basic hypotheses in detail,

making it easy to understand them. What they do not clearly explain is how the Natural

Approach is different from the older Natural Method (also called the Direct Method). They say

it has to do with the use of the term "natural" (179), but I still have some confusion over what the

difference is. Does it have to do with underlying theory or teaching methods? The paragraph

distinguishing the two methods could have been more informative.

I would have liked a chart or table showing which earlier methods this approach uses and

which ones it rejects. The authors briefly claim the Natural Method rejects earlier methods like

Audiolingualism (179), but they do not give any other examples. Since this approach seems to

draw heavily from earlier methods, a more obvious comparison to earlier approaches would have

made it easier for me to understand why Krashen's work is seen as being so central to

contemporary ESL instruction. Instead, I'm left wondering what the big deal is since Krashen's

theory – from the "I + 1" technique to his five hypotheses – all seems so obvious to what any

competent teacher already knows about teaching.

The authors make good use of numbered lists and subheadings to explain Krashen's

work. However, early in the chapter they assume that their readers are already well-versed in

Krashen's work. On page 181, they state, "Krashen's views have been presented and discussed

extensively elsewhere (e.g., Krashen 1982), so we will not try to present or critique Krashen's

arguments here." Well, why not? This is an overview text designed for beginning students, and

it's not our place to go back almost 30 years to read someone else's book. The authors should

have taken the time to present Krashen's work in more detail, especially considering how many

other times Krashen's name appears throughout this book. The author index, for example, shows

that Krashen is referenced in chapters on Total Physical Response, the Lexical Approach,

Communicative Language Teaching, and Task-Based Language Teaching, in addition to this

chapter on the Natural Approach.   He's obviously important, but I still don't know what makes

his research so unique.

Ch. 16: Cooperative Language Learning

Key Words

1. <u>cooperative learning</u> – group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others

2. <u>maxims</u> – a collection of agreed-upon cooperative rules that each group creates

3. <u>formal cooperative learning groups</u> – established by the teacher for a specific task and involve students working together to achieve shared learning goals; last from one class period to several weeks

4. <u>informal cooperative learning groups</u> – ad-hoc groups created for short periods to help focus student attention or facilitate learning during direct teaching; last from a few minutes to a single class period

5. <u>cooperative base groups</u> – long-term groups lasting for at least one year and consisting of heterogeneous learning groups with stable memberships whose primary purpose is to allow members to give each other the support, help, encouragement, and assistance they need to succeed academically

6. <u>positive interdependence</u> – occurs when group members feel that what helps one member helps them all and what hurts one member hurts them all

Questions

1. Group work is very common in many classrooms, but what is the best way to create groups in an L2 classroom where there are many native languages? Should the teacher

group them by language, or is it better for Engish-language learning to have multiple languages in one group?

2. What are the disadvantages for students in working in groups?

3. How can group work be adapted for novice English language learners? How do teachers explain how the group process works to students who do not yet understand English?

Observations

As a student, I hate group work, but as a teacher, I know that students learn best in social situations and that group work is one of the best ways to provide for social interaction in an educational setting. I always struggled with assigning group work because I was never sure how to grade student participation. I also don't like giving up control in my classroom, but I have tried in the past to make sure my students had opportunities to work with others so they can talk about class assignments and learn from each other. Cooperative Language Learning, like group work in traditional classes, has a great deal of potential. I'm concerned, however, at how to create groups in a class where not all the students share the same native language. The authors don't address this in the chapter.

One of the most common types of group work discussed at training seminars on differentiation of instruction is jigsawing. In this method, each group has a different piece of the overall puzzle that they must then become experts on. Members rotate to share their knowledge with other groups. I always had trouble assigning jigsaw work because I was afraid students would not completely understand the content. I always felt like I needed to be the one explaining new information.

Finally, it's hard for me as a teacher to give my students time in class to do group work, even if it's just completing a worksheet to reinforce a concept. I never felt confident that my students were actually doing the group work, even though I would walk around the room to monitor student progress. As a teacher, I know that I need to be more open to using group work. The scholar in me believes the data that shows group work is successful, but the "control freak" in me has a hard time believing that students will actually do the work and learn what I need them to learn in a group situation.

Evaluation

The authors make good use of bulleted and numbered lists to explain Cooperative Language Learning. They also clearly explain the five premises that are the basis of CLL's interactive/cooperative view of language and language learning (193-194). However, they briefly mention how CLL can help with critical thinking skills according to Wiederhold (1995) and Bloom (1956), but they do not give sample questions from Wiederhold's Question Matrix or from Bloom's taxonomy. I'm familiar with Bloom, but I hadn't heard of Wiederhold, so seeing a few sample questions from his matrix would have been interesting, especially since the authors state that they are part of the CL theoretical framework (194).

The authors discuss ways that group work is helpful for students, but they do not address disadvantages to group work, nor do they discuss how teachers can motivate all group members to succeed – regardless of the language level of the individual students. Also, how are the group members supposed to ensure all members are actively participating in group work? Even with a rubric and threats by the teacher, there is always at least one student in every class who simply refuses to cooperate with the group.

Ch. 17: Content-Based Instruction

Key Words

1. <u>Content-Based Instruction</u> – refers to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus; the L2 being taught is used to present subject matter (history, science, etc.), and students learn the L2 as a by-product of learning about real-world content

2. <u>content</u> – the substance or subject matter we learn or communicate through language rather than the language used to convey it

3. <u>theme-based instruction</u> – a language course in which the syllabus is organized around themes or topics such as "pollution" or "women's rights"

4. <u>sheltered content instruction</u> – content courses taught in the L2 by a content area specialist to a group of ESL learners who have been grouped together for this purpose (no native speakers are included)

Questions

1. How do students feel about being in sheltered content classes? Do they feel they are receiving the best instruction possible, or do they feel "ghettoized" like some students claimed in Gunderson's commentary on secondary ESL teaching and learning?

2. When creating a theme-based course, who chooses the theme? If it's topic-based instruction, how is this method different from other methods?

3. If teachers are specifically trained in TESOL, do they feel marginalized when forced to team-teach with a content-area specialist like some of the articles we read claim?

Observations

Content-Based Language instruction reminds me of the current trend to teach reading and writing across the curriculum. That means that all teachers are responsible for helping improve students' skills in reading and writing, not just their English teachers who traditionally were the only teachers actively teaching literacy skills. The only problem with this approach is that not every content-area teacher is qualified to teach English-language skills. I've been in schools where teachers have tried (or were required) to teach literacy skills when they themselves rarely used correct grammar. In theory, CBI sounds great, but in order for this approach to be successful, teachers in all subject areas are going to need special training in TESOL techniques in order to help their students.

CBI is being used locally in Guilford County's Newcomers School, a special school designed to help recent immigrants to the United States learn English well enough to join their peers in mainstream schools the following year. I observed one of the school's teachers for my pedagogical project for our Tuesday night grammar class. All the students in the English 9 class I observed were non-native speakers of English, but the teacher instructed them just like she would have taught native speakers. There were a few times when she asked them to double-check a literary term in their L1 dictionaries, but for the most part, the classroom methodology she used was similar to what would be used in a "normal" English 9 class. I also spoke to one of the science teachers there, and she is using CBI to teach English via physical science. I was very impressed by that school and would love to teach history there using the TESOL techniques I'm learning in this degree program. Basically, CBI is one of the few methods from this book that I think have real-world chances for success.

Evaluation

The authors clearly explain what CBI is and how it developed. Maybe it's just because I actually believe this approach works, but I was able to understand this chapter much easier than some of the others. The use of italics to create subsections and to highlight key words was used better in this chapter than in others, so that also made the topic easier to understand. The authors present an extensive bibliography, including articles from several journals that I think we have access to. Overall, I found this chapter to be a clear presentation of CBI based on what I already knew from personal experiences teaching reading and writing across the curriculum.