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The Significance of the Controversy between the Two
Current Methods for Foreign Language Teaching Methodology.

In the first years of its implementation in the 1940's the audio-lingual method of teaching foreign languages was received with enormous enthusiasm. The were two main reasons for this: its close adherence to the current theories of the two source disciplines, structuralist linguistics and behaviouristic psychology, which attached to it the name of a scientific method of language teaching, and the reports of extraordinarily good classroom results achieved with instruction materials designed according to the audio-lingual principles. For many years the newly worked out set of teaching procedures strengthened its position and had a considerable impact on the later dynamic development of the method.

A strong attack against the audio-lingual approach was launched in the nineteen sixties. It had its roots in the emergence of the new models of the language system and the new approach the language acquisition theories offered by TG grammarians and cognitive psychologists. As a result of this ferment a new 'cognitive code learning method' was born. However, even though the criticism of audiolingualism was severe, alternative proposals concerning textual materials and more efficient classroom techniques were few. It seems that the cognitive code-learning method developed, in the first place as a reaction to the basic assumptions of the audio-lingual approach. In the course of time the innovations of the new orientation came to be appreciated by some theoreticians and textbook writers, who decided to adopt and adapt the new theory / Marton 1976, Sandberg 1976/. W. Marton has worked out a new syllabus for the English course, based on the cognitive approach, in Polish secondary schools, stressing the appropriateness of this type of teaching in the conditions characterized by low inten-

sitivity, poor motivation of pupils and the inability to establish a precise set of goals of teaching / Marton 1978/.

This controversy between the audio-lingual and cognitive code learning methods has had a significant impact on the development of the methodology of foreign language teaching. It has brought into focus a number of valid problems, both theoretical and pragmatic, and stimulated the exchange of ideas. It has initiated numerous discussions about the problem of the status of a method in foreign language teaching methodology, showing that comparing the two methods in order to choose a better one was futile. Both methods were at least partially successful in attaining their objectives. It can be concluded then, that the attempt must be undertaken to select and formulate adequate goals of teaching, before a search for a method best suited to achieve them may begin. There is no one best method that can be universally applied /Wilkins 1974/. Such a reconsideration of a long-standing issue has shifted the emphasis from the method to other components of the teaching/learning process.

At present the problem of the controversy between the audio-lingual and cognitive code learning approaches no longer remains in the centre of interest, although its seminal ideas cannot be dispensed with in the current research into foreign language teaching methodology. Many more problems awaiting solutions seem to have survived on practical grounds, especially the one concerning the withdrawal of out-dated teaching materials. The present article is an attempt at presenting a synthetic picture of the scope of the above mentioned controversy and evaluating its contribution to recent developments.

The introduction of the term 'cognitive code learning', coined by J.B. Carroll in 1964, referring to the mental aspect of learning, meant the return to the rationalist orientation. A serious attack on the theoretical base of the audio-lingual method came from M. Chomsky, with the publication of his Syntactic Structures /1957/ and his review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour /1959/. Chomsky saw inadequacies and gaps in the structuralist language analysis, based on segmentation of physically observable data, in search for the stock of recurrent patterns. The structuralist model of language did not account for such phenomena as language operating as a finite set of rules, enabling the native speaker to produce an

infinite number of grammatical sentences, intuitively felt relationships holding between declarative, interrogative, negative and passive forms of a single sentence, and deeper than surface structure analysis of the sentence. Criticising Skinnerian operant conditioning, Chomsky objected to transforming the results of animal experimenting to solving problems of human learning. As an argument against understanding language as habitual behaviour, he referred to the role of the creativity of language. In this sense language is rule-governed behaviour, as every native speaker is in the possession of an internalised FG grammar. To support his right for an interest in human mental abilities, Chomsky claimed that FG grammar was part of cognitive psychology.

Cognitive psychology concentrating on the capacities of the human mind in the perception of experience, problems of knowledge acquisition and storage of information is much indebted to the concepts developed by Gestalt psychologists. However, Ansbrel's book entitled Educational Psychology: a Cognitive View turned out to be most influential for the rise of new learning theories in opposition to the out-dated behaviouristic approaches. In his interpretation learning and teaching theories are strongly interdependent because the information about the ways in which an organism learns is of primary importance for a theory of teaching. His dichotomy of rote versus meaningful learning on the one hand, and receptive and discovery learning on the other, have become fundamental notions in recent trends of foreign language teaching methodology.

Criticism of structuralist-behaviourist positions, which were at the same time the basic source of the audio-lingual theory, grew stronger. In 1965, Wilga Rivers noticed that the four basic assumptions of the audio-lingual approach concerning habit formation in language, primacy of speech, learning by analogy and discouraging the use of the native language were already in disagreement with new psychological theories / Smith 1971/. The criticism of the theoretical background, although scientifically valid, cannot be considered to be an appropriate evaluation of current classroom procedures for the practising teacher. More disappointment was aroused when poor results achieved by the application of the method on a large scale were announced.

The main goals of the audio-lingual teaching, defined in terms of the ability to communicate in a foreign language and the mastery of the four language skills were never accomplished. The emphasis on speech activated the participation of the learners only at the beginning of a course; their progress was slower at later stages. Reintroduction of the native language became a necessity, as exclusive dependence on the inductive form of learning was successful only with some learners. Brief grammatical explanations in the native language soon followed most of the drills. The pre-reading period and the concentration on oral production, caused frustration of the eye-oriented learners, who had to rely entirely on their auditory memory. Drills were generally criticized for developing the ability to manipulate certain structures purely mechanically instead of fostering communicative skills. Students performed well in the classroom environment, but no transition from the elements inculcated in this way to free behaviour resulted / Kelly 1976:310 / and they were not directed towards creative language behaviour / Engels 1973/. As the weaknesses of pure manipulative drills revealed themselves, many textbook writers designed situational exercises which were to provide a context for the already overlearned formal elements of language. However, this division of language behaviour into manipulative and communicative layers, typical of the audio-lingual teaching, is now rejected in favour of the view that even the most elementary grammatical exercises should draw on the communicative function of language / Oller 1974/.

Adult learners were dissatisfied with the inductive form of learning and an overwhelming number of mimicry-memorization techniques imposed on them. In Diller's view the use of mimicry-memorization can be recommended only to overcome the adult pronunciation block; pronunciation as a skill can be separated from the knowledge of the language / Diller 1971/. The criticisms of the audio-lingual approach touched upon many other problems, such as: overlearning, restricted vocabulary, discouraging errors, but this did not result in the immediate rejection of the method, because, firstly, nothing was offered to replace it and secondly, it had its assets as well.

Trying to discern these factors that determined the success of the first courses in the audio-lingual tradition A. Valdman observed that they strictly followed the audio-lingual type of teaching

but at the same time were conducted under the most privileged conditions: intensive practice, small groups, highly motivated students, native language informants, a variety of teaching aids used and regular elimination of poor students. The conditions provided by schools and colleges were much worse, mainly for economic reasons. The decisive factor seems to have been the low intensity of the language courses conducted in schools / Valdman 1971/. It may be hypothesized that the feature of intensity is inherent in each effective production-oriented model of teaching.

It seems that the cognitive code-learning theory tried to make up for all the defects of the foreign language teaching process that came into prominence in the audio-lingual method. The impact on the development of the new trend came from the new theoretical foundations, supported with practical observations of experienced teachers, but always with the attempt to provide theoretical reasons for particular solutions accepted. The cognitive code-learning approach represents the most up-to-date tendencies in the methodology of foreign language teaching.

The fundamental assumptions of the cognitive code-learning approach are enumerated by K. Chastain, however, his description of the method is far from being complete. The goal of cognitive-oriented teaching is identical with the one put forward by the audio-lingualists, although it is understood not as establishing a set of language habits but as a control over a system of language rules used for communicative interaction. The knowledge of the system is acquired consciously, proceeding from competence to performance. Acquired rules have to be activated in the creative performance. What the learner has to internalize is the finite system of grammatical rules, not the language itself as an infinite body. Meaningful learning ensures that the students relate new material to the framework of the knowledge already stored, among others to the system of rules of their own native language / Chastain 1971 / . Sandberg thinks that learning a foreign language actually means understanding the concepts the speaker uses in his native language unconsciously and then matching them with the corresponding structures and lexical items of a foreign language / Sandberg 1976:300/.

The cognitive code-learning approach has developed a new type of the presentation of the material, that is the spiral program,

utilizing the idea of advance organizers and the principles of meaningful learning by cyclic repetition of parts of the material. At the beginning of the course the learner gets acquainted with the simplest and most concise version of the complete language system, which is presented in a more detailed and comprehensive manner at a later stage, its terminal mastery being planned as the final product. This enables the learner to express his essential communicative needs after the first presentation of a self-contained system of the language and increases his integrative motivation. Cyclic presentation of the material also helps to maintain the distinction between the receptive and productive skills. Before new material is mastered in a productive way it is to be accumulated receptively / Marton 1976 b /. As Sandberg remarked " language usage precedes from wealth" / Sandberg 1976/.

Only a few new techniques have been brought into the classroom procedures in the name of the cognitive code-learning method, eg.: Matching ill and well formed items, correcting semi-grammatical sentences, identifying ambiguous sentences / ideas from TG grammar/. Even though the cognitive code teaching has not elaborated a set of techniques for its own usage, it does not precisely follow any of the previously held models. Instead some instructions of a general nature are offered: understanding of rules should be prior to their application, meaningful application guarantees contextual practice, rote learning should be restricted to vocabulary only, reliance on the two sense modalities: both eye and ear is indispensable, errors are allowed as they direct the learner in finding the boundaries of the grammatical rules of the target language, translation and some other types of traditional exercises regain their status.

All the recommendations put forward by the cognitivists have been willingly accepted, as in the comparison with audiolingualism they provided many interesting insights into the methodology of foreign language teaching. However, the new approach is not free from dogmatic statements and inadequacies. It is especially blamed for too hasty direct applications of the TG model in the construction of the new types of grammatical exercises and overlooking the relevant areas, the ones also left out by TG grammar, as the description of performance in communicative situations, the idea of communicative competence or discourse analysis. A degree of misunderstanding was

caused by the notions of competence and performance: competence, which should be treated as the result of the long-term language performance, that is the final stage of grammar / internalization/, cannot be a starting point of any teaching procedures and precede performance / Marton 1976a:178/.

When two even sketchy presentations of the strengths and weaknesses of the two methods are juxtaposed, it becomes clear that both of them enter the problem of foreign language teaching only fragmentarily. Audiolingualists concentrated on careful analysis and description of only observably identified data, cognitivists, on the other hand, shifted their attention to covert mental processes and tried to consider the problem of foreign language acquisition in their terms. At some point the two approaches were thought to be competing alternatives at the teacher's disposal. Hence the idea of greater effectiveness of one of them evolved. The task some methodologists set out to accomplish, then, was to prove the superiority of one of the methods.

Some attempts to prove the superiority of one of the methods were undertaken on entirely experimental basis. Scherer and Wertheimer /1964/ arrived at the conclusion that the audiolingual students did better in the oral as contrasted with the traditional students who had a better chance to develop written skills, but none of the groups could be said to be definitely worse than the other. The Pennsylvania Project devoted to a similar comparison pointed out little advantage of the traditional methods over the audiolingual ones / Chastain 1971/. As it turns out it is impossible to give experimental evidence of the absolute superiority of one type of teaching, understood in terms of the whole command of the language. It has been observed that students benefit best from what they have been taught, although, on the other hand, techniques employed by the students individually cannot be controlled in any possible way. One can also question the validity of theoretical formulations underlying the contrast presented in the experiment, where no relevant theory stands behind it. Additionally, the high standards of teaching characteristic of the majority of experimental situations, contribute much to the learner's achievement / Carroll 1966/.

The experimental research into the effectiveness of teaching methods has clearly demonstrated that the hope for finding one best universal method of teaching a foreign language has to be given up

because of numerous intervening variables that cannot be eliminated. No one best method can be formulated that can be "equally appropriate for all learners and all circumstances" /Stevens 1977:5/. The learner factor according to Stevens, will comprise pupil age, educational framework and stage of proficiency. The circumstantial constraints that influence foreign language teaching achievements are: the quantity and intensity of instruction, various impediments to learning and teaching and quality of the teacher. /Stevens 1977: 8/.

It seems that a different attitude towards the two methods, standing in opposition on theoretical grounds, might be held by an experienced teacher. From the pragmatic point of view methods are not discrete abstract entities, but all of them form a continuum, reflecting their diachronic development. Discussing methods we usually refer to some extreme idealized versions, while in practice new modifications, constantly introduced by progressive teachers, blur the borders between them, delineating a direction of the development towards new orientations. The way, one very active methodologist, W. Rivers, has continually adapted her outlook, can serve as an example here. She has modified her position, that can now be classified as the cognitive approach, although she began as an advocate of the audiolingual method and its structuralist-behaviourist background /Rivers 1972/. Practical reconciliation of the two methods has turned out to be unworkable.

Proposals for the reconciliation of the two views, generally considered mutually exclusive, on the theoretical basis, are few. In R. Hok's opinion S-R and cognitive theories are complementary. She thinks so because there is no evidence of any barrier existing between habit formation and a cognitive type of learning activity, cognitive activities being involved in establishing habits. A body of knowledge cannot be acquired with habit formation activities only /Hok 1972/.

J. B. Carroll expresses a similar conviction. According to him neither the audiolingual nor the cognitive code-learning are complete and faultless, as from the psychological point of view, he claims, the opposition between habits and rule-governed behaviour is simply false. Carroll defines habit as "any learned disposition to perceive, behave, or perform in a certain manner under specific

circumstances", and the term of rule-governed behaviour as the habits of the speech community, which constitute a model for all its members. His argumentation is similar to that of R. Hok: the human organism participates in establishing S-R bonds. Stimulus and reinforcement do not have to be external because many of them can originate from learners' internal needs. Habits can arise as the result of automatizing the knowledge of the language acquired consciously. Such a synthesis of the two traditionally opposing viewpoints is given by Carroll: the name of "cognitive habit-for-mation theory" /Carroll 1971/.

Like many other methodologists, however, Carroll is also aware of the fact that none of the contemporary theories can offer an adequate explanation of all the aspects of the teaching/learning process, both the ones observed and those predicted /Carroll 1966/. Stevens regards it necessary to construct a theory that would be different from the linguistic and psychological theories, but which in all the situations would offer an appropriate answer to the question: "In those particular learning/teaching circumstances we may reasonably predict that the most effective kind of learning may be promoted by the following kinds of teaching" /Stevens 1977/.

From a more pragmatic point of view, it is evident that the success or failure of language teaching must be always assessed with reference to the established goals. Any method then that will ensure their achievement will simply work. Wilkins considers that there are three main principles that govern foreign language teaching: "1/ clearly defined objectives, 2/ learning activities to be representative of language objectives, 3/ learners to model their own language performance on significant instances of target language behaviour." Here he sees a paradox connected with the relative insignificance of "method", as it is only subservient in reaching goals, which are primary; additionally "It is possible for the same aims to be reached by different paths" /Wilkins 1974/.

To sum up the above discussion it should be emphasized once again that although no working theory of foreign language teaching has been produced so far, the direction of investigations has been delineated and the solutions found owe much to the controversy that evolved between the audiolingual and cognitive code-learning approaches. The bulk of practical problems that draw methodologists'

attention was also enormous. Many of them have now been solved while some others are still awaiting further thought.

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S t r e s z e c z e n i e

Artykuł omawia: znaczenie kontrowersji, jaka zaistniała pomiędzy metodą audiolingwalną nauczania języków obcych, a powstałą w latach sześćdziesiątych metodą kognitywną, dla ukierunkowania rozwoju metody nauczania języków obcych. Metoda kognitywna, chociaż nie powstała na bazie pewnych niedociągnięć i stwierdzeń dogmatycznych, wyrosła na bazie krytyki braków i ewidentnych sprzeczności, które wywniosły się w podstawach teoretycznych i praktycznych aplikacjach metody audiolingwalnej. Kontrowersja między dwiema metodami zapoczątkowała dyskusję na temat statusu metody jako takiej, która obecnie traktowana jest jako podrzędna w stosunku do celów nauczania. Zwrócono również uwagę na decydującą rolę, jaką w nauczaniu języków obcych odgrywają warunki nauczania oraz osoba uczącego się, jego motywacja, stopień zaawansowania językowego i poziom wiedzy ogólnej.