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Language Teaching Methodology: Observations from Three English Lessons

Språkundervisningsmetodikk: Observasjoner frå tre engelsktimer

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to identify which, if any, of the most influential language teaching methods are discernible in some teachers' practices. Using qualitative observation as method, I inspect three English lessons. The theoretical background is a description of four language teaching methods: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, and Communicative Language Teaching. For each method, I provide a list of its most characteristic features, which are then used to analyse the observed lessons. The analysis indicates that the teacher in observation A seems to use a variety of methods. The teacher in observation B seems to lean toward the Direct Method, whereas the teacher in observation C uses the Grammar-Translation Method.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Limiting the thesis.....	2
1.2	Structure.....	2
2	Method	3
2.1	Choice of Method.....	3
2.2	Reliability.....	3
2.3	Validity.....	4
2.4	Ethics.....	5
3	Theory	5
3.1	The Grammar-Translation Method.....	5
3.2	The Direct Method.....	6
3.3	Audiolingualism.....	7
3.4	Communicative Language Teaching.....	8
4	Data	9
4.1	Observation A.....	10
4.2	Observation B.....	11
4.3	Observation C.....	13
5	Analysis	14
5.1	Observation A.....	14
5.2	Observation B.....	16
5.3	Observation C.....	17
6	Conclusion	17
6.1	Future Research.....	19
7	References	20
8	Appendices	21
8.1	Appendix A.....	21
8.2	Appendix B.....	22

1 Introduction

While most bachelor's theses aim to *uncover*, *solve* problems, or *answer* questions, this does not. My impression is that, because of size constraints and small data samples, bachelor's theses often fail to generalize. Consequently, they often come short of figuring out what they initially set out to do. For this reason, I wish to do my thesis, not with the intent of uncovering, solving, or answering, but with the intent of *satisfying my curiosity*. I want to become more informed in the field of language teaching. My interest for the subject has developed over the years; when I was a student, the teaching of English from primary to upper secondary school seemed random. Specifically in the sense that lessons, regardless of content, by one teacher were perceived as different from lessons by another. While one teacher emphasized oral skills, another ignored it. Some teachers acted as helpers while we did tasks and activities, while others were controllers, directing how learning happened. In some classrooms, use of our native language was avoided consistently, while in others we used it frequently. Such experience eventually led me to study teaching, with English as one of my subjects. In my didactics course, I have learned of several language teaching methods. And while I have learned much of their history and characteristics, I am curious to see which of these methods are discernible in some teachers' practices.

I consider such curiosity to be at the core of language teaching. That is, to not limit ourselves to written theory, but to see it in practice. Furthermore, it is insightful to observe and analyse other teachers' practices. Doing so not only gives us insight into techniques and principles behind the methods, but might also help us uncover the thoughts that guide our own actions as teachers. It is an important topic, not just for the knowledge of several language teaching methods, but for the understanding, and perhaps appreciation, of the skill of reflection. That is, possessing the vocabulary and knowing the discourse which enables one to rename experiences – the type of professionalism in which implicit actions are replaced by informed decision-making. By studying methods one might see which methods one does and does not identify with one's own thinking, which in turn helps in uncovering one's implicit thoughts and beliefs about teaching. Ultimately, is that not what we really want from teachers? Particularly, the ability "to make choices that are informed, not conditioned" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013, p. xi).

The purpose of this thesis is to identify which, if any, of the most influential language teaching methods are discernible in some teachers' practices. My intentions are based on *my curiosity*. Some might consider such a background unfit for research; most theses are meant to contribute to a

research society. However, I hope, and believe, that whoever reads this will become more informed and broad-minded in the field of language teaching.

1.1 Limiting the thesis

Despite mentioning the importance of reflection this is not a research questioning whether teachers are, or to which degree they are, aware of their own choices as professionals. My intent is to observe how they teach. Whether they are conscious of their choices is outside the scope of this thesis.

Furthermore, I do not aim to find a language teaching *trend*. Mapping out trends would be more fitting for a master's or doctoral thesis, as doing such would require a much larger amount of data. My inability to generalize (because the data sample is too small) ultimately means I cannot conclude that there is a trend.

Finally, it is not my aim to evaluate, neither methods to be mentioned, nor the teachers' ability to teach. Questioning what the *best* method is, might be considered the easiest way to stray from the intentions of the thesis.

1.2 Structure

Following the introductory part of this thesis, I give an outline of the qualitative method. I make considerations such as: what grade level to observe at, how structured the observations should be, and degree of interaction with the participants. I also justify my choice of method. Furthermore, I address the reliability and validity of the data and how to secure these.

Afterwards, in chapter three, I give a theoretical background. In this chapter, I give an overview of the characteristics of four language teaching methods. I also justify why I have specifically picked those methods. They are presented in chronological order. Additionally, one might notice that the theoretical chapter comes after the chapter on research method. This is not the norm for writing theses. I have done this because I find it important that an overview of the four methods is 'fresh' in the mind of the reader, especially for the chapters where I analyse the observations.

In the next chapter, I present the data. Observations from three English lessons are presented in the form of narratives.

In chapter five, I analyse the data. Using the theoretical background given in chapter three, I try to see if the lessons observed are typical of a certain method.

Finally, in the conclusion, I tie up all the main points from chapter five. In addition, I comment on possible further research.

2 Method

I chose to collect data through a qualitative method of observation. To this end, I inspected three English lessons at lower secondary schools. I picked the lower secondary level because the students, at that point, should be proficient enough in English to convey meaning; both orally and written (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013). It was important that students were able and willing to express themselves using English, as it supplements the analysis. For example, it would be hard to say anything about which language skills are emphasized, or how teachers deal with student errors, if the students rarely express themselves in the target language.

Furthermore, there was a question of how structured the observations should be. More specifically, whether there were to be any use of lists or forms to aid me during the observations. I chose not to, because of (1) an overwhelming amount of potential factors worth taking note of, (2) the possibility of such a list making me blind to aspects which are not on it, and (3) the chance of becoming too preoccupied with waiting for specific preselected behaviours.

2.1 Choice of Method

A central question to ask when choosing a method is: what do I want to get a picture of? Wanting to grasp which language teaching methods exist in English lessons, implies understanding people's actions, roles, and behaviours. In that case, observation seemed suitable. The most straightforward way to find out what people do in certain circumstances is sometimes to simply watch them under those circumstances.

During the outlining of this thesis, both interviews and observations seemed appropriate; why did I abstain from doing interviews? This was due to the fact that, teachers will tell you what they think in interviews, which is not necessarily the same as what they do. What they say can be coloured by their perception of what the interviewer wants to hear, or what they think they should say.

2.2 Reliability

One question that was central concerning the reliability of the data, was whether to interact with the students and teachers. As with most observational research, reactivity is a concern. Reactivity occurs when someone alters their behaviour due to the awareness that they are being observed (Grønmo,

2016, p. 21). In an attempt to avoid such, I chose not to interact. I also placed myself at the back of the room. My hope was that, by interfering as little as possible, the students and teachers would forget that they were being observed. Doing such helps in securing the reliability of the data. Some classroom observations have been left out because of reactivity. For example, during one lesson the teacher kept looking in my direction. Moreover, her body language expressed nervousness and her meticulous attention to detail signified a want to avoid mistakes. As a result, the observation was deemed unreliable.

2.3 Validity

A concern regarding the validity of the data, is that observational research is susceptible to observer bias. Although one does not control what happens during an observation, one is still going to select what one notices. Furthermore, my social background and personal experiences can affect my perception and understanding of the conditions studied (p. 21). For example, if I grew up with positive experiences of grammatical approaches to language teaching, I might unconsciously discard methods that are more communicative.

Observer bias might be the most significant source of error when using observation; it can occur at any stage of the research. That is, during background reading, selection of data samples, execution of observations, data analysis, and discussion. Moreover, bias is usually reduced when the sample size is larger because tendencies are seen more clearly. As such, observer bias is particularly important in this research, since the sample size is only three English lessons.

What can I do to prevent bias? First, I can be *aware* of my own biases. I know that, personally, I am sceptical to communicative approaches to language teaching. To me, they appear uncontrolled and erratic. I need to be aware of this impression, so it does not affect how the data is presented, analysed, interpreted, and discussed. Doing so compromises validity. Letting bias occur in the mentioned case could result in me either (a) neglecting communicative characteristics of language teaching, or (b) heavily criticise its use. Since this thesis aims to *describe* and not *evaluate*, (a) would be more likely.

Second, I can have others look over my thesis. Though they might have biases of their own, they might not have the same as me. Consequently, they might see what I do not. Maybe I disregard certain aspects, get off topic, or overly emphasize certain points.

2.4 Ethics

Dealing with ethical considerations, E-mails were sent out to the principals of each school, and forms were signed to get informed consent (see appendix A and B). Consent was dependent on anonymity and no use of video or sound recording. It also confirmed voluntary participation.

3 Theory

In this chapter, we look at four language teaching methods: the Grammar-Translation method, the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, and Communicative Language Teaching. There are many more methods. Among some of them: Desuggestopedia, Task-based Language Teaching, Content-based Instruction, Total Physical Response, and The Silent Way. I specifically choose to go through these four methods because they have been the most prominent and influential over the years.

Additionally, some methods can be regarded as sub-categories of others. For example, according to Richards & Rodgers (2014, p. 174), some see Task-based Language Teaching as another type of Communicative Language Teaching. In that case, I want to cover those methods that are more distinct from one another. That way, when I later analyse the lessons, I do so with a broad perspective on methods.

Though there are many more methods, because of constraints like the size of the thesis, we cannot look at every one of them. I choose these four methods because they have been the most prominent and influential.

Most of the content is written using Harmer (2007), Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), and Richards and Rodgers (2014). All three discuss the same key points, but Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) distinguishes themselves by drawing more attention to the methods' ways of dealing with student errors and how culture is viewed. For each method I will, after a brief overview, using the specified subject literature, compose a list of characteristics associated with it.

3.1 The Grammar-Translation Method

The main purpose of Grammar-Translation is to enable students to read and translate literature in the target language. In addition, there are two other functions: Firstly, by studying the grammar of the target language, students will become more aware of grammar in their native language, which ultimately makes them better at speaking and writing in their native language. Secondly, it is thought that the studying of a foreign language will help students grow intellectually (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 13). Though there are similar methods, Grammar-Translation distinguishes itself

from others for its reliance on the students' native language and focus on memorization of grammar and vocabulary.

The following characteristics can be associated with the Grammar-Translation Method:

1. The learning process consists of translating into and out of the target language, a task viewed as requiring extensive and thorough examination of grammar rules. With such focus on translation, "the first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language" (Stern, 1983, p. 455).
2. There is emphasis on reading and writing. Little attention, if any at all, is paid to speaking and listening.
3. Vocabulary is taught through memorization, with use of bilingual word lists and dictionaries.
4. "Accuracy is emphasized. Students are expected to attain high standards in translation" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 6).
5. Students are taught grammar deductively. That is, first, the grammar is presented, then, they must apply those rules to examples, tasks and/or exercises.
6. In a classroom using the Grammar-Translation Method, the teacher is an authority and in control of the classroom. The students learn from what she knows. They are passive learners who do not 'explore' and 'discover', but rather study and examine what is already known.

3.2 The Direct Method

The Direct Method was developed as a reaction to the Grammar-Translation Method, in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language. In this method, accuracy is still important, but it is, in contrast to Grammar-Translation, "considered vitally important that only the target language should be used in the classroom" (Harmer, 2007, p. 63). The goal was now to prepare students to use the language communicatively, something which Grammar-Translation failed to do. Instead of studying the target language analytically, meaning deductive applications of explicit grammar rules, students learn by teachers encouraging direct and spontaneous use of the target language, consequently meaning, that students learn grammar inductively (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 11). That is not to say they are taught grammar rules afterwards, for according to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), explicit grammar rules may never be given.

Some characteristics of the Direct Method are as follows:

1. When the teacher gives instructions, she does so in the target language.

2. Typically, oral communication is practiced by the teacher asking questions to which students are to answer in a full sentence. For example, in a lesson about animals, if the teacher asks, "Are lions taller than giraffes?" an acceptable answer would be, "No, lions are not taller than giraffes," rather than just "No," (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 27).
3. Concrete vocabulary is explained through demonstration and visualization. For example, if a student asks what the word 'elbow' means, the teacher will not simply translate the word into the student's native language, but rather demonstrate by pointing to his elbow and perhaps supplement by saying, "This is an elbow."
4. Grammar is taught inductively.
5. Correct pronunciation and grammar is emphasized. Let us look at an example from a class observation by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p. 27). A student asks, "What is the ocean in the West Coast?" The teacher interrupts the class before they are able to answer, turns to the student and asks, "What is the ocean *in* the West Coast? ... or *on* the West Coast?" The student hesitates, then says, "On the West Coast." (This situation is also an elaboration of the next point.)
6. Students are encouraged to self-correct.

Although there is emphasis on speaking and listening, it is important to understand that the Direct Method does not discard reading and writing skills. It simply perceives oral communication as a basic skill. Whatever reading and writing exercises they do, are based on what the students have first practiced orally (p. 31).

3.3 Audiolingualism

Audiolingualism bases language learning on behaviourism. As such, one views the language learner as an organism capable of picking up *habits*, which are acquired through reoccurring behaviours. Occurrence of such behaviours is dependent on three elements: stimulus, response, and reinforcement. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), to apply this theory to language learning is to,

" ... identify the organism as the foreign language learner, the behaviour as verbal behaviour, the stimulus as what is taught or presented of the foreign language, the response as the learner's reaction to the stimulus, and the reinforcement as the extrinsic approval and praise of the teacher ..." (p. 64)

As such, it is thought that the way to acquire sentence patterns of the target language is through conditioning. In practice, this means drilling of such patterns through repetition and memorization. Correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are emphasized. Moreover, drilling is there to combat the fact that the native language is viewed as an obstacle, and the cause for most of a student's difficulties in learning a new language.

Some key characteristics Audiolingualism are:

1. "Foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation. Good habits are formed by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 64).
2. Since it is considered a major difficulty for students to overcome habits of their native language, the teacher is aware of the areas in which students will experience difficulty (p. 44). For example, students might exchange /w/ for /v/. The teacher, being aware of this, can conduct drill exercises using sentences containing those sounds.
3. The teacher uses only the target language in the classroom, so that the students' native language does not interfere with the acquisition of the target language (p. 42).
4. The teacher gives the students positive feedback when they answer correctly, to make them develop correct habits.

3.4 Communicative Language Teaching

In the methods we have gone through so far, we see that the goals of language teaching have changed. Earlier, the goal was to enable students to read literature in the target language, whereas now, the goal had become to enable students to use the language communicatively. However, in the 1970s, some observed students not being able to communicate naturally, despite being able to produce sentences accurately in the classroom. For this reason, educators started questioning if they were going about reaching the goal in the right way (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 115). Thus, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged, and there was a shift in the field of language teaching, from focus on form to focus on meaning.

Harmer (2007) mentions that "a major strand of CLT centres around the essential belief that if students are involved in meaning-focused communicative tasks, then language learning will take care of itself" (p. 69). But, what do we really mean by a task being meaning-focused and communicative? According to Morrow (Johnson & Morrow, 1981, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, pp. 122-123), activities that are truly communicative include: choice, feedback, and information gap.

First, the speaker should have a choice of what to say and *how* to say it. Second, the speaker should be able to evaluate whether she has expressed meaning successfully from the feedback she receives from the listener. Third, in an exchange, one person needs to know something the other person does not. To elaborate, if the teacher asks, “How many windows are there in this room?” and the students answer, “There are five windows in this room,” the exchange is not really meaningful. Both the teacher and the students know the answer, the students simply get to show that they know it. Such questions are called *display questions*. If the students were to ask each other what they got for Christmas however, the exchange would be considered meaningful.

Furthermore, I list the following characteristics of CLT:

1. Everything that happens in the classroom, happens with communicative intent. An important factor in making communication authentic is meaningfulness.
2. There is focus on conveying meaning, not form. Furthermore, many different forms can serve similar functions, as such, students should be able to express themselves in a variety of linguistic forms. The teacher or the activities she sets up do not dictate what language forms students are to use. For example, saying, “It might rain tomorrow,” “It will likely rain tomorrow,” or “Tomorrow it will probably rain,” is all the same.
3. In oral activities, errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome in trying to make oneself understood. “Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 125).
4. In CLT, the teacher is not an authoritarian controller of correctness who checks for students error. Instead, she serves as a guide, whose job is to set up activities likely to promote authentic communicative situations. During activities, she acts as an adviser who monitors the students’ performance, and helps them if need be (p. 122).
5. Use of the students’ native language is not to be avoided in the same degree as, for example, the Direct Method. In CLT, it should be used thoughtfully, meaning students may use their native language if they feel stuck in their attempt to communicate. Additionally, if the teacher senses that the students do not understand the explanation to a certain activity, she might use their native language (p. 125).

4 Data

In this chapter, I present the data. Three lessons by different English teachers are presented as narratives. The way the observations are described might make students perceive as uncommonly

well-behaved. One should keep in mind that more goes on in the classroom than what is mentioned here. I have left out trivial remarks like a teacher looking for a CD-player, or students doing things outside of the learning context.

4.1 Observation A

The lesson begins with the teacher greeting the students and instructing them to find their textbook and workbook. She tells them they are to read a short text on fashion. Before they start working with the text, she tells them to go to the back of the book, where there is a glossary associated with it. All instructions are given in English. Going through the glossary, the teacher first says a word in the students' native language, then in English. Rather than exaggerating pronunciation, on a per word basis, she speaks in a natural manner and tempo. Subsequently, after each word the students respond in chorus using English. Some examples are:

Teacher:	Tilbehør. Accessories.
Students (in chorus):	Accessories.
Teacher:	Skuespillerinne. Actress.
Students (in chorus):	Actress.

Afterwards, the students are to listen to a recording of the text. Before she plays the recording, she tells them to pay attention – especially to pronunciation. The students listen attentively.

Following the listening exercise, the teacher asks questions about the text. When asked who the text is about, one student answers, "Mary Quant." The teacher turns to the rest of the class and asks, "Can someone tell me what she is known for?" "For making clothes," one student responds. "Yes. What kind of clothes did she make?" she asks, directing the question to the entire class. "She makes, uhm, clothes that was, uhm, kind of, short, and, uhm, had a lot of colours," one student responds. "Yes, that's right. Mini-skirts was something she was known for," the teacher adds. Another student raises her. She wants to add something to what kind of clothes Mary Quant makes, but asks if she say it using Norwegian, which the teacher allows.

When they finish discussing the text, the teacher tells them to do a task called 'Let's Talk!' It consists of questions associated with the text, and is to be done orally with a partner. The classroom is organised so that students sit in pairs, so the teacher tells them to do the task with the person they are sitting next to. Before they start, she reminds them to only use English. Some of the questions are as follows:

1. What have you learnt about Mary Quant's life?
2. Describe her clothing design.
3. What do you think Mary Quant meant by "A woman is as young as her knees?"
4. Do you like mini-skirts?

As the students work with the questions, the teacher walks around to audit their performance and help them if needed. During this, sometimes when students ask questions using Norwegian, she simply answers using English. Contrastively, other times she encourages students to repeat their question using English.

When most of the students seem finished with the task, the teacher presents a new task. They are told to do a writing exercise called 'Work With Words', in which they must, first, find words in the text having to do with clothes and fashion, then, they must explain words using English. Some of the words are:

1. A customer
2. Chain-stores
3. Skinny
4. Fashion

Again, while the students work with the tasks, the teacher reviews their performance and helps them if needed. When the students finish, the teacher reviews their work, asking them what they have answered. As they revise the second task, (where they have to explain words using English) one student simply translates to Norwegian. The teacher tells him that he must explain the word using English, which he then does. Furthermore, as they go through the word 'chain-stores', the teacher starts mentioning examples. The students join in, adding things like, McDonalds, BikBok, and H&M. Many students eagerly raise their hand wanting to add to the conversation. Near the end of the lesson, the teacher tells them to revise the new words (the aforementioned glossary associated with the text) and translate them. The activity is meant as written work, and they are tested on the glossary at the end of the week.

4.2 Observation B

The lesson starts with the teacher greeting everyone. She asks them to find their books and take their seats. As they do, she walks to the middle of the room and asks, "What do you do, or could you do, to protest against your parents? I want you to discuss this with the person sitting next to you, for about two minutes." The teacher audits their performance, but does not intervene. When they are

finished, the teacher tells them she wants to hear what they have talked about. One student raises her hand and says, "Dress, sort of, uhm, inappropriate." She gestures at her own clothes as she looks for the right word to use. The teacher chuckles and says, "Alright." Another student says, "I can turn on very loud music." "Ok. What kind of music would you play?" the teacher follows up. "Uhm, sort of party music, or some type of rock." "Ok," the teacher says, smiling. Across the room another student raises his hand. The teacher walks closer and cues him to talk by gesturing. "I can avoid doing my chores." "Aha," the teacher says, amused.

Afterwards, the teacher plays a video of The Beatles performing "All You Need Is Love". When the video is over, she asks, "How many of you have heard of the Beatles?" About half of the class raise their hands. Then, the teacher starts talking about how she grew up with The Beatles; how everyone her age listened to them and that it was often on the radio. She asks, "What do you think parents thought of The Beatles back then?" "They didn't like them?" one student answers with questioning intonation, not raising her hand. "Yes, that's right, but why?" She points to the paused video at the front of the room, then walks around directing the question to everyone. A few students raise their hand. The teacher picks one, who says, "Maybe they didn't like the music?" "Yes, that's right. They meant it was more like yelling than singing. There is another reason why they did not like them. Does anyone have an idea what it could be?" the teacher asks, but no hands go up. "It has something to do with their hair," she hints, fiddling with her own hair. "Their hair is too long?" one student suggests. "Yes, that's right."

Next, they listen to a recording of a text about how teenagers use music, fashion and dancing to provoke the grown-up world. The students listen attentively. When the recording is finished, the teacher asks, "A swastika, what's that?" "It's like, uhm, this," one student says, followed by her drawing an imaginary one in the air, using her finger. "Yes, very good," the teacher says, and then proceeds to draw one on the blackboard, to make sure everyone understands. Next, walking to the middle of the room, she asks, "What's a thug?" One student raises his hand and says, "I think, it's sort of a criminal." "Well, sort of, but not necessarily. It's a good suggestion, though. Does anyone else have any ideas?" "A bully?" one student suggests. "Yes, that's right," the teacher replies. She takes a quick look in the course book, then asks, "What about a bandana, what's that?" One student raises her hand, "It's kind of a, uhm, it's something you put in your hair." "Yes. It's a type of cloth, you could say, which one can fold and put in your hair or around your neck," the teacher explains, demonstrating as she talks. In addition, she draws an angled square on the blackboard.

During the last part of the lesson, students discuss some questions regarding the text they listened to. They discuss with the person sitting next to them. Some of the questions are as follows:

1. Why do young people often dress differently than grown-ups?
2. What often happens when teenagers try to protest against the adult world?
3. What is the latest fashion now? Do you follow it?

While the students discuss, the teacher walks around, listening to what they are saying and auditing their performance. She intervenes each group with the question: "Would you live in another era if you could?" Students reflect and discuss eagerly, stating their opinions on why or why not. Errors are made regularly, but are not remarked upon by the teacher who, instead, focuses on confirming that she has understood their utterances. She concentrates on keeping the conversation going. The lesson ends and the students take recess.

4.3 Observation C

The lesson starts with the teacher finding her seat behind the desk at the front of the classroom. There, she sits for the rest of the lesson. She tells the students to find their books. The topic for the lesson is Native Americans, and the students are to read passages from the course book. The teacher picks a student, who then starts to read out loud. The other students follow the text in their own course book, listening attentively. Whenever the student reading mispronounces a word, the teacher corrects him. After he finishes, the teacher asks, "What is another name for Native Americans?" One student raises his hand and says, "Indians." "Yes, that's right," the teacher answers, and then picks the next student who must read. When he is done reading, the teacher asks, "Did Columbus discover America?" The students discuss in short, and some raise their hands. One student says the Indians were there first. Another student says the Vikings got there before Columbus, to which the teacher gives her affirmation. Then, she asks, "What does alienation mean?" The students discuss among themselves, but struggle to understand its meaning. After a short while, the teacher provides the translation. The students are then able to explain it, using Norwegian.

Another student is picked to read out loud. The teacher, again, corrects mispronounced words. When the student finishes, the teacher asks everyone, "What is a boarding school?" A discussion begins, where the students try to explain what it is. Norwegian is used consistently as they try to explain it, both by the teacher and the students. Eventually they agree that it is the same as 'Kostskule' or 'Internatskule' in Norway.

After the discussion, the teacher asks, "What does dusk mean?" "Skumring," one student says. The teacher replies, "That's right. Have any of you heard the saying, 'from dawn to dusk'?" Some students raise their hands.

Another student reads after being picked, the teacher corrects mispronunciations. She continues to follow up with a question every time a student finishes reading, this time asking, "Where is the state of Arizona?" The students discuss in short among themselves in Norwegian, but are unsure. "What about its neighbouring states?" "New Mexico," one student says. Another says, "Nevada." The teacher answers both, saying, "Yes, that's right." Then she asks, "What is the capital city of Arizona?" The students seem unsure, and after a short while with no suggestions, the teacher provides the answer, saying, "It's Phoenix."

She picks another student to read. When he finishes, the teacher asks, "What is a mayor?" One student raises his hand, and says, "Borgermester." "Correct," the teacher says, before picking the next student who must read. During reading, the student mispronounces 'stagecoach'. The teacher corrects him intrusively in the reading process by recasting the word with correct pronunciation. The student continues to read from the point where he mispronounced 'stagecoach', this time pronouncing it correctly. Since this is the last lesson of the day, they end it early to tidy the classroom and pack up.

5 Analysis

In this chapter I analyse the observations systematically. By looking for characteristics of the four methods in chapter three, I aim to interpret which method a given lesson *leans towards*. I say lean towards because it is perfectly plausible that a lesson contains characteristics from a variety of methods.

Furthermore, though most research discusses its data in the past tense, I use the present because it works well with the narrative style of the research. The conclusion is done similarly.

5.1 Observation A

One characteristic we can discern from observation A, is how the students' native language is used. The teacher seems to do what is indicative of CLT: thoughtful use. We see two situations where it is exemplified. First, a girl wants to say something about what kind of clothes Mary Quant makes, but in Norwegian, which the teacher allows. Second, when students sometimes use Norwegian she does not address it, while other times she encourages them to use English instead. Such an inconsistency

could be explained by the principle of thoughtful use. Maybe, since she knows how proficient each individual student is in English, she chooses to encourage those who she means are capable enough to use the target language. The students who she feels are not as able, can assist themselves using Norwegian.

Another observation worth noting, is when the teacher chooses to tolerate mistakes after a student says, “She makes, uhm, clothes that was, uhm, kind of, short, and, uhm, had a lot of colours” (concord and tense error). This could be indicative of how CLT views errors. That is, rather than remarking errors, the teacher sees value in the student getting the message across. Although the student’s utterance is not flawless, he is a successful communicator because we understand his message. On the other hand, it is possible that the teacher did not detect the errors. Additionally, it might be unreasonable to argue that the lesson leans toward CLT based on just one such remark. However, there were no other times during the lesson where errors were remarked by the teacher.

Despite these observations of CLT characteristics, there are aspects which point the lesson in other directions. In fact, one observation is much against the values of CLT; the teacher uses display questions. After just having read a text about Mary Quant, the teacher asks questions like, “Who is the text about?” and “What is she known for?” In the perspective of CLT, these are meaningless questions; both the teacher and the students know the answers.

Furthermore, the session where they go through the glossary is indicative of Audiolingualism and Grammar-Translation; although there is no *repetition*, some might argue there is a certain *drill* aspect to it. Additionally, the emphasis on translation is indicative of Grammar-Translation. On the other hand, the translation session might be the teacher making sure the students have the ‘tools’ to *understand* the text. In that case, there is focus on *meaning*.

Generally, the lesson seems characteristic of a variety of methods because there is focus on translation, writing, speaking, and listening. Furthermore, there are characteristics of CLT, but there are also display questions. In addition, the teacher seems to be both an authority, and a helper and facilitator of activities. Such a variance could mean (a) that the teacher’s actions are implicit, or (b) that the teacher is aware and chooses to do what she thinks is best. The latter case fits well with the principles of adapted education and varied working methods, which are promoted in LK06 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011).

5.2 Observation B

In observation B, the teacher uses *demonstration* and *visualization*, which is indicative of the Direct Method. When she hints that the members of The Beatles' hair style is one of the reasons why parents did not like them, she fiddles with her own. Also, she demonstrates and draws on the blackboard as she explains what a bandana is. Interestingly, the students do it as well. For example, one student tries to explain what a swastika is, and draws the symbol.

Altogether, the lesson might be perceived as typical of the Direct method; only the target language is used. In addition, the teacher seems to encourage direct and spontaneous speech. On the other hand, the teacher does not seem concerned with student errors, like language forms and pronunciation. Thus, the lesson seems more indicative of CLT. That is, there seems to be focus on meaning, not form. When she asks what a swastika/thug/bandana is, she is not looking for translations, which would be indicative of the Grammar-Translation Method. Neither is she looking for the students to answer in full sentences, like, "A bandana is a type of cloth," which is characteristic of the Direct Method. She simply wants the students to express meaning in a way that feels natural to them, which is another characteristic of CLT. That is, students can express themselves in a variety of linguistic forms.

Furthermore, we notice the three features which characterizes communicative and meaningful exchange: choice, feedback, and information gap. Choice is present because, as we have mentioned, students seem to express themselves how they want; utterances are not tightly controlled. Feedback is present by the teacher's short replies, recasting, and elaborations. For example, when the students explain how they could rebel against their parents, she replies, "Ok," followed by a smile, "Alright," followed by a chuckle, and "Ok," followed by "What kind of music would you play?" as a follow-up question. Last, we see an information gap in the type of questions the teacher asks. She does not use display questions, like in A; she seems to ask meaningful questions where either she or the students know the answers. For example, when she asks what they do to rebel against their parents, *she* is the one in the exchange that does not know the answer. When she asks what they think parents thought about The Beatles years ago, *they* are the ones who do not know.

However, as a whole, it might be reasonable to say that the lesson leans more toward the Direct Method. We notice several of its central characteristics, like (1) use of demonstration and visualization, (2) no use of the students' native language, (3) encouragement of direct speech, and (4) the overall emphasis on oral skills. Although we can discern characteristics of CLT, the remarks I make are not seemingly the method's most distinguishing features. One of CLT's most distinctive

characteristics is the teacher's role as a facilitator of activities, and helper as the students work. In this lesson, however, the teacher seems to mostly *direct*. Except for the short activity at the end, the students are essentially passive learners, making it hard to argue that the lesson is indicative of CLT.

5.3 Observation C

In observation C, we can discern several characteristics of the Grammar-Translation Method. Furthermore, it seems relatively *safe* to identify the lesson as typical of Grammar-Translation. Because, the lesson does not seem to point in directions of other methods. It does not seem indicative of CLT because the students do no activities. Also, there is generally no emphasis on meaning. It is not indicative of Audiolingualism since there is no drilling or repetition. Since there is regular use of the students' native language, it is not indicative of the Direct Method.

The goal of Grammar-Translation is to enable students to read literature in the target language. In the lesson, we see that the main activity is to read passages about Native Americans. Furthermore, accuracy seems to be emphasized; the teacher consistently corrects students who mispronounce words.

Another remark is the role of the teacher; she is an authority and in control of the classroom. We see this in how the teacher directs the entire lesson from behind her desk. The students are passive learners who learn what she knows. Generally, the impression is that there is focus on learning the language, not how to *use* the language.

Furthermore, there seems to be focus on translation. Whenever the teacher asks what a word means, the correct answer is the translation of it. It stands in contrast to the teacher in observation A, where the students use English to explain the word.

Last, it seems that the students' native language is used regularly used without restrictions, by both the teacher and the students. Students have opportunities to speak more directly and spontaneous when the teacher asks them questions. However, when they do, their answers are short, like, "Indians," and "Nevada."

6 Conclusion

By analysing three English lessons, I have deduced which language teaching methods are discernible from them. At first, observation A seemed indicative of CLT; the teacher uses the students' native language thoughtfully, and ignores student errors. However, I later remarked that the lesson also

carries characteristics of other methods. Additionally, I observed that the teacher uses display questions, which contradicts the idea of the lesson being typical of CLT. Consequently, I concluded that the lesson uses a variety of methods.

In observation B, I found that, as a whole, it seems reasonable to say that the lesson leans towards the Direct Method; there is use of demonstration and visualization, no use of the students' native language, encouragement of direct speech, and emphasis on oral skills. Despite mentioning characteristics of CLT, I noted that its most distinct feature is absent. That is, the teacher's role as a facilitator of activities, and helper as the students work. Consequently, I concluded that the students are passive learners, making it hard to argue that the lesson is indicative of CLT.

In observation C, I first remarked that it is relatively *safe* to say that the lesson is indicative of the Grammar-Translation Method. I argue for such by noting that the lesson does not seem to be characteristic of other methods. Since there are no activities and generally no emphasis on meaning, it is not indicative of CLT. It is not characteristic of Audiolingualism since there is no drilling or repetition. Because the students and teacher use Norwegian regularly, it is not indicative of the Direct Method. Further, the observations indicating that the lesson is typical of Grammar-Translation are: (1) reading passages as the main activity of the lesson, (2) emphasis on accuracy, (3) the role of the teacher as an authority in control, (4) focus on translation, and (5) use of the students' native language.

Perhaps, what is more interesting is not the concluding remarks of each lesson, but the *process of analysing them*. There is value in analysing how teachers teach; it uncovers implicit thoughts about teaching and, more importantly, provides new tools for them to adapt their practice. Because *adapt* is the key word; maybe the goal of language teachers is not to search for a *best* method, or even settle on a certain teaching style which one believes in, but to rather possess the knowledge which enables them to adapt their practice. There are a vast number of variables in a classroom. To mention a few: size of class, attitudinal factors, motivation, age, class relationships, discipline, and aptitude for learning. How well does a communicative approach work in a classroom with shy, quiet, and cautious students who have uncertain relationships with each other? Contrastively, how well does Grammar-Translation work in a classroom with unreserved, energetic, and restless students who constantly need new things to do?

Such a view emphasizes that teachers need to be able to adapt their practice according to a vast amount of factors, such as student variables and classroom contexts.

6.1 Future Research

It would be interesting to do this research on a larger scale to look for teaching *trends*. As I mention in chapter 1.1, this thesis is unable to do so; such a task would require larger data samples. Additionally, it would require a more systematic approach for measuring teaching styles.

Furthermore, this research restricts itself by not going into whether the teachers are aware of their choices. It would be complementary to do an action research; one could research to which degree teachers' actions are implicit.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A



Høgskulen
på Vestlandet

Rektor [NAMN REKTOR] ved [NAMN SKULE]

Sogndal, 05.03.2017

Informasjon om bacheloroppgåve og datainnsamling.

Mitt namn er [NAMN STUDENT]. Eg går tredje året på grunnskulelærer 5-10 ved Høgskulen på Vestlandet, campus Sogndal.

I løpet av våren skal eg skrive ei bacheloroppgåve. Oppgåva skal vere profesjonsretta, og den skal kunne knytast til praksisfeltet eller andre sider ved skulen si verksemd. Temaet eg har valt for mi oppgåve er *metodebruk i engelskfaget* med problemstillinga «Kva slags metodar, det vil seie teknikkar og prinsipp, ligg til bakgrunn for nokre lærarpraksisar i engelskundervisninga?» Eg vil med dette spørje om de kunne vere interesserte i å vere informantar i denne oppgåva.

Eg vil gjerne observere engelsktimar på ungdomstrinnet, og spør dermed om løyve til å vere med i undervisningstimane til nokre engelskfaglærarar. Eg vil gjerne vere innom ulike lærarar, slik at eg får sett forskjellige praksisar. Kor mange timar eg kan vere med på er opp til deg, men dess fleire eg kan observere, dess betre.

Under observasjonen vil det ikkje vere nytta noko lydopptak eller filming. Det vil heller ikkje vere noko form for kontakt, som samtale, mellom elevane og meg sjølv. Timen skal ideelt sett gå som om eg ikkje er til stede. Det eg vil sjå etter er moment som: *Er læraren ein autoritet eller ein «guide» i undervisninga? Kor mykje pratar læraren engelsk? Kor mykje pratar han/ho norsk? Kva slags oppgåver jobbar dei med i timen? Korleis rettar læraren på elevane?*

Eg vil gjerne gjennomføre undersøkinga på ein av desse dagane:

- Veke 11: Alle dagar passar.
- Veke 12: Tysdag eller fredag.
- Veke 13: Måndag, tysdag, torsdag, fredag.
- Veke 14: Måndag, tysdag, torsdag, fredag.
- Veke 15: Måndag, tysdag, onsdag, torsdag, fredag.
- Veke 16: Måndag, tysdag, torsdag, fredag.

Ta kontakt med meg eller mine rettleiarar ved HVL Sogndal om det er noko de lurar på.

Venleg helsing

[NAMN STUDENT]

Mail: [EMAIL]

Tlf. [TELEFONNUMMER]

Rettleiarar: [Rettleiar 1]

(Tlf. 57676023 Mail: [MAIL RETTLEIAR 1])

[Rettleiar 2]

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8.2 Appendix B



Høgskulen
på Vestlandet

Samtykkeerklæring for observasjon

Ved å underteikne dette dokumentet, samtykker ein til observasjon av [ANTALL TIMAR] i engelskfaget ved [NAMN SKULE]. Observasjonen er retta mot både lærar og elevar.

Informanten og den som observerer er klar over at:

1. Under observasjonen vil det ikkje vert nytta noko lydopptak eller filming. Det vil heller ikkje vere noko form for interaksjon, som samtale, mellom elevane og meg sjølv. Timen skal ideelt sett gå som om det ikkje blir observert.
2. Det vil ikkje bli spurt etter nokre namn i forbindelse med undersøkinga. Alle opplysningar vil bli behandla konfidensielt i tråd med NSD sine malar. Namn på skule, lærarar og elevar vert anonymisert. Dette gjelder notat, skisser og anna materiale brukt i prosessen.

Eg har lest og forstått informasjonen over og gir samtykke til observasjon av undervisningstimar i engelskfaget ved [NAMN SKULE].

Sted og dato

Signatur informant

Signatur datainnsamlar



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