



University Ziane Achour, Djelfa

Master Two

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Language Approaches and Teaching Methods

Department of Foreign Languages

First Term

English Division

Didactics Students

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#### 4. The Silent Way

According to cognitive psychologists and transformational generative linguists language learning does not take place through mimicry since people can create utterances they have never heard before. That is the reason why language must not be considered a product of habit formation, but rather a rule formation. Language acquisition must be a procedure where people use their own thinking processes, or cognition to discover the rules of the language they are acquiring. The emphasis on human cognition led to the name “cognitive code” being applied to a new general approach to language teaching. Caleb Gattegno’s Silent Way did not emerge from the cognitive code approach it shares certain principles with it. In the Silent Way teaching should be subordinated to learning.

The goal of the method is to enable students to use the language for selfexpression to express their thoughts, perceptions and feelings. In order to do this they need to develop independence from the teacher, to develop their own inner criteria for correctness.

#### **The Principles of the Silent Way :**

- The teacher is a technician or engineer, only the learner can do the learning but the teacher can focus the students’ perceptions, force their awareness;
- for much of the students-teacher interaction the teacher is silent; he is still very active setting up situations to force awareness; when the teacher speaks it is to give clues not to model the language; student-student verbal interaction is desirable and is encouraged;
- the students’ native language can be used to give instructions when necessary to help a

student improve his/her pronunciation; the native language is also used during the feed-back sessions;

- vocabulary is restricted at first;

- there is a focus on the structures of the language, although explicit grammar rules may never be supplied;

- pronunciation is worked on from the beginning, it is important that students acquire the melody of the language;

- all four skills are worked on from the beginning of the course, although there is a sequence in that students learn to read or write what they have already produced orally; the skills reinforce what students are learning;

- the culture as reflected in people's own unique world view is inseparable from their language;

- the teacher never gives a formal test, he assesses student learning all the time; the teacher must be responsive to immediate learning needs; the teacher does not praise or criticize student behaviour since this would interfere with students developing their own inner criteria; the teacher looks for steady progress, not perfection;

- students' errors are seen as a natural, indispensable part of the learning process, errors are inevitable since the students are encouraged to explore the language; the teacher uses student errors as a basis for deciding where further work is necessary;

- there is no fixed linear, structural syllabus, instead the teacher starts with what the students know and builds from one structure to the next; the previously introduced structures are continually being recycled.

### **Activities Characteristic of the Method:**

- sound-colour chart (The chart contains blocks of colour, each one representing a sound in the target language. The chart allows students to produce sound combinations in the target language without doing so through repetition.)

- teacher's silence (The teacher gives just as much help as is necessary and then is silent. Even in error correction the teacher will only supply a verbal answer as a last resort.)

- peer correction

- rods (Rods can be used to provide visible actions or situations for any language structure to introduce it, or to enable students to practice using it.)

- self correction gestures (The teacher indicates for example that each of his fingers represents

a word in a sentence and uses this to locate the trouble spot for the student.)

- word chart

- Fidel charts (The teacher points to the colour coded Fidel charts in order that students can associate the sounds of the language with their spelling.)

structured feed-back (The teacher accepts the students' comments in a non-defensive manner hearing things that will help give him direction for where he should work when the class meets again.) (Larsen-Freeman 1986: 51-72)