

Szilvia Zörgő

## ORGANIC AND KINESTHETIC ESL PEDAGOGY:

### A DESCRIPTION OF THE HYBRID METHOD AND ITS APPLICATION

*The key to every man is his thought. Sturdy and defying though he look, he has a helm which he obeys, which is the idea after which all his facts are classified. He can only be reformed by showing him a new idea which commands his own. The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end... Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth, that around every circle another can be drawn.*  
Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Circles*

#### 1. Introduction

The picture so vividly presented by the transcendentalist writer is the geometry of learning. We come to see the world and classify information according to certain principles and through the process of learning affirm or redefine them. The function of the pedagogue is to urge students to continuously draw their own circles, expanding into the world, exploring and encompassing all to enrich and perfect who they are as individuals and as members of their society.

The following will present a method for teaching English as a second language, as well as its application: class management, teaching techniques and modes of assessment. The description will incorporate my experiences gained over six years of teaching English privately and to small groups, as well as my teaching practice (as a part of teacher training), conducted at a Hungarian public high school. I have continuously worked on this method, having applied it in teaching children between ages 11 to 16; and although I have employed versions of it with older students, young teenagers will be the “target group” for the purposes of this paper. This choice was based upon the fact that I have applied my method with this age-group for most of my teaching career, thus could observe it in practice and document its successes and points to improve on.

#### Characteristics of the Target Group

In considering a certain method and techniques to be applied, the pedagogue must be aware of age-related conflicts their students face, whether it is young children or adults and although each student must be seen as a separate identity, an individual with their own personality and dilemmas, common problems and characteristics among peers can be pinpointed. These commonalities must open a dialogue with the pedagogical approach taken and must be allowed to shape the method itself.

Aside from the physiological changes puberty induces, teenagers most prominently deal with defining who they are, their place in their peer-group and society. Self-ideal (long-term ideals governing personality), self-image and self-esteem are all important factors of identity, self-image (directly linked to self-esteem) being the most prone to instability during puberty. To form an identity and be a part of their social environment, they experiment with different social roles<sup>154</sup>, try different manners of behavior with their peers. At the same time, they are in the midst of separating from their parents emotionally, and are beginning to assume responsibility for themselves and their actions.

For a teenager it is extremely important to be accepted by their environment, especially the acknowledgement of parents and belonging to a reference group. According to psychologist Erik Erikson, teens re-live certain crises they have already resolved in earlier stages of their lives. He names four such crises: 1) *establishing trust* (teens search

<sup>154</sup> A social role is the aggregate of behavioral norms characterizing a certain position in society.

for people who they can believe in and who they can prove themselves to), 2) *establishing autonomy* (emotional, cognitive and behavioral), 3) *the need for initiative* (strive to implement their dreams and goals), and 4) *the need for accomplishment* (accomplishing what the teacher assigns, appointing own goals, taking responsibility for the quality of their work). These general problems and characteristics this age-group faces may already enter a discourse with general pedagogical considerations and pave way for a more specific method further on.

### General Pedagogical Considerations

In reaction to the conflicts and characteristics above, children of this age must be aided in their search to define themselves and secure their self-image. They should be encouraged to try different social roles and to build their self-esteem; the latter most prominently achieved by frequent praise and constructive criticism. It is also important to encourage them in their social and educational ventures, in challenging themselves, in maintaining persistence and following through on their initiatives. The teacher must also place great value on what their students accomplish, assessing their accomplishments in relation to their own progress and abilities. Yet since peer-feedback is equally important for a teenager, a constructive forum must be provided for peers to respond to each other.

The teaching of giving and receiving constructive criticism should be a pedagogical goal in itself, for it capitalizes on critical thinking in relation to others and oneself, as well as the mastery of reasoning. These are important tools in adult life regardless of a chosen profession and make for a vital part of cognitive education.

Before examining more general educational goals, the two aspects of education will be discussed. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines education as "systematic training and instruction; knowledge and abilities, development of character and mental powers, resulting from such training" (280). While the above definition seems incomplete, the word "educate" comes closer by stating it is to "give intellectual and moral training". In Hungarian, these aspects are separated into two individual words: *oktatás* (intellectual training) and *nevelés* (physical, intellectual and moral training).

The goals of moral training, according to Sándor Imre, are always two-fold: on the level of the individual and of society. The exploration and understanding of different cultures, through relativism, has taught us that there are few, if any, universal standards of morality. Therefore, how an individual is educated (in all senses of the word) depends greatly on the values of their society. As mentioned above, the Hungarian language and pedagogy distinguishes "nevelés" and "oktatás." Let us view the categories and goals based on Imre's description:

Aspect	Nevelés	Oktatás	Resulting in
Physical education	The protection and development of the body and adaptation to new physical tasks, development of resistance or fitness	Development of movement: mimicking, manipulation and correction, coordination, automatization	a healthy lifestyle
Intellectual education	The protection and development of the mind and adaptation to new mental tasks, aiding the formation of guiding intellectual principles	Cognitive development: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation	intellectual autonomy
Moral education	The protection and development of the moral sense, ennoblement of emotions, aiding the formation of guiding moral principles and character	Development of emotion and will: openness, tolerance, reaction and cooperation, organization of values	decency and character

The differences between moral and intellectual aspects of education (nevelés/oktatás) are subtle and their meanings are intricately intertwined. Yet making the distinction is perhaps most important in relation to pedagogical attitude and responsibilities. The teacher must be aware of their two-fold task: they not only convey and develop knowledge, but also play a vital part in the child's socialization and moral evolution. The chart can be reduced to a simple, yet complex goal: education must prepare the student and develop their ability to lead a constructive life as an individual and as a member of society.

## General Principles of the Hybrid Method

Taking the age-specific characteristics (teenage emphasis on identity-formation and achievement) and general pedagogical concerns (constructive life in physical, intellectual and moral sense) into consideration, we can now move on to method-specific factors. In other words, what does the hybrid method place emphasis on? The organic-kinesthetic method is a learner-centered way to teach English as a second language; it focuses mainly on developing communicative competence, as opposed to solely gaining lexical knowledge without the ability to apply it in everyday life. Through techniques such as drama, role-play/simulation, and creative writing, it builds on the students' natural inquisitiveness, allowing learning, to a certain degree, to direct itself. Referring back to the Eriksonian crises, this pedagogical view or approach allows the student to develop intellectual autonomy, gain a sense of initiative and accomplishment through a shared authority in determining areas of study.

In the following sections, a more detailed description of the "organic" and "kinesthetic" elements will be explained, an elaboration on collaboration and group work as a form of its class management, and clarification of the above mentioned techniques. Finally, I will address student assessment in light of this method and its principles.

## 2. The Organic-Kinesthetic Method

The educator must be as one inspired by a deep *worship of life*, and must, through this reverence, *respect*, while he observes with human interest, the *development* of the child life. Now, child life is not an abstraction; it is the *life of individual children*.

There exists only one real biological manifestation: the living individual; and toward single individuals, one by one observed, education must direct itself. By education must be understood the active *help* given to the normal expansion of the life of the child.

– Dr. Maria Montessori<sup>155</sup>

### 2.1 The Organic Metaphor

The organic metaphor pictures second language learning more like a garden than building a wall. To elaborate, learners do not learn one linguistic element at a time and after its mastery move on to another, but rather learn several items simultaneously and imperfectly. "The linguistic flowers do not all appear at the same time, nor do they all grow at the same rate. Some even appear to wilt, for a time, before renewing their growth" (Nunan 109). The areas and rate of growth are determined by the interaction of several factors: employed techniques and specific tasks, speech processing constraints, pedagogical interventions, acquisitional processes and the influence of the discourse environment in which the item occurs (Nunan 109). Additionally, in a given material or level, it is the task itself and the process which the student goes through to complete it, that thematically direct the course of the material to follow. In this manner, the organic approach to learning and teaching simulates first language acquisition, where we see many aspects of our entire environment and learn in many areas simultaneously.

Those who adhere to the linear approach (wall) of instruction often present topics incoherently and grammar out of context. "Learners are confronted with decontextualized structures at a sentence level, and are expected to internalize these structures through exercises involving repetition, manipulation, and grammatical transformation" (Nunan 109). Although these tasks may result in a solid lexical knowledge, it denies students the opportunity to see the systematic relationship between form and function, that is, they do not develop communicative competence. This competence, charged with culture-specific knowledge, is vital in all instances of language use, with the exception of the traditional classroom.

As stated under the general principles of the hybrid method, the development of communica-

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155 Montessori 1912:98.

tive competence is of the utmost importance. This competence, which entails and embraces several sub-competences, was first defined by Dell Hymes, anthropologist and linguist. He described it as “not only knowing *the grammatical rules of a language* but also *what to say to whom* in what circumstances and how to say it; that is, the rules of grammar are useless without the rules of language use” (Hymes 5). Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell developed a refined model of communicative competence in relation to second language acquisition and state that it is a set of knowledge and skills, which embraces:

*Linguistic competence* (the knowledge of the basic elements of the language code: syntax, morphology, vocabulary, phonology, orthography)

*Discourse competence* (the ability to combine language structures into different types of unified spoken and written discourse: dialogue, poetry, academic writing, etc)

*Actional competence* (the ability to understand and convey communicative intent by interpreting and performing language functions: complimenting, agreeing/disagreeing, predicting, suggesting)

*Socio-cultural competence* (the understanding of the socio-cultural rules of language use: appropriate vocabulary, politeness, style in any given situation, non-verbal communication)

*Strategic competence* (the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, in other words, the ability to express oneself in the face of difficulties or limited language proficiency).<sup>156</sup>

Pedagogues must be aware there is more to language acquisition than linguistic knowledge; “there is only a handful of grammatical rules that are free from discourse constraints” (Nunan 109). If learners are not taught grammar in context and are not prompted to employ the knowledge in a multitude of situations, it will be difficult for them to understand how and why alternative forms express different communicative meanings. Through an organic approach, students learn to form linguistic structures correctly, as well as learn how to use these structures to communicate meaning.

Additionally, organic methodology permits the task itself to generate further topics and linguistic areas of study. For example, in one of my small groups of beginners, I had the 11 year olds

start drawing a cartoon on their third week of class. They dubbed the cartoon “Bob’s Story” and created the initial plot with the superhero/everyday guy in Hungarian. Periodically throughout the year, they were asked to brainstorm about the story and together phrase the sentences in English, but each student was to have a separate copy of the text and individual illustrations. We spent in-class time on the stories every other week, and as their grammar and vocabulary developed, the more intricate the plot became and its language more sophisticated. Every time they wanted to use a tense we had not studied sufficiently or at all until that point, we worked with that topic after the task was finished. For instance, a boy asked me, “How do you make [conditional tense]<sup>157</sup>? Because Bob has a dilemma...” I was happy the tense was introduced and we spent that class and several others afterwards practicing conditionals. This on-going cartoon project provided a great opportunity for new grammar and vocabulary to *introduce itself organically* through the natural inquisitiveness of the children, as well as the natural inclination to always ‘outdo’ themselves. I also observed a deep desire to convey exactly what they thought and how they imagined things – this is something to build every task on and is very much like a wave, which if the pedagogue does not ‘ride,’ they ignore the child’s natural impulse and desire to learn language.

The on-going cartoon project served another function as well: it illustrated the continuous development of the children, a piece of proof for them – from simple descriptive phrases like “His shirt was white and his hair was brown”, they could see the introduction of additional characters, intricate sentences and vocabulary from a plethora of topics. The topics were exactly those that interested them and motivated them even further.

Motivation is a central component of learning. We distinguish two sources of motivation: *extrinsic*, based on external rewards (grades, diplomas, advancement, and so on) or threats (from teachers, family, society, and the like) and *intrinsic*, based on internal factors (love of language, culture, desire to learn, succeed). Of course one could argue all motivation, regardless of what we attribute it to, is internal but we cannot neglect *what* motivates us to learn, it has an effect on the learning process as a whole, its outcome and even our attitude towards learning itself. As the cartoon project example illus-

156 Celce-Murcia – Dörnyei – Thurrell 5-35.

157 The phrase “conditional tense” was said in Hungarian.

trates and as psychological/pedagogical studies have shown, the teacher's goal should be the (creation and) maintenance of the students' intrinsic motivation. Integrative motivation<sup>158</sup> and instrumental motivation also have an intensive propelling force, perhaps more so with older students who are already thinking about foreign cultures and profession-related plans. I would like to highlight a special source of intrinsic motivation in relation to the method and target group discussed here: cognitive motivation, or in other words, 'simple' curiosity.

Cognitive motivation impels the individual to seek new sensory stimuli, to explore their environment, to discover new phenomena, and even to complete an interesting task in English class. Anything that is new, exciting and challenging; anything that tickles the imagination; anything that is fascinating or unusual either in content or form – will, through cognitive motivation, propel the student to think, act and accomplish. Setting the mind and body into motion is facilitating learning; learning is through the motion of the mind and body.

## 2.2 The Kinesthetic Element

We habitually *serve* children; and this is not only an act of servility toward them, but it is dangerous, since it tends to suffocate their useful, spontaneous activity. We do not stop to think that the child *who does not do, does not know how to do*.

– Dr. Maria Montessori<sup>159</sup>

We examined organic pedagogy in one aspect, as a means to place grammar and vocabulary in context (or rather to *keep* them in context) to develop communicative competence. In the other aspect, we observed the as method as one that allows the task to generate topics in accordance with the student's natural flow of interests. These sustain intrinsic motivation but the tasks themselves need to capture the student's imagination. Before investigating specific techniques, it is important to review the other 'half' of the hybrid method, which is kinesthetic pedagogy.

It is difficult to deny that we learn best from our own experience. The child who has been warned repeatedly not to touch the hot stove will, in fact, touch it and learn from the burn. Young children

actively use all their senses to explore and understand the world. With increased knowledge, experience and the development of cognitive functions, older individuals do not necessarily have to *try* everything or *see* everything to believe it or understand it. Yet the senses remain pivotal in learning, whether it be solely hearing (a lecture) or seeing (a book), or all senses simultaneously, as when you walk down a street in a foreign country. As we get older and use our cognition at a richer level, it tends to blunt our senses. Imagine a school environment where the students' senses are required and motivated to stay keen; imagine what cognition would be capable of with such 'raw material' from the senses. Everything we see, hear, feel, smell, and taste can teach. These are just our basic, physical senses; we still have not spoken of meta-communication.

The pedagogue teaches with their entire being: the words they utter, the content they convey, the facial mimicry they employ, the body language they use, allowing meta-communication to be expressed in every moment of the class. Unfortunately, many teachers do not or can not harmonize all of the above and either neglect meta-communicative factors, thus sending *partial* information to the receiver (student), or do not harmonize the verbal and non-verbal messages, resulting in a mixed message the receiver cannot decode correctly. Both basic senses and meta-communicative senses need to be developed, sharpened and continuously used for optimized learning and teaching. Not only do we learn more efficiently if we use all our available 'channels,' but information is also secured and imprinted better in this manner.

In teacher training practice, I had my class write assessments at the end of our time together and one of the questions posed was "What was the most memorable moment/thing in class?" Eighty percent of the students responded their most memorable moment was when learning past continuous, which I taught by separating the structure as: past tense of 'be' + verb + ing. ('ing' in Hungarian means 'shirt'). I was writing the structure up on the board and explaining it. When I reached the point of the 'ing' I pulled out a blue shirt on a hanger from my bag and hung it up on the board instead of writing out 'ing.' A few moments passed before the class understood the pun, but then they all started laughing. The shirt was effective because it provided a visual representation of an abstract linguistic element, helping students to learn the item and remember it.

158 The need/desire to join target language groups  
159 Montessori 1912:97.

Modern pedagogical literature is awash with justifications for ‘learning styles.’ These reflect the primary way our bodies take in information. Their classification is founded on *perceptual modalities* or intelligences, which are biologically-based reactions to our physical environment and the way we most efficiently process data (Hood, Mantle 1). Since Howard Gardner’s theory of “multiple intelligences<sup>160</sup>,” we distinguish the following learning styles: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial/visual, musical, kinesthetic/tactual, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Unfortunately, as not all the senses are roused during a class, not all perceptual modalities are addressed. A pedagogue cannot live up to the expectation of catering to all learner styles, but at the same time it is poor pedagogy to distill the world to one sense and one-or-two modalities. Yet if we look at senses and intelligences more closely, we may see most senses are provoked by movement and movement stimulates many modalities. If a task involves movement of some kind, it will kindle much more.

Ultimately, it depends on how we define movement and how we can incorporate it in tasks. What does the method consider kinesthetic pedagogy? In the respect of the pedagogue, it requires teaching with one’s entire being, as discussed above: verbal and non-verbal instruction, harmonizing the meta-communicative message (body language, facial gestures, tone) with form and content. In the respect of class work, it considers cooperative learning a form of movement in itself (see next section). On the level of technique, it aims to provide students with operational tasks through “modality-based instruction” (Hood 1).

In what is called *the frontal method*, verbal education has a central role. The student needs to imagine and register all of the material delivered by the teacher and is expected to interiorize all operations<sup>161</sup>. In *the traditional method*, there are readily available demonstrational objects as symbols of op-

erations, but this could mean nothing to the student if their perceptual modality is not congruent with the mode of illustration. There exists a transitional approach between the traditional and ‘new’ method, where the demonstrative objects are made/assembled in front of the class, as the students internally mimic the operation. While a new form of pedagogy employs the actual, physical completion of the operation and with it, experimentation and interiorization.

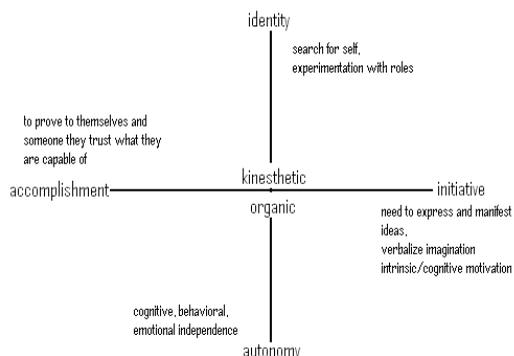
Therefore, an operational task involving movement in an English class can be anything from role play and simulation to a drama presentation, but it can also be illustrating new words with their bodies, miming or presenting their drawings to the class. As hinted at before, movement triggers many of the senses and caters to many modalities. Role play, for instance: aside from developing communicative competence, caters to the verbal/linguistic, the spatial/visual, and the interpersonal intelligences, through kinesthetic pedagogy. ‘Simple role play’ can be extended to contain ‘observers’ who constructively comment on or summarize the task afterwards; this generates a sub-task for students with an intrapersonal modality. Another example is with creative writing and drama. Students write a short story in modality-based groups and then are required to present it in some form (play, ‘music video,’ cartoon presentation, narration, etc). This stimulates and employs many intelligences. On a class level, this leaves students with the experience of seeing a story, a grammatical element or a certain set of words, from multiple points of view, thus helping them to learn and remember the material better. If ten students are asked to mime or present a new word in some way, it will lead to ten different manifestations of the same word: drawn, mimicked, explained, sung, and so on. All of the above necessitate movement and generates forums for several modalities. Eiszler claims that varying teaching strategies to address all channels promotes learning no matter what students’ preferences of cognitive styles are (231-242). This is ‘kinesthetic’ extended to involve all movement, whether it be group work as a means, or presentation as an ends.

Before discussing collaborative learning as class management, it is important to review the main points in consideration as outlined in the chart below.

160 Howard Gardner: *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, 1993. The theory stated there are at least seven different learner styles, as opposed to three.

161 According to Piaget, an operation is the internal completion of a procedure. Children in a pre-operational phase, for example, need to use their fingers to count, while adults are capable of doing this in their head.

### **Characteristics of target group and pedagogical considerations**



The graph shows the Eriksonian teenage dilemmas (need for autonomy, initiative, accomplishment and trust) as well as the pivotal quest for identity. They are joined in a singularity of communicative competence from which, as a means of conveying autonomy and social stance, all competences and actions stem. Without the competence of communication (first or second language), we cannot develop and employ our identity as individuals or our place in society. To refer back to the main goal of two-fold education (oktatás and nevelés): without developing our communicative competence, we cannot lead constructive lives. The graph also portrays the areas where kinesthetic and organic pedagogy aids the resolution of a specific crisis; this is not as simple as categorizing one crisis under a single pedagogy, it is just a rough illustration. There exists a close interaction between the two pedagogies, which is why it is a hybrid method.

As we will see in the section discussing techniques: drama, role-play and simulation (kinesthetic elements) provoke the student to try new roles, examine themselves critically from many perspectives and induce a strong sense of identity-exploration. This, optimally results in a stable self-image (due to experience and learning from multifaceted sources) and good self-esteem. This is the result of acknowledgement from peers and the teacher. The organic element of the method helps more in establishing a sense of autonomy and initiative. If the student senses they share authority with the teacher (directing the material to some extent), they will also sense a shared responsibility to learn. The problem with large classes being taught with traditional methods is that anonymity among students happens easily. „Does the teacher even care about what I want, what I have learned, what I want to learn,

what I am good at?” the student may ask justly. The answer in most cases is no. Unfortunately, large classes and mass education are not only inadequate learning environments for the student, they are also atrocious environments for teaching.

In clarifying organic pedagogy it must be noted that it does not equal either chaos, or uncontrolled learning permitted to deviate from centralized, level-based requirements. The centrally or individually demanded material is taught, only not in a pre-determined order. The topics are guided by careful planning. The task can be anticipated to generate several questions and themes, it is only a matter of preparation and reacting spontaneously to events, keeping in mind the general direction learning must take (Olaf 1). The method indeed entails the pedagogue to be prepared in a very wide range of topics supported by a multitude of tasks applicable in many areas of study. Perhaps the most difficult obligation of the teacher is to *get to know* her or his students through careful observation. To know the students' learning styles, their interests, how and who they work best with, to know their weaknesses and their goals. In addition, they need to know their language level, skills and weaknesses. Children are sensitive to these aspects; they will feel it if the pedagogue does not care for them as individuals. In a school environment, they wish to establish trust with an adult; the obvious choice is with their teacher. The establishment of trust is unattainable if they do not sense caring. If there is no trust between student and pedagogue, learning and teaching is extremely difficult. „The educator must be as one inspired by a deep *worship of life*, and must, through this reverence, respect, while he observes with human interest, the *development of the child life*” (Montessori 98). If one does not see the miracle of learning, they will not achieve the miracle of teaching.

### **3. Collaborative Learning as Class Management**

Most methods, similar to ideologies, seem coherent and complete in their abstraction. It is their practical application that determines and demonstrates their worth. The first practical aspect of the hybrid method is its mode of organizing the learning process. Collaborative learning entails: modified student/teacher roles (compared to non-collaborative pedagogy), cooperation and group work.

In a collaborative classroom, authority is shared among teacher and students in setting common goals and decision-making (Tinzmann 1). The teacher becomes the leader of the group who influences and guides students towards a goal. Others compare this function to that of orchestra conductors. On this level, the pedagogical aim is ‘scaffolding,’ to give the child increasing responsibility for the task while continuing to support them in it. It takes place within the student’s zone of proximal development<sup>162</sup>, a level or range in which a student can complete a task with help (Tinzmann 8).

Shared authority and decision-making have different levels that depend on the teacher, group size, level, class/course time, required material and the individual students. In my smaller groups we decided collectively on the main means of study. I asked these 11 year old students what their prior experiences were with language learning and how they would like to study now. I was pleasantly surprised at the level of sophistication they used to verbalize their feelings about language learning in school. They were critical about using only their workbooks and about linguistic drills. We agreed to focus on speaking and interaction and less on grammar. Although we did not neglect the study of grammatical formulas, we kept to this mode of learning. They shared the responsibility in their learning.

With my larger group of 17 students goal-setting was impossible in this manner. During our first class together I explained “This will be a learning period for both you, the class and me. I want to learn from all of you and want to hear your opinion about how I teach. It *will* count.” I asked them to keep a journal: after every class they had to write down in English, what we did that day, and in Hungarian (or English) write down what they liked or learned from and what they did not like or did not learn from. This is also a form of shared authority. Therefore, students assume new roles in a collaborative classroom as well. Their modified roles are that of collaborator and active participator (Tinzmann 4). Through organic pedagogy they have more responsibility in directing tasks and topics (9).

Thus collaboration between teacher and students exists, but students also have to cooperate

162 Piaget refers to this as “teachable moments;” in Krashen ‘Monitor Model’ of language acquisition, it is ‘i+1’ – stretching a child’s capacity, but staying within what they are capable of understanding.

amongst themselves. This is most prominently achieved through the forum of group work. Children interacting regulate each other, as Vygotsky points out, assist each other like adults and through cooperative work are capable of completing more difficult tasks than they could individually (Tinzmann 8). Conditions for cooperative group work include trust (Ehrman – Dörnyei 76-77), positive interdependency, interaction and reflection/assessment (Tinzmann 11). These may form naturally in a class environment, but may also develop in time through in-class tasks. Group tasks such as project work, discussion and collective assessment develop cooperation, logic and cognitive skills, as well as expose the students to multiple points of view, resulting in tolerance and formation of identity (Bailey 2), many of these direct goals of education (see section 1).

Younger teenagers work better with those who they consider close friends within the class, and according to my observations, circles of friends seem to have the same learning-styles. Some activities may work better with modality-based groups; other tasks may be more interesting and complex with mixed-modality groups. The next section contains several specific techniques and tasks in light of collaborative learning as its forum.

#### 4. Techniques for the Application of the Hybrid Method

Generally speaking, learning should include the following three stages:<sup>163</sup>

- (Stage 1) introduction to a concept/material by the teacher or by the task itself.
- (Stage 2) processing the information, developing an understanding of the concept/material through work, experimentation, creation.
- (Stage 3) Presentation of accomplishment/knowledge by the completion of a new, follow-up task in class, by teaching each other in some form, by completing a homework assignment, or using the acquired information in a totally different task later.

Therefore, a task always includes an introduction or a follow-up activity such as assessment, unless the task itself introduces the material to be covered. An example of the latter would be, in

163 First two stages based on Olaf 1

accordance with the method's emphasis on movement: a good warmer and introductory task to new vocabulary is to hide pieces of paper with the new words written on them in the classroom. This takes five minutes before class for the teacher, and the children even less time to find them. It is a small gesture, but plays on the students' sense of and need for exploration.<sup>164</sup> At the end of the warmer each student may have a new vocabulary word in their hand, infinite possibilities arise from here: the teacher hands out the definitions and they have to match these with the words in groups. Each student is handed the definition of the word and has to mimic it to the class/illustrate it/teach it in some other form. They are handed a text to read and must look for their word in context and so forth.

#### 4.1 Illustration

Other tasks which do not serve as an introduction to a topic or set of vocabulary words, will be grouped under the techniques of creative writing, drama, role-play and simulation. Before preceding to these, it is important to refer back to two techniques briefly mentioned above, illustration of words and 'teaching each other in some form.' During the time I have worked with teenaged children, I was pleasantly shocked at the proficiency and expressiveness of their drawings. Many pedagogues do not take advantage of the skills their students possess, which are not directly connected to the skills necessary in an English class. Not all students enjoy drawing, but those who do, show a remarkable talent for it. Not only do they remember words better if they illustrate them, but their peers benefit from it also. Young artists and visual learners work great with interpersonal and logical learners on a task such as making linguistic dominos. (The two parts of the domino are a picture and a word independent of the picture.) The interpersonal and logical learners coordinate the project, that is, assign words to students, make certain the dominos will match and make sure everyone is working together. The visual, intrapersonal and kinesthetic learners can draw and put together the dominos. Many teachers may think making dominos in

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164 I did something similar for a section of their vocabulary test. I hid the last part of their test under their seats with scotch tape; they were instructed on their test papers to look under their seats for the last few questions. It made the normally stressful situation of taking a test more tolerable.

class is a waste of time, but in reality, all modalities are addressed in a task such as this and each student has an opportunity to learn by doing in accordance with their learning style. To use the words in many ways, in many tasks is to know them; this task is a good way of securing new information into long-term memory.

#### 4.2 Peer Teaching

The other technique mentioned is having students teach each other in some form. Peer teaching can be one of the most effective ways of dealing with a topic or material. I have employed two main types of peer teaching techniques: 1) retrospective, and 2) progressive. With one of my smaller groups, I periodically had them teach each other what we had learned. They had to think of new ways to explain the material and new tasks for each other concerning what was covered. When I was tutoring two children privately, I periodically asked them to teach me what we had learned. I told them I was going to be a bad student and not pay attention if it is 'boring'. They came up with brilliant ways of teaching and interesting tasks to follow. This meant conceptualizing the already covered material from a different point of view, thinking about ways to explain it differently, and most of all, it meant going back to their notes and revising.

'Progressive' peer teaching connotes teaching current material to each other. There are many versions of this as well, but to mention a few: modality-based groups are given material to work on according to their learning-style and then teach it to the class. Mixed-modality groups are provided with certain material and must cooperatively work on a coherent way to present it to the class resulting in many perspectives on the same items. The class is divided into two groups and the two groups are handed different materials/topics/items; they are asked to work on their set of material in their groups and then to pick a person from the other group and teach the material to each other. Both progressive and retrospective peer teaching must be monitored by the teacher and must not stand on its own. There should be a teacher-led lesson that deals with the material before either of these techniques are applied. The introductory task described, as well as both techniques elaborated on above involve movement and have the inherent potential to organically pave way for new areas of study.

### 4.3 Creative Writing

As Keplinger states, „Creative writing has been demonstrated to produce outstanding effects on the development of writing and speaking proficiency for students of foreign languages” (1). My experience is in accordance with Keplinger’s statement and so are student evaluations of this particular technique. One student wrote in their evaluation, „We read many stories in class, but what we wrote were the best”. I completely agree; their stories were smart and funny; they were much better than those collected from various sources to use in various tasks. We were studying ‘spooky words’ and each student had to take a separate sheet of paper and write down the sentence fragment „It was a cold and rainy night when...” They each had one vocabulary word from vocabulary we had studied and used. They were instructed to use the word to finish the sentence and then pass the paper to their right.<sup>165</sup> They then had to continue the story with the same word in a sentence. Next they were in-

Initial plot:

You live in England in “the old times.”

You live in an old castle, there are 19 rooms and two towers.  
 You got an important letter.  
 You go to meet this person in a town near by.  
 There was a big rain, it rained for five days in a row.  
 The roads are wet and dirty.  
 You are in a horse carriage with a few other people.  
 You have to go through a forest to get to the near by town.  
 The carriage gets stuck in the mud.  
 The sun is setting and you start hearing noises.

structed to pass the stories to their right and pass their words to the left. The next sentence had to be formed with the new word, then pass and use this new word in the next sentence. At the end of the task, they each had written six-sentence stories, employing three different words in six different sentences. The task was not only interesting; it provoked continuous movement and creativity, as well as necessitated using the three words in many different contexts. The stories were taken home and corrected as homework, then read aloud the next class. They were coherent, funny and intelligent.

With one of my smaller groups, after studying past simple, they were to write fairy-tales for small children. The stories were then exchanged and they had to write an alternate ending to each other’s story. Creative writing as a technique also works well when joined with another technique: drama. In larger classes, after the beginning of a story was introduced, the students had to create alternate endings in groups based on specific questions:

Questions to answer:

Who did you get the letter from?

What is a horse carriage?  
 Who are the other people in the carriage?  
 How are you feeling?  
 Do you know the others?  
 Do you like the others or do you have conflicts?  
 What kind of noises do you hear?  
 What is making this noise?  
 What do you do together with the other people?  
 What do you talk about?  
 What happens as you are thinking about what to do?  
 Do you get to the nearby town?

<sup>165</sup> Do to the complicated procedure, the steps were written on the board to make certain everyone knows where we are and where we are going.

The groups not only had to devise answers and a resolution for the story, but also had to incorporate given words and structures into the text. They were also instructed that they will have to perform the stories so they must think in terms of characters (for everyone in the group) and dialogue (so it is actable and enjoyable for an audience). This brings us to the next technique, drama.

#### **4.4 Drama**

Aside from being ESL-specific pedagogical tools, both creative writing and drama are ways of experimenting with and/or expressing identity. Equally, both develop communicative competence through the actual practice of form and multiple functions (Singh 2). Drama also plays with and develops the senses, physical and meta-communicational (Singh 3). According to Katalin Gabnai, the educational goal of drama is the harmonic and differentiated development of the entirety of personality – the mind, the emotions, the body, and the character (5). Drama pedagogy (or educational drama), if applied correctly, aids the development of the following:

- Movement, speech
- Knowledge of self and others
- Creativity (as situational flexibility and the ability to respond immediately to a challenge)
- Autonomy and flexibility in thought
- Concentration and the ability to plan work
- Confidence in using body, spatial security, timing
- Confidence in communication with peers, the opposite sex
- Self-realization (identity and accomplishment)
- Social and aesthetic sensitivity
- Empathy (Gabnai 5-14).

Gabnai also points out, that in this situation of trial and challenge, one has to take on a role and express *themselves* simultaneously. If the individual is capable of doing this while in the center of attention, it requires the same „state of readiness” as our social roles do in everyday life (6). This thought ties in directly with the notion of communicative competence. “Drama gives opportunity to create and express with movement and with words. This provides facility for cognitive and linguistic coordination enriching verbal proficiency and language competence” (Singh 3).

It can be extremely challenging to perform in one’s native language and even more so in a foreign language. One comment in an evaluation from a student said, „I didn’t like the ‘acting,’ but only because I get very nervous”. It depends on the situation, the student, and the teacher to decide whether a student, such as the one mentioned above, should be motivated to push themselves further and develop confidence in performing. Performing, using the body and voice to communicate is a vital tool in everyday life, but not all students can be expected to participate in such activities, especially not all young teenagers. Yet from my observations, mostly it is a case of surmountable shyness, not a serious problem in socialization, which causes students to be hesitant in completing such tasks. If so, they need to be guided and encouraged to overcome this to develop vital communication skills. Another student wrote, „My problem with English is that I can speak it well at home, but somehow, when I’m anywhere else, I can’t. During these classes I felt more liberated, thank you!”

Props help students in performing. Only people with extensive experience in drama are comfortable with standing out in front of others and performing/mimicking without any props or tools, save their bodies. Give a student a pair of sunglasses, a scarf or a baseball cap and immediately they turn into an actor. To some extent, at least among amateurs, props make the actor. Once, for a student-performed drama, I assembled a cache of props from objects in my apartment: a big spoon, a doctor’s mask, a purple flashlight, a brown-curly wig, a baseball, a scarf, a stick, sunglasses, a raincoat, etc. The students made great use of these props in their plays and by using them, the students were noticeably comfortable in their performance. Props not only make the actor, they oftentimes make the play as well (unless the goal of the dramatic exercise is not using anything). Props authenticate the imaginative environment of the performance; they add another dimension.

#### **4.5 Role-play and Simulation**

This technique is very close to drama, in fact, incorporates it. Role-play or simulation is a pivotal tool for developing communicative competence because it directly addresses everyday life situations. The completion of these types of tasks not only entails knowing what to say in certain situations, it

necessitates knowing how to say it and how to behave. These tasks adjoin form and function, provide a forum for a palette of multiple meanings. Based on many role-play/simulation tasks I have employed as technique, I distinguish two main types: 1) Task-centric, and 2) Role-centric. The task-centric version requires a student to concentrate more on completing the task, that is, to resolve a simulated real-life situation. An example of such a task is, telling a student to 'come into' the teacher's 'shop;' the student wants to buy a pair of jeans, the teacher is the salesperson. To make the task more interesting and easier to perform, I added, in this particular case, that the salesperson is having a bad day and is sad or annoyed by everything; the buyer is in a hurry to buy a pair of jeans for his girlfriend's birthday. The task is completed when there is a resolution. In this case, the resolution was when the student ended up buying a belt because I took such a long time to 'show' him the jeans.

An example of role-centric role-play would be asking a student to take on a role they do not identify with or can only partially relate to. While in the above version they could be themselves, this version entails 'becoming someone else' for the time period of the task. Such tasks include: having a simulated argument with a 'spouse' or 'boss' about something the student does not normally adhere to (this depends on student, age, sex, etc); convincing someone to be a part of their 'music band,' becoming someone from the opposite sex, as examples.

Role-play aids the exchange of ideas, and through this second version, even develops the skill of making an argument for or against something (whether it is the student's opinion or exactly the opposite). Role-play and simulation also sensitize the child to social and cultural diversity (Singh 2). Thus we arrive back at movement-based tasks aimed at developing communicative competence.

In reality, all of the above discussed techniques rely on movement, but move so much more than just the body. Incorporating drawing and other fine art (painting, multi-media) enriches the learning experience, while using and viewing the word/topic in different ways helps its long-term memorization. Retrospective and progressive peer teaching in both modality-based groups and mixed-modality group is effective, especially with teenagers who place great emphasis on peer feedback and acknowledgement. Creative writing, although not always directly linked to movement, is a multi-faceted technique, applicable in almost every area of study

and efficient because the student gains a real sense of accomplishment and sense of creation in light of their own writing.

Drama may frequently join creative writing, extending it, providing a new dimension in the presentation of a written work. Drama, in itself, offers a means of self-exploration, role-playing, seeking identity, self-fulfillment and autonomy, while cultivating social skills and communicative competence. Role-play, especially role-centric tasks widen an individual's perspective, facilitate empathy and with that, induces tolerance. In addition, all of the above mentioned techniques incorporate the potential for exploration into new areas of study. There will always be questions that arise from these tasks; to allow organic development, the teacher should follow these leads and permit them to generate new tasks, as everyday life does.

Thus, the hybrid method, collaborative class management and specific, movement-related techniques have been discussed. Concepts such as 'shared authority' in the classroom and the emphasis on movement justly pave the way for the question, „How does one maintain discipline in such an environment?” The following section will address this issue.

## 5. Discipline

Discipline must come through liberty. Here is a great principle which is difficult for the followers of common-school methods to understand. How shall one obtain *discipline* in a class of free children? [...] If discipline is founded upon liberty, the discipline itself must necessarily be active. We do not consider an individual disciplined only when he has been rendered as artificially silent as a mute and as immovable as a paralytic. He is an individual *annihilated*, not *disciplined*.

– Dr. Maria Montessori<sup>166</sup>

Montessori talks about „the bench of the soul” (21) that oftentimes forms due to traditional forms of discipline, such as keeping the student silent and immobilized at their desk. This is not how children learn best, in fact, this artificial pose and behavior may inhibit them in learning. There are indeed times and tasks that require silent concentration, but for the most part, learning should involve movement. Movement inevitably causes noise. One must set

166 Montessori 1912:95.

aside their primary (pedagogical) instinct to hush children; silence does not equal learning. Cooperation and group work entail communication; what the pedagogue must regulate is keeping students *on task* and not letting conversation enter realms outside of the given assignment and material.

Shared authority between teacher and student does not usually result in misbehavior, but even in some instances where it does, it is short-lived. It does not occur more frequently than in traditional, authoritarian classrooms, but it does resolve itself much faster and painlessly. For example, one summer day my small group was more energized than usual and digressed from the topic at hand. After some giggling, one girl said to me, „Sorry, teacher, we’re just having this sort of day.” I smiled at her comment, said „Ok” and went on. We did not have any more interruptions that class. Their energy was invested in the tasks that followed. Once, one of my private students, a boy, climbed up a ladder at the beginning of class and said he would participate from there. I gave my consent and began the lesson. His top-of-the-ladder positioning lasted about five minutes, and then he came down and sat with us on the ground. He made this decision on his own. He was given the autonomy to decide and made the right decision.

Many pedagogues would argue taking a friendly tone with teenaged students is dangerous; there should remain a distance between teacher and student: authority is the main disciplinary tool of the pedagogue. I do not find this to be true. Children are more open to instruction if they are handled as equals. Shared authority encompasses this as well. If children are perceived as equals in the classroom, and are spoken to in this manner, it makes a firm disciplinary warning that is much more powerful. For instance, in my larger class the students were supposed to be doing peer teaching. Two girls were in front of the rest of the class, trying to explain a certain vocabulary word and its context. The rest of the class gradually became louder, they lost concentration and digressed into various subjects of conversation. I waited until the point where I could not hear the girls. I said, „Hold on one second” to the girls and turned to the class. Firmly, I asked, „What does respect mean?” I was answered immediately with the Hungarian version of the word. „Give your classmates respect by listening to them!” There was a short silence, and then I asked the girls to continue, which they did. The class was not silent for long, but there were only short com-

ments afterwards, and the comments were all on the material being taught. There was a difference between the two types of noise (before and after my remark), not only in volume but also in content. If the noise remains on a minimal level and the teacher hears the conversation is related to the task (or maybe it is even in English), it should be permitted. It is part of learning.

## 6. Assessment

The last area I will address is the vital question of assessment. I have hinted at the importance of self-evaluation before, and have stressed the significance of peer-feedback in the form of constructive criticism. A conglomeration of the two and plenty of encouragement/praise from the teacher, result in a healthy self-image, self-esteem and a secure identity. It takes bravery to start speaking in a foreign language; the appreciation of this should be reflected in the teacher’s verbal and non-verbal responses to student initiatives. Most tasks should include a short evaluation at the end for the above reasons, and to point out the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of the product or performance.

I strongly disagree with randomly asking students to give answers to out-of-context questions for a grade, what is called ‘feleltetés’ (spontaneous recitation) in Hungarian, used frequently in public elementary and high schools. Nowhere in real-life does a situation like this occur: a person with authority over another person demanding a single correct answer immediately to a random question, while a crowd watches. Nowhere except in quiz-shows.

Written exams<sup>167</sup> come closer to realistic expectation, where students have time to think things through and check their answers. Yet as certain teaching techniques do not cater to certain modalities, tests are not always the most efficient way to determine what the student has learned. If we are sensitive to modalities, why are we not sensitive to testing knowledge? I had my large class write a vocabulary test for our mid-term. I listed English and Hungarian words at the top of the page and had questions underneath them:

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167 Most students can really appreciate a well put together, interesting test. A written comment from a student said: „I can see you put a lot of energy and time into our final test”. It is worth spending time on constructing an interesting test that evaluates many skills.

- 1) Choose 3 English words and write two sentences for all 3 words, the sentences need to show the meaning of the word.

For example, with the word 'cat':

- a) The white cat sat by the window and looked at the rain.
  - b) Cats generally like their milk warm.
- 2) Choose 6 English words and write their Hungarian version.
  - 3) Choose 7 Hungarian words and write their English version.

Despite written instructions and their verbal repetition before the test, one student misunderstood the task. She did not pick from the list to answer the second and third questions; she instead chose words from all of the material we had covered. The words she used were impressive and spelled correctly. Knowing well she might have tricked me into thinking she misunderstood in order to use words she wanted to, I gave her full points on both questions. I deducted one point for her mistake and returned her test with my comment about the deduction. For the end-term I provided the class with a choice: they could either choose to take an end-term test or do an end-term project. (The topics and guidelines of both were written down and handed out, see supplement.) The student in question chose to do a project. This was the moment of truth: if her test reflects the level of proficiency I *trusted* her to be at when I gave her full points, it would show in her project. It did. She handed in a wonderfully written project with possibly the fewest grammatical mistakes in class and almost no spelling errors.

This case illustrated two things for me: 1) *indeed it is worth trusting the student*, and 2) there indeed needs to be alternative modes of testing, not just differentiated tasks within the test. Individual project work is an accurate way to test acquired knowledge and its level of usage. It is not inferior to traditional testing. It exemplifies another dimension of knowledge. Another situation further strengthened my belief in fully trusting the student. A boy had been absent for a few weeks and when he came back from his sickness, I gave him separate work to do instead of taking the vocabulary test with the others. He was given words and definitions and asked to write a story with the words,

finish it at home and bring it in the next day for grading (as his vocabulary test grade). The next day he handed me a torn piece of paper with three sentences on it. I asked him whether he knows this will not do, and smiled. He looked at the floor smiling and said „Yes, I know”.

After this he did not bring me his assignment for three days, so I gave him an ultimatum: either he sends it to me over the internet today, or he fails the 'test.' He sent it to me that day. The text was very short, five sentences. However, after carefully reviewing it, I counted several of the given words in a single sentence – a sign of great language use and intense creativity. As happy as I was to discover this, the more disappointed I was to see he had not used all the given words. I wrote him explaining my train of thought and told him to do a self-evaluation. What mark did he think he deserves in light of all this? He wrote back and said he would give himself a 3. I concurred. I was proud of him because his self-assessment was accurate; he did not complete the task fully, but what vocabulary he did employ, he used incredibly well. Most students are capable of accurate self-evaluation from a relatively young age. This is also an area which should be capitalized on in pedagogy.

## 7. Summary and conclusions

Through an examination of teenage characteristics, we arrived at the four basic crises of students in question (need for autonomy, initiative, accomplishment and trust) and reflected on those concerning general pedagogical objectives. The general intentions of the hybrid method (learner-centeredness, emphasis on communicative competence) were introduced in juxtaposition to pedagogical objectives. From these we ventured more deeply into the organic element of the method. The organic metaphor illustrated the natural path of learning, both through keeping simultaneously studied linguistic elements in their context, and through the potential of a task to generate further topics of study in reaction to the cognitive motivation of students. Concerning the kinesthetic element of the method, we discussed the necessity to harmonize verbal and non-verbal messages, the importance of meta-communication, as well as perceptual modalities. We established that perceptual modalities, governing how we perceive the world, are an important consideration when designing

tasks. The significance of intelligences were also discussed in relation to operational tasks and linked back to movement, as a means of learning.

As we saw, collaboration, cooperation and group work are the main modes of class management. Through shared authority, students share responsibility in their learning. The decisions are made and the goals are set together with the student, thus the role of the teacher changes to that of group leader. Both the method and its class management build on developing communicative competence and autonomy through techniques such as creative writing, drama and role-play. Not only are these techniques effective tools for teaching English as a second language, but also develop the student's social skills, imagination and sensitivity to others.

My students have commented they learned more and remember more in comparison to their earlier experiences in language class. One student wrote they could remember all the words we learned, solely based on class work with no additional memorization. Another student commented: "I feel braver in using English because we acted out situations that are in everyday life." Perhaps the most intense element, which makes the hybrid method successful is its emphasis on playing. Moving in exploration, presenting a work, acting out a sketch are all 'playing' if the class environment is relaxed. Most students remarked they enjoyed "learning by playing" and profited from it in terms of language use as well.

If the pedagogue pays careful attention to the students, allows them more authority and initiative in their learning, they will work harder. Through trusting the student, the student can develop trust for the teacher as well. This is not a trivial part of pedagogy; it is not negligible. Pedagogues must understand the amount of responsibility they have towards a child, their intellectual and moral education. Only through this can a student realize and develop responsibility for their own learning, to continue learning throughout their lives.

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