Н. А. ЛАВРОВА

Подход избирательного эклектизма к обучению английскому языку и его интеграция в российскую систему высшего образования

Цель исследования – рассмотрение основных принципов «избирательного эклектизма», современного подхода к обучению иностранным языкам, в том числе английскому, и его интегрирования в российское образовательное пространство. В соответствии с поставленной целью автор преследует ряд задач, как практического, так и теоретического характера. Основная задача – выяснить, насколько указанный подход эффективен в российской системе высшего образования (1), а также рассмотреть некоторые причины и факторы, препятствующие его интеграции в российскую систему высшего образования (2). В соответствии с обозначенной целью и поставленными задачами, статья поделена на 8 разделов, каждый из которых посвящён одному из аспектов указанного подхода (кроме разделов 1,2). Все разделы содержат не только теоретическую информацию, но и практические результаты проведённого исследования, актуальность которого обусловлена необходимостью пересмотра некоторых методик и методов преподавания иностранных языков для оптимизации образовательного процесса и выпуска высококвалифицированных специалистов в области преподавания иностранного языка.

Основной вывод, к которому приходит автор статьи, заключается в том, что при сравнительной эффективности избирательного подхода к обучению иностранному языку студентов языковых вузов, в российской системе высшего образования наблюдается его частичная интеграция, что обусловлено несколькими причинами. Во-первых, (относительной) недоступностью некоторых международных курсов повышения квалификации для преподавателей, таких как TESOL, CELTA и DELTA, во-вторых, ориентацией на устаревшие подходы к обучению иностранному языку, как, например, фокусировка на письменном переводе и грамматических правилах в ущерб коммуникативной методике обучения. В целом интегрирование избирательного подхода в российскую образовательную систему должно осуществляться постепенно, с учётом культурно-исторических и образовательных традиций.

Ключевые слова: обучение, методология, избирательный подход, селта, средний продвинутый уровень, точность, беглость

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The principled eclecticism approach to teaching English and its integration into the Russian system of education

The paper focuses on some of the main tenets of the principled eclecticism approach, which has been embraced by most international courses of English for teachers and language instructors. As a former graduate of one of such courses, the author sees her goal as threefold. First, to provide some theoretical knowledge of teaching methods within the paradigm of principled eclecticism – an approach that makes use of the best of all the other approaches to teaching English, with the communicative one playing a more prominent role than the rest. Second, the author intends to establish whether the main principles of the said approach are systematically practiced within the Russian system of teaching English to students. Ultimately, the author hopes to help all language instructors to become not only better at teaching, but also at learning. In accordance with the above aims and objectives, the paper is divided into several parts.

In the introduction (1), some general background as to what inspired the author to conduct the research is outlined. The methodology and data collection section (2) gives a detailed explanation of the main methods, techniques and approaches to the research. The planning section (3) minutely describes the essential components to any workable and efficient plan. In the 'correction' section (4), the main techniques of correcting learners are enumerated, with the emphasis that overcorrection is to be discouraged at all stages of the lesson, as it is detrimental to learners' progress and may significantly dent their confidence. The 'teacher' (5) section explores some of the personal and professional qualities any efficient teacher should have. A selective list of 'an-ideal-teacher' attributes is provided, based on the interview conducted with Russian learners of English. In the 'learners' section (6), the main types of learners are discussed, with the emphasis on primary representational systems – sensory channels unconsciously used by learners in order to perceive, process, store and retrieve information. The 'results' section (7) describes the main findings of the research. In conclusion (8), the author evaluates the significance of the findings and outlines possible areas for further research.

Key words: teaching, methodology, principles eclecticism, CELTA, upper-intermediate, accuracy, fluency

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*The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.*
(William Arthur Ward)

1. Introduction

The present paper investigates the main tenets of the principled eclecticism approach to teaching English, which seeks to integrate some of the most efficient methods and techniques from all or nearly all of the existing approaches, tapping into the workable procedures and bypassing those that seem to hamper smooth, progressively incremental learning and creative, rewarding teaching. The study compares how well these tenets are adhered to by Russian teachers of English in higher educational establishments.

2. Methodology and data collection

A number of methods have been utilized to achieve the aims and objectives of the research: the meta-analysis methodology was used when evaluating the efficacy of the main approaches to teaching English; non-involved observation of both learners and teachers was applied during the author's teaching practice on the CELTA course; cross-cultural and interlingual analyses were adhered to when comparing Russians' and native speakers' expectations with regard to the best teacher attributes. The main results were obtained based on the author's teaching and observation practice of more than 2000 hours. Both structured and non-structured interviews were used when analyzing learners' needs. Both structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with upper intermediate Russian learners of English, who shared their experiences of how often they are given an opportunity to speak during a single English lesson. The main results of the study are presented in graphs, tables and diagrams. The paper is based on thorough research into the works by contemporary FLT writers as well as on the author's teaching practice – during the 2017 CELTA course and in Moscow State Pedagogical University, where the author has been affiliated for the last 15 years.

3. Planning

When planning a lesson, a teacher should take into account class description (the level, the coursebook, the size and its composition), time-table fit and the assumptions about learners and their current knowledge (or its lack) [4], [9]. To enable a teacher to do this, a class profile should be made, which gives individual students' strengths and weaknesses and describes the class as a whole [1]. The next thing to do is to think of the aim(s) and objective(s). The terms being synonymous, novice teachers rarely know the difference between the two: aims are stated in *input* terms, what the *teacher* intends to do; objectives (*aka* achievement aims) are stated in *output* terms, what the *students are* expected to achieve. The aims are typically divided into three types: **main (achievement aim)**, **subsidiary** and **personal** [3]. Typically, different language is used when formulating these types of aims. The typical formulae for the achievement aim are as follows: *by the end of the lesson,*

learners are able to use present perfect to describe their past achievements or by the end of the lesson learners can communicate confidently and share their ideas about global warming using the relevant vocabulary items. Subsidiary aims are aims of specific activities that work toward advancing the main aim of the lesson. Some of the language used for these aims is: *presenting and giving controlled practice of...*, *giving (or to give) students greater understanding of ... vocabulary, providing with...*, *teaching...*, *improving/raising the morale of the group through appropriate cooperative interaction, to sensitize students to uses of (pitch and intonation), to problematize learning, to establish the context of ..., to set the theme by introducing..., to contextualize lexis on..., etc.* Personal aims comprise any aspect of a teacher's performance he/she wishes to improve: cf. *to overcome initial shyness and self-consciousness when meeting a new class; to reduce teacher talking time; to memorize students' names; to use the board effectively*, [13], [14], etc.

The present study revealed that the majority of Russian teachers in higher educational establishments do not devise a formal, committed to paper, lesson plan, although they do think in advance of what they are going to do with students. The worrying trend, however, is not lack of planning per se, but lack of awareness of the main, subsidiary and personal aims. Out of more than 50 respondents, only 10 said that they specifically think of the lesson's main aim. This correlated positively with these teachers' having international certificates on teaching English, such as TESOL, CELTA or DELTA [10]. 15 admitted that they mostly thought of the personal aim, i.e. of how to enhance their own, rather than their students' performance. The rest, 25 teachers, mostly thought of the lesson procedure, i.e. what they are going to do with students and in what sequence. This finding, that as many as 50 % of teachers, do not think of the main lesson aim, obviously takes its toll on learners' progress: if teachers do not know what they want to achieve at the end of the lesson, chances are that they are not going to achieve it. **Table 1** reflects statistical data on the number of teachers who (do not) formulate lesson aims in advance of the lesson.

Table 1

The number of Russian teachers of English in higher educational establishments who (do not) formulate lesson aims in advance of the lesson

Teachers who formulate the main aim	Teachers who formulate personal aim(s)	Teachers who do not formulate the main lesson aim in advance
20 %	30 %	50 %

4. Correction

If correction is done in writing, then special correction code is required, with which not only the teacher, but also the learners should be familiar. In the FLT practice, a distinction is typically drawn between two types of mistakes: **a slip** and **an error**. The former can be defined as a non-standard form produced as a result of the pressures of performance in real time rather than due to faulty learning; the latter is said to occur due to knowledge gap. Hence, a teacher's correction zeal should primarily be aimed at spotting and correcting errors rather than mistakes. The depth and frequency of correction depend on the student's level: at advanced levels, typically less correction is required than at a lower level, when accuracy is still on the priority list of both teaching and learning aims [7].

Overcorrection is generally discouraged in the principled eclecticism approach [5]. However, as is said elsewhere, it depends on whether accuracy or fluency is being targeted at a particular lesson stage. During the fluency stage it is quite possible and frequently highly advisable not to correct learners at all, because what they strive after is genuine communication. During the accuracy stage, however, some correction is called for, although it should always be done in a sensitive way and, better still, in a way suitable for this particular learner. Just like motivation, correction can also be **extrinsic**, i.e. coming from outside, and **intrinsic**, i.e. self-correction. The most optimal technique is when the teacher acts as a prompter, guiding the learner to self-correction [11], [12].

The following types of correction are acceptable.

- The correct answer is given by the teacher immediately when a mistake or an error occurs. This type is least preferable as it deprives the learner of the opportunity 'to think for himself' and to discover the cause of the mistake as well as to repair it.
- The teacher repeats the misguided structure with a raised intonation, thereby drawing the learner's attention to it and signaling that something is wrong.
- A raised finger or tapping on the table is sometimes enough to draw learners' attention to the fact that something is wrong.
- The teacher explicitly asks the learner to repeat the wrong structure once again or several times. This technique is based on the premise that when a learner is exposed to the misguided variant several times, it is easy for him/her to spot the mistake. The downside, however, is that the learner repeats the wrong structure several times, which may get stuck in the long-term memory, especially so if the correct variant is not quite clear to the learner.
- The teacher addresses the class or nominates a particular individual to correct the mistake. Although in this way the other learners have the opportunity to check and consolidate their own knowledge of a particular word or structure, this technique has been criticized for being insensitive to the learner who actually makes the mistakes: the 'culprit' is frequently mortified at being exposed and becoming a laughing stock. Actually, many learners prefer the teacher to correct the mistake, endowing him with the authority to do so.

Below is a table (**Table 2**) reflecting the main types of correction according to the criterion of who does the correction – the teacher, the learner or peers and their relative efficacy.

Table 2

Types of correction and their efficacy as indicated by the degree of shading: the darker the background, the more effective the type of correction¹

guided self-correction (the teacher acts as the guide)	guided self-correction (peers act as guides)	the teacher	peer correction
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Although all correction techniques are used in the Russian tradition of teaching English, most teachers are unaware of the possible strategies of *indicating* that a slip or an error has occurred. Typically, a teacher gives away the correct answer much too quickly or asks peers to correct the learner, thus depriving the latter of the opportunity to come up with the correct answer on his/her own.

¹ unaided self-correction is not in the table as it is only applicable to slips, not mistakes.

5. Teacher

A survey conducted among Russian learners of English has revealed that a good teacher should do or be the following: *uses short, personalized explanations, instills confidence, is non-judgmental, empathetic and respectful, (at least occasionally) negotiates part of what he/she is going to teach with students, listens in unobtrusively, is inspirational, charismatic, optimistic and enthusiastic, etc.*

What Russian teachers of English seem to lack is the following. In terms of personal characteristics, they are rarely optimistic and seem to lack the ability to assume a different persona. While this may partly be explained by cultural peculiarities, it is still advisable to be more outgoing, smiling, enthusiastic and generally optimistic. Russian teachers also seem to be frequently critical and judgmental of weak learners or those who frequently make grammar mistakes. Another feature is that teachers frequently allow one or a couple of stronger students to dominate the classroom, which may be explained by two factors: either the teacher does not have the technique or wish to engage other learners, or he/she chooses the easiest way out: to communicate with only those students who are willing themselves. However, it is worth remembering that reticent students are not necessarily lazy, indifferent or non-willing. An interview conducted among Russian learners of English revealed that even the most taciturn learners, who seem to be indifferent to everything going on in the classroom, which is the frequent comment I hear from my fellow-teachers, on closer inspection appear only too eager to speak up and desperately ache for the teacher to ask them to share their opinion or at least do some exercises, so that everyone can hear 'how well they are prepared'.

The informal interview with 50 upper-intermediate Russian students of English revealed that about 35 % are not given an opportunity to speak English during a lesson; 40 % complained that their speaking contribution is too short, less than a minute; with only 25 % claiming that they make relevant speaking contributions running from 1 to 4 minutes. Apparently, these numbers indicate a worrying trend (see **Diagram 1**).

Diagram 1 The number of Russian students who are given an opportunity to speak English during a single lesson for at least one minute (in percentages), as reported by 50 Russian upper intermediate learners of English

6. Learners

Learner needs are typically subdivided into **personal**, **learning** and **professional** needs. Just like a teacher's personal aim, a learner's personal aim is highly individual and is not necessarily directly connected with his professional needs in English. Praise, security and attachment to a group are frequently cited by learners as their personal needs [15]. Learning needs may comprise better accuracy, more fluency, better knowledge of particular lexis (idioms or collocations, or words of a particular thematic field). Professional needs are more pragmatic and may include the following: getting a higher pay, more respect from colleagues, a possible tenure, the need to upgrade qualifications, etc.

The abbreviation VAKOG is a shorthand for visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory representational systems, engaged in the perception, processing and retrieval of information. Language is primarily learned through the activation of the first three systems – visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The other two are rarely or only marginally made use of by humans for various biological reasons (these systems play a more prominent part in the animal world). If a person is visual, he/she memorizes information by seeing pictures or by seeing words on the printed page, they also have trouble remembering verbal instructions [6]. If a person is primarily auditory, they are easily distracted by noise, may think using external dialogue and best learn by listening. A kinesthetic type of person responds to physical rewards and touch, memorizes things through doing or engaging with physical objects. These three systems get reflected in the language style a person makes use of and are then called 'predicates'. A teacher can recognize a learner's dominant representational system by listening out for recurring sensory words (primarily metaphors). To communicate most efficiently, a teacher is advised to use words from the same representational system as his/her learners. In other words, it is crucial in the course of a single lesson to try to appeal to all the three types of learners interchangeably, so that no one is left out [16]. However, if you know that your group of learners are all homogenous, e.g. visual, it is possible to exploit only one representational system. There are a number of single lexical items as well as complex idiomatic phrases (based on cognitive metaphors, discovered and elaborated upon by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson [8]) that are hallmarks of either visual, auditory or kinesthetic language style: Cf.

visual: *picture, light, focus, perspective, outlook, flash, snapshot, colour, diagram, bird's eye view, beyond a shadow of a doubt, to catch a glimpse of smth., to get a scope on, horse of a different colour, naked eye, sight for sore eyes, etc.*

auditory: *hear, music, overtone, rattle, rings the bell, tempo, blabbermouth, to give an account of, keynote speaker, purrs like a kitten, to tell the truth, tongue-tied, tuned in/tuned out, to voice an opinion, within hearing distance, etc.*

kinesthetic: *rough, smooth, slippery, touchy, heavy, prickly, moving, striking, a tug of war, chip off the old block, come to grips with, to pull strings, to pull smb.'s leg, to grasp the meaning, to get hold of the wrong end of the stick, hand in hand, a heated argument, to lick into shape, etc.*

According to F. Constantinidou and S. Baker [2], most learners are visual (around 40%), about 35 % are auditory and only about 25 % are kinesthetic. Given these data, a worrying trend exists in current EFL teaching: the absolute majority of English teachers in Russia primarily cater to auditory learners' needs, relying on the oral presentation of information,

occasionally using the board or PowerPoint presentations. The discrepancy between most learners' representational systems and the systems Russian teachers of English seem to cater to are given in **Table 3**.

Table 3

The discrepancy between most learners representational systems and the systems Russian teachers of English cater to

Learners' representational systems	Russian teachers' catering for representational systems	Needs' discrepancy
visual – 50 %	auditory – 60 %	60 % visual learners' needs are not met
auditory – 35 %	visual – 30 %	100 % auditory learners' needs are met
kinesthetic – 25 %	kinesthetic – 10 %	40 % kinesthetic learners' needs are not met

7. Results

The results of the present research are both theoretical and practical. On the theoretical level, it has been demonstrated that the methodology of the principled eclecticism works best in any pedagogical environment, as it enables the teacher to take into account learners' individual, sometimes idiosyncratic characteristics, caters to different learner needs and expectations. Although the conducted research suggests that the principled eclecticism approach to teaching English seems to be optimal, there is still some discrepancy between what it recommends doing and its implementation in Russian institutions of higher education. First, Russian teachers of English are still only marginally aware of its main tenets and implications. The reasons for this are twofold. First, some of the relevant courses, as for example CELTA and DELTA courses, are prohibitively expensive for most teachers; second, the approach is not propagated on the current methodology courses in many educational establishments. This lack of informative awareness explains most teachers' intuitive adherence to the methods and techniques they have been using for years and/or have been exposed to during their professional training. Thus, auditory learners are still primarily catered for, accuracy is still the primary focus, correction is mostly done by the teacher, frequently to the detriment of learners' understanding of mistakes as well as detracting from their confidence and motivation. Since interactive forms of education are a rarity in many establishments, most teachers resort to the traditional chalk-and-talk approach, in which a teacher's verbal explanation is illustrated by examples committed to the blackboard or whiteboard. Apparently, this eats up a lot of time that could be spent on other activities, such as games, roles plays, or accuracy exercises. Interactive boards are still non-existent in most educational establishments, an aid which significantly enhances educational process through its potential to appeal to all types of learners.

8. Conclusion

As a former graduate of the CELTA course, the author of the present exposition has sought to share some ideas absorbed from the relevant outlets as well as from my personal teaching experience, both during the course and the teaching practice in my alma mater. The main principles, tenets, techniques, theory and practical tips have been dwelt upon

in detail with a view to raising teachers' awareness of some alternative techniques and approaches to teaching English.

Given the existing discrepancy between the main tenets of the analyzed approach and the way English is taught by Russian university teachers, a gradual revision of the current methodology is obviously needed if Russia is to have knowledgeable, efficient and advanced speakers of English, who are competitive on the international level. That said, these tenets should be integrated into the traditional Russian techniques and approaches, so that a judicious and workable blend emerges. It seems that the traditional Russian system of teaching English in which the teacher dominates the classroom should be called into question and diluted with more learner-oriented activities, so that students feel that they are directly responsible for the acquisition of language skills and knowledge, ultimately becoming more independent and capable of continuing their education beyond and outside the classroom.

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