

# DIDACTIC ANALYSIS OF THE *POSTMETHOD CONDITION* OF B. KUMARAVADIVELU: ECLECTICISM AND COMPLEX DIDACTICS OF LANGUAGES AND-CULTURES

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## **Abstract**

Bala Kumaravadivelu Mahwah (henceforth "B.K."), a long-time professor at San Jose State University in California, gained international recognition in 1994 with an article entitled "The Postmethod Condition: Emerging Strategies for Second/Foreign Language Teaching," published in *TESOL Quarterly (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)*, a widely read journal for teachers of English as a foreign language around the world. In this article, and in his subsequent works, he criticizes all methodologies as being unsuitable for local cultures. His main target is the communicative approach, dominant in international EFL teaching, as an instrument for perpetuating American colonialism, as well as methodological eclecticism, which he considers still dependent on constituted methodologies. Instead, he promotes the construction by teachers of coherent sets of strategies theorized by themselves from their own situated practices.

In this long article of 40 pages, I study the evolution of B.K.'s work during his career by means of several personal tools of analysis: the different forms of eclecticism, and their logics; the different methodological matrices available; the methodological, didactical and didactological perspectives of a "complex didactics of language-cultures"; the models as indispensable interfaces between practices and theories; the multi- and pluri-methodological approaches; the characteristics of the communication paradigm; the opposition between the optimization-substitution paradigm and the adaptation-addition paradigm.

Although I share B.K.'s main aim, which is to give power back to teachers in the field, by considering them as researchers of their own environments and practices, as well as many of his criticisms of the dominant constituted methodologies, including the communicative approach, I explain in this article my disagreement with some of his analyses and proposals, which suffer in my opinion from two important contradictions: he promotes situated modes of teaching-learning, but he builds his proposals on a single problematic of reference (the effects of the implementation of the communicative approach in the teaching of international English in Third World countries); he denounces the perverse effects of the global coherences of the constituted methodologies, but he promotes the construction by the teachers themselves of their own methodological coherences. It will not be surprising, finally, that I point out in B.K.'s observations, analyses, and proposals, all the problems generated by the fact that he never situates himself within the framework of a didactic of languages-cultures constituted as an autonomous discipline.

## **Initials and acronyms**

B.K. : Bala Kumaravadivelu Mahwah

COE : Council of Europe / Conseil de l'Europe

DLC: Didactics of languages and cultures (« Didactique des langues-cultures »)

ESL : English as a second language

FFL : French as a foreign language (« Français langue étrangère », FLE)

## **Nota Bene:**

-This article is translated from the French original entitled "Analyse didactique de la postmethod condition de B. Kumaravadivelu : éclectisme et didactique complexe des langues-cultures" ([www.christianpuren.com/mes-travaux/2022b/](http://www.christianpuren.com/mes-travaux/2022b/)).

-B. Kumaravadivelu's personal website unfortunately no longer in service at the time (April 2022). Some of his work can still be downloaded from [www.ResearchGate.net](http://www.ResearchGate.net) and [www.Academia.edu](http://www.Academia.edu), as well as from the website of his former university, San José State University, [www.sjsu.edu](http://www.sjsu.edu).

## INTRODUCTION

Bala Kumaravadivelu Mahwah (henceforth "B.K.") is originally from India, but for most of his career, he has been a teacher-researcher and trainer in *Applied Linguistics* in the USA. In particular, he was a professor at San Jose State University in California from 1995 until his retirement in 2018. B.K. gained international recognition in 1994 with an article entitled "The Postmethod Condition: Emerging Strategies for Second/Foreign Language Teaching", published in the journal *TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)*, which is widely read by teachers of English as a second language (ASL) around the world. In this article, and his subsequent works, he presents the ins and outs of this *postmethod condition*, and in 1994 he proposes to non-native ESL teachers a "*strategic framework*" and then in 2001 a "*postmethod pedagogy*" that would give them the means to make the best use of this situation in their own interest as well as in the interest of their learners and their countries.

The objective of my present contribution is to analyze B.K.'s positions and proposals from the point of view of academic criticism, and with reference to a discipline that has been constituted in France since the 1970s, the "didactique des langues-cultures" ("didactics of language and cultures", henceforth "DLC"), as I understand it. For this reason, I will begin, in the first part, by presenting the tools of didactic analysis that I have used for this study. In the second part, I will analyze B.K.'s ideas by assessing their relevance to this DLC. This objective of my contribution explains - and, I hope, will excuse in the eyes of my readers - the very high number of references to my personal work: finally, it is indeed the whole of my conception of the DLC discipline that I had to mobilize here to confront it with the one that seemed to me to emerge from B.K.'s work that I could consult.

These works are the articles or chapters of collective works available for download on his personal site until April, 2022<sup>1</sup>. My sources are therefore partial; they do not include, in particular, the four personal works that B.K. announces in the *Books* section of his site. Nevertheless, I will speak here of B.K.'s "works", making the hypothesis that he has chosen to make freely available the texts that present the essence of his ideas<sup>2</sup>. What certainly does not seem to me to be questioned in B.K.'s other texts - it is important to point this out now because it has chain consequences in the elaboration of his positions and proposals - is that this author is initially only interested in the methodology of the international teaching of English, namely a communicative approach that he considers instrumentalized by the Western countries of English language, and especially the USA, to maintain their colonial domination. I do not question the accuracy of this observation, nor the relevance of his struggle, nor the didactic interest of his proposals within the limited historical and geographical frameworks he has thus given himself. But these frameworks and his militant commitment lead him to questionable analyses and proposals from the point of view of the general didactics of language-cultures: neither his "macrostrategic framework" nor his "postmethod pedagogy" can be transposed as such to the teaching of foreign languages in Europe, any more than the American communicative approach, whose imposition on other countries he rightly denounces.

As will be seen, I do not share many of B.K.'s criticisms of language teaching methodologies, and I have strong reservations about the idea of the *postmethod condition*. His 1994 article appeared the same year as my *Essai sur l'éclectisme* (Puren 1994e). He criticizes eclecticism, whereas I analyze it as an empirical but positive response of teachers and textbook authors to the complexity of didactic problems. He judges that all past methodologies have been useless, whereas in my opinion, even if they have produced perverse effects by functioning as "systems for constructing certainties and servitudes"<sup>3</sup>, they have represented an effort to adapt to new objectives, audiences, models and environments, and have thus enriched disciplinary reflection and the available teaching

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<sup>1</sup> With the sole exception of a lengthy interview published in English and Spanish in an international didactic journal for teachers of Spanish as a foreign language, *MarcoELE* (see B.K. 2012b).

<sup>2</sup> It is possible, however, that I have missed some important ideas. On this point, see note 25, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> This is one of the major conclusions I draw at the end of my *Histoire des méthodologies de l'enseignement des langues* (1988a, p. 263), taking up a beautiful formula of Robert Galisson.

tools; he considers that they are all to be rejected, whereas I think that they are part of the historical heritage of the profession, and that as such they should not only be known, but exploited.

## **1. DIDACTIC ANALYSIS TOOLS USED**

I have limited myself in this first part to the tools I used in the second part to analyze B.K.'s work, while announcing, at the end of each of his chapters, the main criticism that it allows me to make of his positions and proposals. All these criticisms can be summed up, in the end, in the fact that B.K. does not clearly situate himself in the framework of a constituted discipline, with its constitutive problematic and perspectives, and with its history. But the content of my criticisms is of course determined by my own conception of this discipline, which I have long proposed to call "complex didactics of language-cultures", and of which I published a manifesto in 2003 (Puren 2003b).

### ***1.1. The different methodological matrices***

The "constituted methodologies" ("methodologies", in the rest of this article) are historical systems claiming to give coherent answers to all the questions concerning the modes of teaching, the modes of learning and the modes of relating these two processes. Four methodologies have emerged since the end of the 19th century in France: (1) the direct and active methodology of the 1920s-1960s, which was the official methodology in French school teaching throughout this period and the dominant methodology in French as a foreign language (FFL) teaching; (2) the communicative approach, from the 1970s to the 1990s; (3) the plurilingual and pluricultural methodologies, since the 1990s; and (4) the actional approach, since the 2000s. Each of these methodologies emerged at a time when the social objective, the social situation and the targeted competences in language and culture changed, and they differed from the others in the specific models used to develop them - in the case of all methodologies, the pedagogical, linguistic, cognitive and cultural models dominant at the time - while borrowing certain methodological models from the preceding methodologies. The elaboration of a new methodology consists in mobilizing these different models to define and organize the learning action (the "school tasks") according to the use action (the "social actions") for which one wants to prepare the learners. Once the process has been completed, all the elements that contributed to it constitute a new "didactic configuration".<sup>4</sup>

I consider that all these methodologies are currently relevant, either globally, as matrices that can be adapted to certain objectives, audiences and didactic environments, or partially, when one selects components of different methodologies to articulate, integrate or combine them. On this point, my position is in radical opposition to that of B.K., who considers that eclecticism does not allow for coherent classroom practices, and who does not question at the outset (in his 1994 article) the universalist claims of the communicative approach.

### ***1.2. The methodological and metamethodological perspectives***

The discipline of Didactics of languages and cultures (DLC) emerged in France at the end of the XIX<sup>e</sup> century, to reach its maturity in the 1980s, by successively applying twice the same process of complexification, namely the "passage to the meta": this consists, when one has progressed in the knowledge of one's object to the point where one is no longer able to apprehend it by only one glance from the position where one is, to take a position of distance in order to be able to observe it once again in its totality.

(1) The reflections and proposals concerning language teaching started from the methodological perspective, which remained the only one in force until the 1960s: until then, the best answers in absolute terms were sought to the questions concerning the modes of teaching, which were perceived as problems that could receive definitive solutions, and all these solutions were grouped together in a "method" or "methodology" conceived in a single global coherence that was considered permanent and universal.

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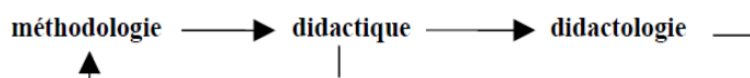
<sup>4</sup> For the different didactic configurations, see Puren 029, with its notes and bibliography. For two examples of the process of elaboration of didactic configurations (the direct configuration and the active configuration), cf. Puren 2012f, pp. 6-12.

(2) A first shift to the meta -to a "meta-methodological" or "didactic" perspective- took place at the beginning of the 1970s: the various possible answers to methodological questions were still being sought, but they were now perceived as problems that could only be managed according to the different objectives, audiences and environments by means of solutions that were necessarily partial, local and provisional<sup>5</sup>. The *discipline of* "didactics (of languages and cultures)" was built on this didactic *perspective*, and for this reason it has taken on this name, which it has retained until now. Two metamethodological perspectives already existed, but they were external to the teaching-learning of languages because they were borrowed from two other disciplines, namely pedagogy, dominant in the teaching of modern foreign languages in schools, and applied linguistics, dominant in the teaching of French as a foreign language (FFL) to adults.

The didactic perspective is therefore by nature a metamethodological perspective within the discipline of DLC. The "field" of the didactic *perspective*, within the *discipline of* didactics (of language-cultures), is constituted by all the extra-methodological positions from which it is possible to problematize the methodological questions: on the design side, these are the objectives, the environments (of which the actors themselves are part, in the very broad sense of the concept, the one it has in ecology) as well as all the models available in the different fields concerned, those of linguistics, cognition, cultural anthropology and pedagogy, as well as the methodology itself, if one mobilizes for these problematization methodologies or methodological components already constituted.<sup>6</sup> When we place ourselves in the methodological perspective, we are looking for answers; when we place ourselves in the didactic perspective, we are looking for a maximum of questions and possible contextual answers, in order to give the teachers the means to choose their own questions and to bring their own answers, and even, beyond that, to construct their own questioning; in methodology, we construct, in didactics, we deconstruct in order to give teachers the means to build their own constructions on their own ground, and this didactic deconstruction naturally concerns all methodologies, so as to enrich the construction materials available to teachers, and the ways of using them.

(3) A second shift to the meta, to a "meta-didactic" perspective, therefore, takes place in the early 1980s, with the emergence of ethical, epistemological and ideological questions that are imposed as soon as didactic questions are in turn perceived as problematic. This is the case, for example, when one seeks to answer questions of language policy, school curriculum development, or teacher training as autonomous professionals and responsible citizens. This third perspective within DLC, the "didactological" perspective, historically completes its disciplinary maturation<sup>7</sup>.

What characterizes this mature discipline, which I call the "complex didactics of language-cultures" (cf. Puren 2003b), is the maintenance of a permanent recursion between its three constitutive perspectives:



In my 1999a article, in which I present the functioning of these three internal perspectives, I explain what the didactic perspective brings to teachers as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> On the epistemological difference between the notion of "problem" and "problematic," cf. Puren 023. On the notion of "methodological components", or "methodological objects", cf. *infra* the beginning of chapter 1.5 and my reference that is indicated, Puren 2019b.

<sup>6</sup> On the intervention side, which is the second major type of activity in DLC, these are materials, practices and evaluation. For a schematization of this whole field of didactics and its illustration by two mental experiences, see Puren 044.

<sup>7</sup> To designate this new metadidactic perspective, I have taken up the term proposed by Robert Galisson in the 1980s to designate what appeared to him at the time as a new discipline, which he called "didactology". On this whole historical evolution of DLC in France from the 1960s to the 1980s, see Puren 1994a. On the characteristic activities of each of these three perspectives constituting the discipline DLC, see Puren 002.

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*The methodological level<sup>8</sup> remained for a long time in DLC - exactly as long as it remained the only one constituted - a field of predilection of a dogmatic and restrictive type of training, whether in reference to practical models (among the so-called "field" trainers and inspectors) or in reference to theoretical models (among linguists and applied psychologists). From the didactic level, which by definition integrates in particular the historical and comparative perspective, it is now possible to make this first methodological level, in the same way as the other two, a field of fundamental reflection where teachers can find tools for analysis and personal construction of their own practices. (pp. 38-39)*

In his first publications, B.K. adopted a methodological perspective: all you had to do was read the titles of these articles in the "Articles" section of his (now defunct) website. There was a 1993 article on the communicative approach: "*Maximizing learning potential in the communicative classroom*", which he will quote, under the reference 1993a, in a passage of his 1994 article (cf. the last quotation in chapter 1.3.). We will see further on in chapter 2.5. that with his "strategic framework" of 1994 and his "postmethod pedagogy" of 2001, B.K. moves to the didactic perspective and then to the didactological perspective. But one of the weaknesses, it seems to me, of all his proposals is that they are not situated within the framework of a constituted discipline functioning on the principle of recursivity between its three internal perspectives.

### **1.3. Methodological eclecticism**

From the beginning of the 1970s, some French specialists proposed to elaborate a "reasoned eclecticism", which corresponded to the transition to the didactic perspective. In a 1972 collective work, three specialists in the teaching of ESL wrote:

*Let us repeat, the solution of the future can only be eclectic, in the positive and not pejorative sense that Palmer gave to eclecticism: "So far from being a term of disparagement or reproach it implies the deliberate choice of all things which are good, a judicious and reasoned selection of all the diverse factors the sum of which may constitute a complete and homogeneous system". What we might call a "reasoned eclecticism" must govern both the choice of linguistic and psychological theories on which we want to base our experiments and the choice of means and techniques to be used in conducting the experiment (Antier, Girard & Hardin 1972, p. 76).*

One of the three authors of the above-mentioned collective work, Denis Girard, published in the same year 1972 a personal book entitled *Linguistique appliquée et didactique des langues*, in which he explains its title as follows:

*Language teaching, long considered an art, has evolved considerably during this century and has already acquired, in the best of cases, a certain scientific rigor. It was perhaps a mistake to try to make it a sort of by-product of linguistics by labeling it "Applied linguistics". [... ] (Girard, 1972 : 27)*

And he continues a few pages later with this proposal, which will be imposed in France during this decade: "Why not speak of Didactics of language', as W. F. Mackey does?" (p. 9 & 27)<sup>9</sup>.

In my *Essai sur l'éclectisme* (Puren 1994e), I analyzed eclecticism, whose rise in French as a foreign language textbooks had been noticeable since the early 1980s, as an empirical response by

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<sup>8</sup> Since that article, I have replaced the term "level" in my terminology, which connoted the idea of a hierarchical relationship, with "perspective". As I wrote in the presentation of this article, "the superiority of analysis in complex didactics is given only by the constant chaining of the three perspectives, the superiority of analysis being given only by the constant chaining of the three perspectives, just like the passage from one perspective to another, in the physical world, which allows one to apprehend the complexity of an object by spinning it between one's fingers or by turning around it."

<sup>9</sup> D. Girard refers to William Francis MACKEY's 1961 book, *Language Teaching Analysis*, which had just been translated into French with the title *Principes de didactique analytique. Analyse scientifique de l'enseignement des langues* (Paris: Didier, 1972, 713 p.).

teachers to the complexity with which they are constantly confronted in their daily practices. The same observation was made by K.B. the same year in his 1994 article:

*Furthermore, as the study conducted by Swaffar, Arens, and Morgan (1982) revealed, even syllabus designers and textbook producers do not strictly follow the underlying philosophy of a given method, and more importantly, even teachers who are trained in and claim to follow a particular method do not fully conform to its theoretical principles and classroom procedures (see also Kumaravadivelu, 1993a). (K.B. 1994, p. 30)*

But unlike B.K., who limited himself to a critique of eclecticism, in my subsequent work I proposed to take it into account within a complex DLC, that is to say within the framework of the recursivity of the three internal disciplinary perspectives.

#### **1.4 Between practices and theories, models**

Long before Denis Girard, Émile Durkheim had distanced himself from the traditional conception of teaching as an "art". In his 1922 book *Education and Sociology*, he noted that pedagogical reflections "take the form of theories; they are combinations of ideas, not combinations of acts, and, in this way, they are close to science. But the ideas which are thus combined have for an object, not to express the nature of the given things, but to direct the action" (p. 88), in what according to him they approach art. And he finally proposed to consider them as being of the same nature as "political, strategic, etc. medical theories". To express the mixed character of these kinds of speculations, we propose to call them practical theories. Pedagogy is a practical theory of this kind" (p. 89).

What Durkheim means by this paradoxical expression of "practical theory" is what B.K. calls "*classroom-oriented theories of practice*" (1994, p. 29), and it is what epistemologists now call "models" in the sense that they give to this notion when it comes to the products of systemic modeling. But B.K. does not think of his "theories of practice" as systemic models. The complexity and epistemological specificity of the teaching profession are that they cannot be thought of as a direct application of a set of established practices, nor as a direct application of external theories: the only way out of the eternal and insoluble problem of the "theory-practice relationship" is to resort to those indispensable interfaces between theories and practices that are models. Models are concrete enough to generate practices, but abstract enough so that these practices can be diversified according to the audiences, objectives and teaching-learning environments<sup>10</sup>.

There are a great many models that have been bequeathed to us by the different historical methodologies, of different formats - micro, meso and macro-methodological - and of different types - practical, praxeological, theoretical and didactological, according to their different origins and functions<sup>11</sup>.

One of the weaknesses of B.K.'s positions and proposals is that he remains at the sterile opposition theory-practice, so that he only envisages, in order to fight against the domination of the "theorists", to make all the didactic reflection and intervention start from the teaching practices alone, which is only passing from one type of limitation to another.

#### **1.5. Multi- and pluri-methodological approaches**

The two multi- and pluri-methodological approaches are already emerging in empirical eclecticism from the 1970s onwards in France. They have been developed recently from a DLC point of view by Bruno Maurer in part 5 of Maurer & Puren 2019, and by me in Puren 2020f<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> On the issue of models in DLC, cf. e.g., with their respective bibliographies, Puren 2015a and, in Spanish, 2019i-es. The title of this chapter 1.4. takes up the subtitle of the latter text, which is entitled "*La didáctica en la formación del profesor: entre las teorías y las prácticas, los modelos*".

<sup>11</sup> On the different model formats, cf. Puren 2019g. On the different types, cf. 2020a.

<sup>12</sup> These two texts refer, of course, to references from other didacticians.

These two types of approaches are based on the idea, which I have already touched upon in chapter 1.1 above, of the current availability of different methodological matrices provided by the various language teaching methodologies that have succeeded one another since the end of the XIX<sup>e</sup> century in France, as well as on the idea, validated by the analysis of the evolution of these methodologies, of the existence of components of these methodologies that are sufficiently coherent and self-sufficient to have been "copied and pasted" from one constituted methodology to another. These components, today as in the past, can also be inserted as they are by teachers into their own methodological "software". I have proposed to call these components methodological "objects", from a term used by computer scientists, who speak of "Object-oriented programming" (OOP) when they interpose already written parts of software into the new software they are creating. These software components are available in "object libraries" that are available to computer scientists. The same is true of "methodological objects", which are available to language-culture teachers: these include, for example, the "direct" techniques (*i.e.*, in L2) for explaining an unknown word, the active and comprehensive approach to texts, the experiential techniques, the standard exercise procedure, or the five documentary logics (cf. Puren 2019g). Some of these methodological components are so robust, effective, and self-sufficient that they can be found added to all methodologies constituted since traditional methodology included: these are the "experiential techniques," which propose to "make students experience" the foreign language in the classroom, and for this purpose solicit "the authentic, the spontaneous, the lived, the affective, the emotional, the pleasurable, the trusting, the convivial, the imaginative, the creative, the playful, the relational, the interactive, the corporeal" (Puren 052, p. 4).

I recently proposed (Puren 073, November 2020) the following definitions of multi- and pluri-methodological approaches, which I believe are at work in the construction of the corresponding methodologies:

*A "multi-methodological" approach is one in which different methodologies are simply juxtaposed without even being articulated, for example from one teaching sequence to another or from one year to another. [...]*

*A "pluri-methodological" approach is a system designed to "articulate", "integrate" or "combine" several methodologies, i.e. to manage them in such a way as to bring them into synergy within the same overall coherence. (p. 2)*

The distinction brought to these two approaches by the prefixes multi- and pluri- is homologous to the one that the authors of the *CEFR*, with the same prefixes, attribute to the notions of "multilingual/multicultural" and "plurilingual/pluricultural": the multi- is of the order of juxtaposition, the pluri- emerges when the different languages and the different cultures enter into synergy and are integrated into a new global coherence:

*[...] the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. [...] (COE 2001, p. 5)*

*[...] the various cultures (national, regional, social) to which that person has gained access do not simply co-exist side by side; they are compared, contrasted and actively interact to produce an enriched, integrated pluricultural competence, of which plurilingual competence is one component, again interacting with other components. (COE 2001, p. 6)*

Because he situates himself in the sole framework of the communicative approach in his 1994 article, refusing any form of eclecticism, and then rejecting the very idea of "methodology" in his 2001 article, B.K. cannot consider the relevance of these multi- and plurimethodological approaches.



## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE POSITIONS AND PROPOSALS OF B. KUMARAVADIVELU

The first three chapters of this second part focus on B.K.'s positions: his "postmethod" perspective, his critique of eclecticism, and his promotion of teacher pedagogical autonomy. The last two chapters focus on his two successive proposals, a "macrostrategic framework" (1994) and a "postmethod pedagogy" (2001).

### 2.1. A project to "decolonize" international ESL teaching

Originally from India, B.K. did all of his college education there; he began his teaching career at the university there; and even though he spent most of his career in the US, he has always maintained a keen awareness of being a non-native English teacher, and a strong solidarity with all those countries, like India, in which he considers that the Western English-speaking countries -that is, if you count England, the US, English-speaking Canada, and Australia- are imposing a mode and content of English teaching that is inappropriate to those other countries and their teachers. Using critical geopolitical terminology, he calls these countries the "Periphery" and the "Center"<sup>13</sup>.

But his criticisms are in fact aimed primarily at the United States, the only country to which he clearly refers when he speaks of "the Empire". In a very politically committed article with very anti-American overtones (« Dangerous Liaison: Globalization, Empire and TESOL", 2006), he thus takes up from a quoted author the equation *Globalization = Westernization = Americanization*.

In this 2006 article, after recalling the 2003 invasion of Iraq as an illustration of U.S. imperialism, he cites among other criticisms those made by TESOL Islamia<sup>14</sup> denouncing the neo-colonial orientation of TESOL International's activities "in the area of language policy, curriculum design, materials development, language testing, teaching methodology, program evaluation, and second language research" (B.K. 2006, p. 14). The only thing missing from this list is the area of teacher education, but that is probably an oversight, because he has often discussed it elsewhere (at great length, for example, in his 2001 article, and again in his 2012 article).

We know the difference between the "postcolonial" critique, in which it is considered that the political independence of the colonized countries opened a new era (B.K. still uses this concept in the title of an article from 2005), and the "decolonial" critique, in which it is considered that colonialism has continued until today under new forms of domination, those of the international networks of economic, political, ideological and cultural power. For B.K. and the many authors he cites in this regard, one of the instruments for perpetuating this domination is the international teaching of English, including its methodology, which he considers a "colonial construction": he denounces the methodological manipulation that comes with center-based methods (B.K. 2012b, p. 7), in particular by means of the native teacher model, which imposes a monolingual approach, as well as a mono-cultural approach with a Western worldview and mode of communication.<sup>15</sup>

What B.K. calls a "colonization of English language teaching" in the countries of the Periphery endangers, according to him, the linguistic and cultural identity of the learners, and it is even likely

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<sup>13</sup> Regarding B.K.'s education and career, I refer to the detailed information he himself provides on his personal website, still online even though it is no longer updated since his retirement in 2018, [www.bkumaravadivelu.com](http://www.bkumaravadivelu.com).

<sup>14</sup> [http://cqcounter.com/site/tesolisla\\_mia.org.html](http://cqcounter.com/site/tesolisla_mia.org.html) (last consulted April 2022). As the name suggests, the project of the site's managers is to establish a close relationship between the teaching of English and Islam.

<sup>15</sup> Ayachia (2016) presents as self-evident the idea, which he supports with references to B.K. and other authors, that "the rejection of translation in the method era was illegitimate and it was a result of the method concept as a colonial construct." Such a statement is for me an example of purely ideological reasoning. This rejection of translation was originally built on pedagogical arguments at the end of the XIX<sup>e</sup> century for the teaching of school languages in Europe, well before American behaviourism, and it was only afterwards that it could be eventually exploited for the benefit of colonialist domination.

to provoke, in countries where English is the national second language (as in India, precisely), a real collective acculturation.

The intercultural approach, which historically came to be grafted onto the communicative language approach to manage the cultural side of language-culture teaching, restores the balance between the foreign culture and the culture of the learners to some extent, but it seems to him insufficient<sup>16</sup>:

*While the world at large seems to be treating English as a vehicle for global communication, a sizable segment of the TESOL profession continues to be informed by an anachronistic anthropological belief in the inextricability of the language-culture connection. TESOL textbooks continue to use the English language as a cultural carrier. There are instances where academic papers presented at professional conferences propagate an ethnocentric view of culture learning and culture teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2002). Even textbooks on intercultural communication, with very few exceptions, still treat Western cultural practices as the communicational norm for intercultural communication across the globe. (B.K. 2006, p. 19)*

And he calls for the "epistemic break"<sup>17</sup> necessary, in the conception of language teaching-learning and in the corresponding research, to achieve a radical reappropriation of English language teaching from the point of view of the "historical, political, cultural, and educational requirements" of these different countries (B.K. 2012, p. 24).

Most French, and no doubt European, didacticians will certainly be surprised, as I was, to see their postulate of the indissociability of language and culture treated as an "anachronistic anthropological belief". It is certainly important to remember that, as B.K. denounces, language can be a formidable instrument of acculturation: European countries like France, which have a long colonial history, know this well. But we can oppose B.K. with the following three objections:

(1) What he wants to see is in fact that a certain language is dissociated from a certain culture so that other cultures can be associated with it. However, this project does not call into question, but rather tends to reinforce the idea of an indissociability of language and culture. In his 2001 article, B.K. quotes the following passage from Weedon (1987):

*language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed (p. 21). (Quoted in B.K. 2001, p. 543)*

And B.K. continues, "This is even more applicable to L2 education, which brings languages and cultures in contact." (p. 534)

(2) The intercultural approach aims to modify the learners' representations of the foreign culture, but "with very few exceptions", to use B.K.'s formula (2016, p. 74), it has in fact only given rise in textbooks to a metacultural comparative approach, *i.e.* an explicit comparison between foreign cultures and the learners' own cultures. It is this approach, which he calls "multicultural", that B.K. proposes, but, like the two authors he quotes in the following passage, it is limited to the cultures of teachers and learners:

*Raising cultural consciousness minimally requires that instead of privileging the teacher as the sole cultural informant, we treat the learner as a cultural informant as well. By treating learners as cultural informants, we can encourage them to engage in a process of participation that puts a premium on their power/knowledge. We can do so by identifying the cultural knowledge learners bring to the classroom by using it to help them share their*

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<sup>16</sup> In this regard, B.K. cites in his 2012 article a well-known author among European language-culture educators, Michael BYRAM, and his 1997 book, *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the subtitle of his 2012 text: *The Case For an Epistemic Break*.

*own individual perspectives with the teacher as well as other learners whose lives, and hence perspectives, differ from theirs (Swaffar, 1991; Walters, 1992). We can do so by taking our learners on the path of "cultural versatility" if we "structure tasks and assignments so as to ... elicit a synthesis between learner, the learner's home culture, and the target cultural objective" (Robinson, 1991, p. 118). Such a **multicultural approach** can also dispel stereotypes that create and sustain cross-cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications. (B.K. 1994, p. 41, emphasis added)*

I personally do not see why this comparative meta-cultural approach should not also include, at least in the teaching of English in schools, the cultures of Western English-speaking countries, precisely in order to give students the means to develop a critical vision of them. To omit American culture from this teaching - since it is concretely what B.K. is talking about - at least in the countries where it is massively diffused, is to deprive oneself of an effective means of fighting against acculturation. One also wonders more generally why the strategy proposed by B.K. would be valid for other cultures that do not present a risk of acculturation for students. One of the weaknesses of B.K.'s positions and proposals is that they are difficult to generalize, because he never questions their validity for other audiences, other institutional environments, and other languages.

(3) B.K. rightly points out the inadequacy of the intercultural approach, but he fails to see what is the cause of this, namely that this intercultural approach has inherited the characteristics of the communicative approach because it has historically been placed at the service of the same social objective of reference<sup>18</sup>. Replacing the Western culture of communication with local cultures of communication cannot produce this "epistemic rupture" that B.K. advocates: to achieve this, it is necessary to question the exclusivity of the intercultural component within cultural competence at the same time as the exclusivity of the communicative component within language competence. But B.K. cannot question intercultural competence because he does not question the language objective of communicative competence, and this is why he proposes the only other solution, radical and debatable, namely the impasse on the cultures of Western English-speaking countries (cf. the paragraph above). From the point of view of a DLC that is open to the whole history of methodologies, the language-culture relationship always appears to be indissociable because it is thought of in a complex way in the diversity of the components of language competence and in the diversity of the components of cultural competence: these are the relations between the comprehension and meta-cultural components in the active methodology, the communicative and intercultural components in the communicative approach, the plurilingual and pluricultural components in the plurilingual-pluricultural methodologies, and the co-language and co-cultural components in the action-oriented perspective.<sup>19</sup>

While up until 2006 B.K. had published exactly half of the articles referenced on his site in the journal *TESOL* (8 out of 16), it is not until 2016 that we find another one, which will be the last, where his stances are just as critical and militant, as its very title suggests: "*The Decolonial Option in English Teaching*". The author of B.K.'s "profile" on his personal website notes that he had a reputation among his students as a "*thoughtful, and always thought-provoking guide*": although he was awarded emeritus status at his California university upon retirement, it is likely that elsewhere he paid for the radicalness of his political and ideological stances with a certain marginalization.

I personally feel close to these positions of B.K. and to his direct way of taking them, as can be seen in the criticisms that for twenty years now, together with some other colleagues, I have been addressing to the experts of the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe and their proposals in terms of the linguistic policy as well as of teaching, learning and evaluation of languages and

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Puren 2017h, slides #27 and #28. The same "service relationship," which partly explains the lack of consideration of intercultural competence in communicative textbooks, can be found in the scales of mediation competence in the *CEFR Companion volume* published in 2018 (COE 2018): cf. Puren 2019b, p. 57

<sup>19</sup> On the different components of cultural competence, see Puren 2011j. On these different relationships between the cultural components of cultural competence and the language components of language competence, cf. Puren 052, diagram p. 2.

cultures<sup>20</sup>. It seems to me, however, that B.K. does not sufficiently remind us of the particularity of his field of intervention in relation to other countries, other languages and other learning publics, and that his methodological proposals are not generalizable because they are too narrowly limited to the teaching that he criticizes.

## **2.2. A "postmethodology" perspective**

B.K.'s analysis of the current situation of teaching English as an international language seems to him to provide a way out of what he denounces as a neo-colonial "methodological manipulation". He announces this at the very beginning of his 1994 article:

*In practical terms, the postmethod condition signifies several possibilities for redefining the relationship between the center and the periphery. First and foremost, it signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method.* (B.K. 1994, p. 29)

In the expression *postmethod condition*, the term *method* has for B.K. the restricted meaning of "constituted methodology"<sup>21</sup>. His criticisms concern all methodologies as such. It is with them that he begins his 1994 article, whose tone is immediately very incisive:

*After swearing by a succession of fashionable language teaching methods and dangling them before a bewildered flock of believers, we seem to have suddenly slipped into a period of robust reflection. [...] In the past few years, we have seen a steady stream of evaluative thoughts on the nature and scope of method [that] counsel us against the search for the best method and indeed against the very concept of method itself. This awareness is fast creating what might be called a postmethod condition.* (B.K. 1994, pp. 27-28)

To translate *condition* into French, I think it is necessary to use the same term. It is the one used by François Lyotard in his famous 1979 book, *La condition postmoderne*. Admittedly, this French philosopher is not cited in the texts of B.K. that I have been able to consult; in a 2012 text, he even distances himself from postmodernism, which he presents on the basis of a work by the American sociologist Harvie Ferguson, because he considers it to have been overtaken in turn by *globalization* (B.K. 2012a). But the analogy is too strong, between B.K.'s critique of methodologies and F. Lyotard's critique of ideologies, all of which function according to the two authors as great systems of unique, closed and universal coherence, not to justify the use of this term.

The most accurate French translation of *the Postmethod condition* seems to me to be, therefore, "la condition post-méthodologies".<sup>22</sup>

The first reason for B.K.'s opposition to all methodologies comes from his project to decolonize international English education.

*[...center-based methods and center-produced materials are all the time imposed on the Periphery. Constructing a context-specific postmethod pedagogy is one way of countering the methodological manipulation that come with Center-based methods.* (2012b, p. 7)

But he is really only targeting the instrumentalization by the USA in some countries of a particular methodology, the communicative approach. He does not give any other historical examples in his work, and the generalization he makes in the above quotation is hardly risky, because it is a simple truism: by nature and by definition, a methodology is "centralist" when it is imposed by a few on many... and vice versa. The most frequent case, as far as I know, and which concerns the majority of language teachers in the world, is the imposition on these teachers by the educational authorities of their country of pedagogical and methodological orientations chosen, as well as sometimes of

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<sup>20</sup> See bibliographic references cited in 2<sup>e</sup> paragraph of the general introduction to Maurer & Puren 2019, p. 1 (book freely downloadable online).

<sup>21</sup> The French term "méthode" is also used in DLC in the sense of didactic material (e.g., "les méthodes d'anglais publiées en Espagne") and of a minimal unit of methodological coherence (e.g., the "méthode déductive", the "méthode onomasiologique"): cf. Puren 004.

<sup>22</sup> I have retained in the present English translation this remark that I made in the French original.

textbooks elaborated, according to national aims and objectives. These are more complex situations to analyze and to denounce, because these orientations and textbooks are instruments without there always being "instrumentalization", and because it is a question of local relations of hierarchical authority, and not of foreign domination.

When he criticizes methodologies in general, B.K.'s assertions are often questionable, because his focus on the communicative approach alone does not give him sufficient historical or geographical distance. I will take as an example the following passage, which I will analyze in detail.

*Not anchored in any specific learning and teaching context, and caught up in the whirlwind of fashion, methods tend to wildly drift from one theoretical extreme to the other. At one time, grammatical drills were considered the right way to teach; at another, they were given up in favor of communicative tasks. At one time, explicit error correction was considered necessary; at another, it was frowned upon. These extreme swings create conditions in which certain aspects of learning and teaching get overly emphasized while certain others are utterly ignored, depending on which way the pendulum swings. (B.K. 2003b, pp. 28-29).*

Here are a few remarks that this passage suggests to me:

a) Each methodology, in fact, emerges and is constructed by being strongly "embedded in a specific learning and teaching context". In his 1994 article, p. 32, B.K. proposes ensuring "social relevance" as one of ten macrostrategies from which teachers can develop their own methodology, which will be made up of all the corresponding microstrategies:

**Macrostrategy 10: Ensure social relevance**

*Social relevance refers to the need for teachers to be sensitive to the societal, political, economic, and educational environment in which L2 learning/teaching takes place. [...] L2 learning/ teaching is not a discrete activity; it is deeply embedded in the larger societal context that has a profound effect on it. The social context shapes various learning/teaching issues such as the motivation for L2 learning, the goal of L2 learning, the functions an L2 is expected to perform at home and in the community, the availability of input to the learner, the variation in the input, and the norms of proficiency acceptable to that particular speech community. (B.K. 1994, p. 42)*

But this is precisely the mechanism at the historical origin of each transition from one methodology to another: a new methodology begins to be constituted when the current one has lost its social relevance due to the evolution of society (cf. the examples of direct and active methodology in Puren 2012f, pp. 6-12, already cited above note 4 p. 3, regarding the notion of "didactic configuration"). The inadequacy of the communicative approach in some countries, rightly denounced by B.K., comes precisely from the fact that its original environment of elaboration –the Western English-speaking countries– is not the same as that of these other countries. But conversely, the fact that these countries have imported not only the American communicative approach but also the corresponding social, pedagogical and communicative cultures and have maintained it in their school systems for so long until now cannot be explained solely by a neo-colonial external imposition or by collective alienation: it necessarily responds in part to the aims and objectives that these countries have sovereignly set for themselves for the teaching of English. In other words –those of B.K.– it necessarily has a certain degree of "social relevance". It also has a certain degree of didactic relevance: there is the educational environment of the teachers, which B.K. rightly talks about, but there are also the educational aims of foreign language teaching in schools, among which the discovery of foreign cultures cannot be excluded. The fact that other languages are offered in parallel with English, each one taught with its corresponding culture(s), also modifies the evaluation that can be made of a country's educational policy with regard to the teaching of language-cultures.

To fit all his analyses into his scheme of the Center versus Periphery domination relation, B.K. extends it to the theory/theorists versus practice/practitioners relation:

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*As conceptualizers of philosophical underpinnings governing language pedagogy, theorizers have traditionally occupied the power center of language pedagogy while the practitioners of classroom teaching have been relegated to the disempowered periphery. If the conventional concept of method entitles theorizers to construct knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy, the postmethod condition empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice. (B.K. 1994, pp. 28-29)*

But methodologies are not only the work of theorists. While some are partly applications of theories, others, such as direct and active methodology, are empirical in origin, with theories *subsequently* legitimizing the choices made by practitioners. Even methodologies that refer very strongly to certain theories from the outset integrate, during their initial development phase, taking into account the experiments in the field, and sometimes even a long period of practical experience by many teachers. In the French audiovisual methodology of the 1960s-1970s, for example, the influence of experimental teachers, all trained in direct and active methodology, was much more decisive than the verbo-tonal theory of Petar Guberina (cf. Puren 1988a, p. 211). Another example: at the origin of the active methodology, dominant for half a century in French school teaching, from the 1920s to the 1960s, there is a revolt of teachers against the authoritarian and dogmatic imposition by the Ministry of National Education of the direct methodology, which some of them at the time had denounced as a "pedagogical coup d'état" (Puren 1988a, pp. 63-64). And this active methodology developed progressively and empirically during the years 1900-1920 on the basis of a principle that one of its promoters, Auguste Pinloche, presented thus in 1909:

*There is not and cannot be an absolute system in pedagogy. What one has to do, therefore, if one wants to make progress, is to seek in good faith, experimentally and not theoretically, what each process can give, according to the indications of the moment and the terrain, as the student's psychological evolution progresses, and then not to hesitate to recognize the moment when it ceases to be useful and can even begin to become harmful. And then, instead of obstinately depriving oneself of the benefits of one or other of these processes, is it not quite advisable, on the contrary, to combine them with a view to maximum possible efficiency? The processes of direct method[ology] cannot escape this law. Like all the others, they have their relative value and their useful indications, and consequently also their limit of effectiveness.*

This direct methodology then became official, and those who imposed it were not the "theorists" -linguists, psycholinguists and other specialists in the sciences of education- but the language inspectors of the French National Education. They are the ones among this body of civil servants who have most preserved a tradition of authoritarianism, and it is among them that opposition to "theoretical" academic research on DLC is still strongest in France, on the pretext that only they would know the realities of the field. Let us add to this the case of teachers who, as we know, apply limited and fossilized practices on a day-to-day basis: in the teaching of language-cultures, as in all school disciplines, the "centers", the places of power, are multiple and in competition with each other. I wrote at the beginning of this chapter 2.2. that B.K. "only aims [...] at the instrumentalization by the USA in certain countries of a particular methodology, the communicative approach": as a result, the relevance and interest of some of his positions and proposals do not go beyond this historical and geographical framework.

b) Describing methodologies as "caught up in the whirlwind of fashion" is a nice phrase, but it is inaccurate, especially with regard to the communicative approach in the USA, which is still relevant in the 2010s (under this name or that of "Task-Based Learning") whereas it was already dominant in the 1980s, according to the bibliographical data provided by B.K. himself. It would not be wise from a strategic point of view, if the methodologies were really so well instrumentalized by an all-powerful "Center", to allow them to be constantly modified by simple fashion effects.

The fact that the communicative approach is inadequately used in other countries is not only due to its instrumentalization, or more precisely, this instrumentalization is made possible by the fact that this methodology is, like all methodologies, difficult to modify and impossible to question as long as the social objective of reference on which it was built - in this case, communicative competence in a foreign language - is not called into question. The social objectives of reference

change very little over time: in the entire history of methodologies in France, I know of only five since the 17th century, the last two having emerged simultaneously with the *European Framework of Reference* just twenty years ago –plurilingual-pluricultural competence, and social actor competence–, and they have not yet really been imposed in training programs and textbooks (cf. Puren 029 with his bibliographic references). B.K. himself does not question the social objective of communicative language competence in English: what he proposes, as we shall see later (chapters 2.5 and 2.6), are adaptations of the communicative approach in terms of communicative, pedagogical and social cultures.

c) The "swings" cited by B.K. in this excerpt may appear negative if one limits oneself, as he does, to the contemporary history of the communicative approach to English as an international language as it is disseminated in certain countries. When he illustrates the pendulum effects, which are always noticeable between two successive methodologies, he is content to oppose communicative examples to pre-communicative examples. But if we look at the long historical period, we no longer perceive these movements as simple pendulum effects, but as regular returns to constant DLC problems, which are revisited each time in a different way, as when, after years of travel, we return to the same places that we look at in a different way (cf. Puren 1990c). This is the very first lesson I drew from my historical research in the general conclusion of my *Histoire des méthodologies*:

*I was particularly struck by the richness of this past: the coherence of the methodological constructions, the relevance of the debates, the intelligence and conviction of those who took part in them, the permanence, beyond fashions and even "revolutions", of the fundamental problems to which our era, like the previous ones, is striving to bring the solutions that suit it best. If the existence of an autonomous discipline can be judged by the specificity and the coherence of its problematic, then I believe I can affirm that in school teaching, at least, a true didactics of modern foreign languages was constituted at the end of the XIX<sup>ème</sup> century. (Puren 1988a, p. 261)*

I fully agree with B.K.'s idea, in the words he borrows from another author, that teachers have developed

*the conviction that no single perspective on language, no single explanation for learning, and no unitary view of the contributions of language learners will account for what they must grapple with on a daily basis" (Larsen-Freeman 1991, p. 269) (quoted by B.K. 1994, p. 30)*

I strongly disagree, however, with the conclusion he draws: "In such circumstances, it is not surprising that all attempts to devise alternative methods have proved to be an exercise in futility" (B.K. 1994, p. 30). Knowledge of these successive methodological constructions is indeed not only useful, but indispensable to the professional training of language teachers. It provides them with numerous concrete cases of the development of different teaching "strategies" because they are adapted to different objectives, audiences, "theories"<sup>23</sup> and environments.

Now it is precisely this situated methodological competence that B.K. wants to train teachers to enable them to extricate themselves from the grip of such and such a constituted methodology and to develop their own methodology. But this competence cannot be given, as he proposes, by the mere application of macrostrategies (cf. *infra* chap. 2.5.1) or of great pedagogical principles (cf. *infra* chap. 4.5.2).

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<sup>23</sup> Here again I use the term used by B.K. We will see later that it is in fact the "models" which, in the discipline "DLC", ensure the indispensable function of the interface between practices and theories.



## **2.3. The critique of methodological eclecticism**

### **Introduction to Chapter 2.3**

B.K. thus recalls in his 2012 interview with *MarcoELE magazine* the reasons why teachers generally choose methodological eclecticism.

*Actually, it is the presence, not the absence, of the concept of method that compels teachers to try to put together what is called an eclectic method. They have been doing this long before the concept of method came to be questioned. That is because they have all along known the limitations of an established method, namely, it is not location-specific, it is not derived from their classroom; it is artificially transplanted into it; it can not be implemented as is, and so on. Confronted with the complexities of their everyday teaching, and frustrated with established methods, teachers see no option but to try to invent an "eclectic method" that might work for them. (B.K. 2012b, pp. 2-3)*

I fully agree with this idea that eclecticism is an empirical response to the complexity that teachers constantly face in their practices (Puren 1994e, chap. 2.1.2. "Eclecticism and Complexity", pp. 59 ff.; Puren 1988b), and I see, as he does, the risks that this response presents if it is not thought through. But my strategy in the same 1990s was different. It consisted not in abandoning the idea of methodology, but in thinking of all methodologies within a discipline that takes care of this complexity, a "complex Didactics of languages and cultures".

Below I will repeat the various arguments put forward by B.K. to criticize eclecticism.

#### **2.3.1. Eclecticism would be limited by the concept of "methodology"**

It is true that any methodology is limiting in the practices it promotes, but this is essentially because, in order to be constructed as a global coherence, it must evacuate those components of complexity that are heterogeneity, variability, instability and contradiction (cf. Puren 046). Now B.K. demands the same level of coherence from the set of personal strategies that each teacher<sup>24</sup> could, according to him, induce directly from his classroom practices: such a set of strategies would constitute - and he repeats the idea several times in his 1994 article - "a **systematic, coherent** and relevant alternative to the methodology" (I emphasize). But in reality, it would run up against the same limitations, and the same risk of fossilization: we have all known teachers who had made "their own method"... and applied it identically in all their classes throughout the year and throughout their career.

Compared to what would ultimately be only other personal or collective methodologies, conventional methodological eclecticism, which starts from the great constituted different methodologies, has this advantage of providing not only different, but for some opposing modes of teaching, which are permanently at the disposal of teachers to manage the complexity of their practices. To be sure, as B.K. writes in a quote from Freeman, "the conventional concept of method 'overlooks the fund of experience and tacit knowledge about teaching which the teachers already have by virtue of their lives as students' (Freeman, 1991, pp. 34-35)" (quoted by B.K. 1994, p. 30), but this is true only in the case of a single exclusive methodology. There is nothing to prevent teachers, in an approach of reasoned eclecticism, from adding to their own modes of teaching the modes of teaching borrowed from different methodologies. These correspond to a fund of experience and explicit knowledge that the discipline has accumulated over more than a century, and which is far more important than the experiences of a single teacher or even a group of teachers. If, as B.K. writes in his 1994 article (pp. 31-32),

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<sup>24</sup> Or team of teachers: according to Widodo & Zakaria (2008) in their review of B.K.'s 2006 book, " the author proposes building solid and conducive ELT professional communities and tapping local resources to overcome local problems using local expertise and experience". This idea does not appear in my corpus of B.K.'s articles, so I can only renew my reservations here about its representativeness.



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*any pedagogic framework must emerge from classroom experience and experimentation and is also motivated by the fact that a solid body of classroom research findings are available for consideration and application,*

I see no reason why the various components of the methodologies that have been developed, what I called "methodological objects" in section 1.5 above, should not be examined as historical research findings and applied by teachers whose objectives, audiences and teaching/learning environments they suit.

It is certain that, to a certain extent, the specificity of the audiences, objectives and environments requires fine-tuned implementations that can only be the responsibility of the teacher in his or her classes, in front of his or her students, but this specificity is relative. There are in fact problems in DLC that have been well-identified for a long time (since the direct methodology of the 1890s-1900s, for the first ones) and that have produced stable and reliable modes of treatment - what I called, at the beginning of chapter 1.5. above, "methodological objects" -, and it would be foolish on the part of the teachers not to reuse them, as well as on the part of the trainers not to train the teachers in their reuse<sup>25</sup> .

Moreover, the implementation of eclecticism is not limited to simple, more or less empirical juxtapositions of different methodologies or methodological objects: alongside this "multi-methodological" approach, "pluri-methodological" approaches can be conceived, in which methodological objects are either articulated, integrated or combined with each other, as can be the case with languages in a plurilingual approach, or cultures in a pluricultural approach (see Puren 2020f).

### **2.3.2. Eclecticism would require too much teacher training**

B.K. writes about this in his 1994 article:

*In spite of such good intentions, eclecticism at the classroom level invariably degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical pedagogy because teachers with very little professional preparation to be eclectic in a principled way have little option but to randomly put together a package of techniques from various methods and label it eclectic. (B.K. 1994, p. 11)*

It is surprising to criticize the eclectic position, so widespread among teachers, on the grounds that it is not suitable for very poorly trained teachers; because one should logically infer that B.K. thinks it is suitable for all well-trained teachers; and because in fact very poorly trained teachers do not generally venture into risky methodological combinations, but prefer to follow strictly the single methodology proposed by their textbook or their initial training. And this may be a lesser evil, or even a temporary good, until they have the level of experience and competence from which they can launch into personal experimental combinations.

This criticism of B.K. can be immediately turned against his proposals, which also require, by his own admission, a high level of competence:

*The postmethod condition, however, recognizes the teachers' potential to know not only how to teach but also know how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula, and textbooks. It also promotes the ability of teachers to know how to develop a reflective approach to their own teaching, how to analyze and evaluate their own teaching practice, how to initiate change in their classroom, and how to monitor the effects of such changes (Richards, 1991; Wallace, 1991). In short, promoting teacher autonomy means enabling and empowering teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they have theorized. (B.K. 1994, p. 30)*

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<sup>25</sup> We find these objects from one methodology to another, borrowing being a constant mode of elaboration of the great historical methodologies (cf. Puren 1988c).

I do not see why teachers as experienced and reflective as those described by B.K. above would not be able to judiciously integrate into their practices methodological objects borrowed from different methodologies, or to decide at certain times to build certain class sequences according to one methodology or another, or to propose to their students several of the seven types of didactic treatments of authentic documents belonging to different methodologies (on this last point, cf. Puren 066). In the same article, B.K. contrasts eclecticism, which he condemns, with "enlightened pragmatism", which he advocates; the difference, in his view, being that in eclecticism the teacher chooses his practices from among the existing methodologies, whereas in "enlightened pragmatism" he induces them from his own practices. But it is also a position that is just as pragmatic and just as enlightened as the one proposed by M. Antier, D. Girard and G. Hardin in their 1972 work (cited *above* in chapter 1.3), or, earlier on, that of the teachers who, at the beginning of the XX<sup>e</sup> century, elaborated the half-direct, "half-traditional" "active methodology" (*i.e.* grammar-translation) by applying the principle that Auguste Pinloche, already cited above, presented as follows in 1913:

*As for the choice of means, as far from the extreme tendencies of the past as from those of our days, [the new pedagogy] knows how to combine all that can be good in the most opposed systems and endeavors to use, after having experimented with them impartially and measured carefully, all the procedures that can contribute to the attainment of the goal, taking into account each time not only the practical but also the intellectual needs of the pupils, and also the nature of the terrain. (Pinloche 1927, p. 5)*

B.K. writes in his 1994 article:

*As Stern (1992) rightly points out, the "weakness of the eclectic position is that it offers no criteria according to which we can determine which is the best theory, nor does it provide any principles by which to include or exclude features which form part of existing theories or practices". (p. 11) (quoted pp. 30-31)*

I find it difficult to understand why the "enlightened pragmatism" he advocates could succeed in providing these criteria and principles, and not the "enlightened eclecticism" advocated by M. Antier, D. Girard and G. Hardin. In the end, I find it difficult to distinguish even this pragmatism from this eclecticism, except for the fact that for B.K. the designers are the teachers themselves, whereas for these three authors it is a collaboration between experienced teachers, researchers in language teaching-learning and school officials. On the other hand, this second strategy is not without danger: one risks ending up in this way –and this was indeed the case in French school teaching with the official methodology active from the 1920s to the 1960s– with an eclectic methodology which becomes dogmatized and fossilized simply because it becomes official.

We shall see that B.K. We shall see that B.K., successively, proposes two different guides for teachers to develop their own methodologies: "macrostrategies" in his 1994 article, and "organizing pedagogical principles" in his 2001 article, on the basis of which teachers will be able to produce multiple adapted practical responses. In both cases, the strategy is basically the same, which seems to me to be relevant because it combines the rigor of predefined macrostrategies or agreed principles with the possible flexibility of their modes of implementation on the ground. But I do not see why these modes of implementation should all be constructed by teachers, when the historical analysis of successive methodologies provides a great many, tested and validated for a long time, which are immediately available for use, or at least for trial. In what profession are practitioners asked never to repeat any of the established techniques of their trade, but to invent all their own techniques?

### **2.3.3. Eclecticism would not allow the necessary coherence of practices**

In his 1994 article, B.K. writes that there are "inherent contradictions between method as conceptualized by theorists and method as actualized by practice", and he gives as evidence the fact that there are language-centered methodologies, learner-centered methodologies, and learning-centered methodologies, but that "view, none of these methods be realized in their purest form in the actual classroom primarily because they are not derived from classroom experience and experimentation". But he judges, as we saw at the beginning of the previous chapter 2.3.2, that

"eclecticism at the classroom level invariably degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical pedagogy". In his 2012 interview with *MarcoELE magazine*, he considers that teachers cannot be "responsibly eclectic" because to do so,

*we need to know, with a reasonable degree of certainty, which features of method A, which features of method B, etc. can be combined, how, for what reason, and with what result. And, all this has to be done taking into account the particularity of a given learning / teaching context.* (p. 3)

This argument of B.K. calls for the following remarks:

a) Apart from the fact that he thus daringly criticizes all those teachers who believe they are doing their work correctly within the framework of a "reasoned eclecticism", and all those who have supported the idea of an "enlightened eclecticism", B.K. uses here an argument that seems to me somewhat specious: it is precisely because contextual specificities must be taken into account that methodological answers cannot be given in advance. And it is the function of didactic training and professional experience to provide this "conditional knowledge" (the knowledge of when and why to apply this or that knowledge) which is just as necessary as declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge for the concrete application of any skill (Tardif 1996). This is not an easy task, but it seems to me to be less difficult than giving teachers, as B.K. wishes, the ability to construct their own methodology in the field, because they are already provided with a set of ready-made answers that only need to be used wisely. For beginning teachers, about whom B.K. is rightly concerned, the equivalent of the "strategic framework" or "postmethod pedagogy" he proposes can be provided by a type of research focused precisely on developing types of responses tailored to previously characterized types of contexts, namely "intervention research" (cf. Puren 2019c, 2020h).

b) It is surprising that teacher-centeredness does not appear in B.K.'s list, even though it is still considered the first historical phase in the evolution of methodologies, corresponding to the so-called "traditional" pedagogy. Was this because he considered it too traditional? But this teacher-centredness is not a problem when it is considered as only one of the available centring points: all teachers sometimes ask their students to listen attentively to them; it is only a problem, precisely, if they do so *systematically*. None of the centrations proposed in the different methodologies can be maintained in the classroom exclusively, and one must rather conclude that they are all necessary, some at certain times, others at other times. This even seems to me to be an empirical evidence: at one moment or another, for example, the teacher will explain a point of grammar, or encourage a student, or propose the realization of a project. The logical conclusion that can be drawn from this observation is not that all the corresponding focuses and methodologies are to be rejected, but on the contrary that all of them can be useful (cf. Puren 1995a).

c) When one chooses the eclectic option, contradictions appear not only between the constituted methodologies and the methodologies implemented by the teachers, but also between the different constituted methodologies, which effectively raise the question of coherence. But we must begin by questioning the notion of coherence itself. One of the weaknesses of B.K.'s proposals is that they are based on a single conception of coherence, which was that of all the constituted methodologies, even though he wants to reject them all. This is why he can only envisage replacing these methodologies with personal methodologies of teachers conceived on the same model of coherence, which obliges him "mechanically", one could say, to a set of proposals that is in fact teacher-centered. This is one of the criticisms levelled at B.K. by the authors of a review of his 2006 book, Widodo & Zakaria (2008):

In the texts of B.K. that I consulted, I did not find any proposals for taking into account the diversity of students (their cognitive profiles and their individual learning strategies, which can be opposed) and the need, in order to deal with it, to use sequences of differentiated pedagogy and autonomous learning in which the teachers and the students will necessarily implement methodological components that will not be of the same coherence

d) There are different types of coherence, all of which must remain available to teachers because complexity cannot be managed by one. I have proposed a model of the "epistemological types of

coherence available in foreign language-culture didactics" (title of Puren 058), which presents the characteristics of the different coherences that I have called "closed", "open", "multiple" and "virtual". Contrary to the American audio-oral methodology and the French audiovisual methodology, which were closed coherences, the communicative approach was intended to be an open coherence<sup>26</sup> ; the management of different centrations requires the use of multiple coherences (this is the type of coherence implemented in eclecticism); the materials on digital support proposing individualized or collaborative learning paths in a network can only be elaborated in reference to a virtual coherence.

e) In his argumentation, based on his observation of "inherent contradictions" between the proposals of "theorists" and the achievements of "practitioners", B.K. proposes a "strategic framework" that would allow teachers themselves to develop "theories of practice". In this way, he remains with the same epistemological conception as that of the methodologies, even though he considers them to be outdated. In his 2001 article, B.K. proposes three principles for his *postmethod pedagogy*, including that of "*practicality*", with which he answers the same question posed by Durkheim at the beginning of the 20th century<sup>e</sup> (cf. *above* chapter 1.4). He writes thus: "A pedagogy of practicality aims at a teacher-generated theories of practice".

The difference between models and theories is that the latter are mutually exclusive -one cannot be both constructivist and behaviourist, for example- while the corresponding models, which are also opposed, are at the same time complementary. A teacher will thus see no contradiction in asking his students at one point to reflect on the rule they have unconsciously applied in order to produce a certain incorrect grammatical structure, and then to have them do an intensive exercise in reworking the correct model (cf. Puren 016). The micromethodological analysis of all the methodologies constituted shows that they are made up of "methods" (in the sense of minimal units of didactic coherence") which are all classified in opposite pairs - transmissive/ active, direct/ indirect, inductive/ deductive methods, etc. (cf. Puren 008) -, because complexity requires opposite management modes. A teacher who asks his or her students, in succession, to conceptualize a rule and then to apply it, thus moves from the inductive to the deductive method. And if the students do not succeed in inducing the rule themselves (active method), the teacher may end up giving it to them (transmissive method). So that the conceptualization by teachers of their own practices cannot lead, contrary to what B.K. wants, to a "systematic" and "coherent" methodology, but to these same modes of managing complexity, by opposing methods and centrations.

In his 2001 article, B.K. quotes Feyerabend: "[...] philosophers of science such as Feyerabend (1975) would argue that there is no absolute objectivity even in scientific research". I understand that the title of his 1975 book appealed to him (*Against method*)..., and I also quoted Feyerabend in the same year, in my *Essay on Eclecticism*, but I did so in support of eclecticism (cf. p. 109 and note 157 p. 92), because this is the position he defends, and which he even extends to opposing scientific theories. In another work of 1989 (*Farewell to Reason*, 1987), he affirms, for example, that "the only principle that does not hinder progress is 'everything is good'"<sup>27</sup>, and he defends there what he calls, using an expression that could perfectly well be retained as equivalent to that of "methodological eclecticism", a "pluralist methodology":

*A scientist who wishes to extend the empirical content of his conceptions as far as possible, and who wants to understand them as clearly as possible, must therefore introduce other conceptions: that is, he must adopt a pluralistic methodology. He must compare ideas with other ideas rather than with "experience", and he must try to improve rather than reject conceptions that have failed in the struggle. (back-translation from the 1979 French edition, p. 27)*

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<sup>26</sup> What it has not always been in practice: closed coherence is generally more reassuring for teachers, because it is simpler to implement; more practical for trainers, because it provides them with the guiding thread of their program; more rewarding for inspectors... and for the didacticians themselves, because it legitimizes their authority.

<sup>27</sup> Page 7 of the 1979 French edition published by Éditions du Seuil.

In the same book, P. Feyerabend affirms that "There is no one rule that remains valid in all circumstances, and no one instance to which one can always appeal" (p. 196), an idea that is hardly compatible with that of the "organizing principles" of B.K.'s postmethod pedagogy.

As we can see, this is the opposite of B.K.'s position, who certainly recognizes that there is no absolute objectivity in science, but who believes that language teachers can rely on " an open-ended, coherent framework based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogic insights" (1994, p. 44), that of the ten macrostrategies he proposed in 1994. I smiled when I noted that in the bibliography of his 2001 article, the subtitle of P. Feyerabend's *Against method, Outline of a framework for language learning*, is not given. Feyerabend's book, *Outline of an anarchist theory of knowledge*: one can wonder if it is a coincidence, quoting an author who claims to be an anarchist risking to be badly considered in an academic journal, published by an association created in the USA, and, *last but not least*, destined to an international diffusion...<sup>28</sup>

### Conclusion of chapter 2.3.

Criticisms of eclecticism need to be handled with caution with respect to teachers. As I wrote in a 2004 article:

*Strong needs for eclecticism [have been] traditionally felt in the profession but often accompanied until now by a feeling of professional incapacity or even personal guilt: in a regime of dominant constituted methodology (which was the case throughout the XX<sup>e</sup> century, entirely occupied by constituted methodologies: direct, active, audiovisual and then communicative), methodological diversification is not felt as an adaptive richness, but as an inconsistent deviance. (Puren 2004d, p. 4)*

Especially since these criticisms are not unanimous among researchers, far from it. Among the authors that I have read citing B.K.'s work, I have not come across any who have taken up his critique of eclecticism. There are some, no doubt, but what I have found are only three examples where paradoxically his work is cited in support of the eclectic position:

(1) In her contribution to a 2017 collective academic work, Sonia El Euch, a Canadian didactician, writes thus:

*In reality, there is no ideal method or approach, and it is an illusion to try to develop one. We are in what Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001, 2006a) has called the postmethod era. Rather than identifying or developing the ideal method, we need to identify the principles that should be followed in developing a teaching methodology for optimal learning. Kumaravadivelu (2003) has identified 13 principles that we believe are the foundations of expert eclecticism. (p. 144, my translation of the French original)*

(2) In a *Manual de formación para profesores de ELE* (Español Lengua Extranjera) published in 2019, one of the contributors, Manel Lacorte, writes that:

*[...] since the 1990s, there has been an increased interest in postmethodological perspectives, which push for an "informed eclecticism" (un "eclecticismo informado") regarding activities, techniques and resources for L2 teaching and learning (see, for example, Kumaravadivelu 2006) (Lacorte 2019, p. 10)*

(3) Even more surprisingly, the same interpretation is found in a review of B.K. 2006 published two years later by two scholars in another American international journal on foreign language teaching:

*Currently, ESL/EFL [English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language] teachers are encouraged to explore what works and what does not work in particular ELT [English Teaching Learning] contexts using what Brown (2007) calls an informed and eclectic approach/method. He suggests that teachers explore all approaches to language teaching*

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<sup>28</sup> The title of the other work by P. Feyerabend that I quoted in my 1994 *Essay on Eclecticism* was not very "academically" correct either (*Adieu la raison*)...

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*since no one approach or method is appropriate for all teaching contexts. Kumaravadivelu has made a significant contribution in this regard in his book Understanding language teaching: From method to postmethod by presenting personal and professional perspectives on ELT [English Language Teaching] methods. (Widodo & Zakaria 2008, p. 1)*

It is also on eclecticism that the Spanish interviewer of the magazine *MarcoELE* (B.K. 2012b) asks his second question to B.K. after a first, general one about the difference between *method* and *postmethod*. Based on these limited but concordant examples, it seems that, paradoxically, B.K.'s work would not have had the international impact it did if it had not been interpreted as an interesting contribution to the debate on eclecticism... which he wanted to close.

In a 1995 article entitled "Of Constituted Methodologies and Their Questioning" (Puren 1995b, p. 6), I noted, like B.K., the failure of all constituted methodologies, and I concluded, like him, that "the crisis of methodologies must serve to renew methodology" (p. 6). But unlike him, I think that for this renewal, teachers and other actors in the teaching-learning of languages have no reason not to exploit the constituted methodologies and their recyclable components (their "objects"), in which is encapsulated more than a century of experience and collective professional thinking.

## **2.4. The demand for teachers' pedagogical autonomy**

"The condition of postmethod signifies teacher autonomy" (1994, p. 30); "Teacher autonomy is so central that it can be seen as defining the heart of postmethod pedagogy" (2001, p. 548): the two tools proposed by B.K. The two tools proposed by B.K. in these two articles are very different, as we shall see, but what brings them together is the common goal, namely the empowerment of teachers (and learners), as well as the common means, which is, in order to eliminate the domination imposed by theorists on practitioners, the theorization by the latter of their own practices. We have seen above that B.K., in his 1994 article, denounces the domination of theorists over practitioners, and that he thinks that the postmethodological condition allows practitioners to take their autonomy:

*If the conventional concept of method entitles theorizers to construct knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy, the postmethod condition empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice. (B.K. 1994, pp. 28-29, quoted above p. 13)*

There is, however, a notable shift in the conception of autonomy between the macrostrategic framework of 1994 and the postmethod pedagogy of 2001.

### **2.4.1. Autonomy in the 1994 "macrostrategic framework"**

In the "macrostrategic framework" proposed by B.K. in 1994, to which I will return in chapter 2.5.1, autonomy is limited by two factors that combine with each other: the fact that it is a framework, and that this framework is exclusively that of the communicative approach.

*(1) The macrostrategic framework is in fact a communicative framework.*

Even if the notion of *postmethod* concerns all methodologies, B.K., in all his works that I have been able to consult, is only interested in those that have communication as their main objective and as their privileged means.

In his 1994 article, he presents the following typology of methodologies: those which are centered (a) on the language, (b) on the learner and (c) on learning, giving as corresponding examples (a') *the audiolingualism*, which is a pre-communicative methodological orientation; (b') *the communicative methods* and (c') *the natural approach*, which is a variant of the communicative approach. From 1994 onwards, I did not find in B.K.'s work any reference to *Task-Based Learning* (TBL), a more common name among English-speaking didacticans<sup>29</sup>. But this is of little importance

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<sup>29</sup> Among the articles or contributions prior to 1994 listed in the *Articles* section of his personal website, there are two that refer to the concept of *task*: *Language learning tasks: teacher intention and learner*

here, since the TBL tasks are communicative tasks, and B.K. is obviously not interested in the variants of the "communicative approach"<sup>30</sup>, nor in other methodologies. In his analyses of the communicative approach, he never uses the comparative method, nor the historical method, which is consistent with his idea of a *postmethod condition*.

B.K. does not question the communicative approach as such: on the contrary, he defends the teaching of English as a language of international communication, but disconnected from the native cultures, that of the countries of the Center –their teaching cultures, their communication cultures and more broadly their social cultures– so that the local teachers can replace them with their own cultures:

*One of the avenues open (...) to create an environment in which multiple identities flourish is to move away from the prevailing notion of English as a cultural carrier to English as a communicational tool. (2006, p. 18)*

His exclusive interest in the communicative approach is explained by his political struggle. In the same 2006 article, he repeatedly quotes passages from a book by Hardt and Negri in which these authors denounce the "empire"<sup>31</sup>, taking up their idea that "the control of linguistic meaning and significance as well as the control of communication networks is becoming an increasingly central problem for political struggle.

*(2) The very notion of "framework" limits the proposals it can contain.*

B.K. is not opposed to the communicative approach, but to eclecticism, which he criticizes, as we have seen, for lacking principles and coherence. This is why he proposes in his 1994 article a coherent communicative framework, which he conceives at the same time as serving the empowerment of teachers. There is an opposition here, which is expressed in different forms in his 1994 article.

We find what is at least the expression of a tension in the following passage:

*Clearly, the ultimate worth of such a framework is to be found in how well it strikes a balance between giving teachers the guidance they need and want and the independence they deserve and desire. (p. 44)*

In the following two passages, what appears on reading is already more of a contradiction:

*The research-based macrostrategic framework is thus offered not as a dogma for uncritical acceptance but as an option for critical appraisal in light of new and expanding experience and experimentation in L2 learning and teaching. (p. 32)*

*In practical terms, the postmethod condition motivates a search for an open-ended, coherent framework based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical insights that will enable teachers to theorize from practice and practice what they theorize. (p. 44)*

In this other passage, finally, we can speak of a double paradoxical injunction: "Be free, and liberate yourselves thanks to the knowledge and assured principles that I propose to you":

*Although the purpose of such a framework is to help teachers become autonomous decision makers, it should, without denying the value of individual autonomy, provide adequate conceptual underpinnings based on current theoretical, empirical, and*

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*interpretation* (1991) and *The name of the task and the task of naming: methodological aspects of task-based pedagogy* (1993).

<sup>30</sup> I will use here, for my part, this generic expression consecrated in French.

<sup>31</sup> HARDT Michel. & NEGRI Antonio. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. This book has been widely read in American academic circles, where it has sometimes been considered a new "communist manifesto".

*pedagogic insights so that their teaching act may come about in a principled fashion.*  
(p. 31)

Such a "coherent" framework, based on a single methodology, the communicative approach, announced as supported by knowledge validated by research and very detailed (it contains ten macrostrategies), but presented nevertheless as non-dogmatic and "open", is inevitably reminiscent of the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)*, which was developed at the same time. It too is intended to be "flexible", "open", "in continuous evolution", principled but "non-dogmatic" (COE 2001, chapter 1.6., pp. 7-8)<sup>32</sup>. It will be agreed that a flexible and open "framework" is, in the real sense, a surrealist object as found in some of Salvador Dalí's paintings, and, in the figurative sense, the equivalent of a UFO, in this case an epistemologically unidentified object.

However, there are two fundamental differences between B.K. and the authors of the CEFR, between their starting point and their aim:

- B.K. considers that teachers implement a unique methodology that is imposed on them and that is inappropriate and even alienating, but that they can arrive at coherent practices on their own if they theorize their own practices.
- The authors of the CEFR acknowledge that most teachers practice eclecticism (cf. chap. 6.2.2, p. 140) and explain this by the fact that theories (linguistic, cognitive and pedagogical) have not yet reached sufficient certainty for theorists to design the best possible methodology, which they envisage for the future.

#### **2.4.2. Autonomy in the "postmethod pedagogy" of 2001**

Whereas in the 1994 article, teacher autonomy, as we have just seen, was conceived within a detailed "macrostrategic framework", in which, as it is rightly said, it was... "framed", teacher autonomy is much broader in the 2001 article, where it is guided only by three very general "pedagogical" principles. This evolution is reflected in his later work.

The reason for this is a more assertive political commitment of B.K. to a type of pedagogy known as "pedagogy of liberation": B.K. indicates at the beginning of his 2001 article that he is mainly inspired by Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator to whom this expression is attached. It is from him that B.K. first borrows his principles proposed in this article, *a pedagogy of possibility* (e.g. p. 542). This "possibility" refers to what teachers, but also trainers and learners, can mobilize themselves from their own knowledge and experience, and what they can do with it themselves; it is a question, as B.K. writes in this article, of making them "coexplorers" (p. 537) of their identity, of their society and of their project of social transformation. The pedagogy of P. Freire, which he claims, is indeed a revolutionary pedagogy that aims at making all social actors reappropriate their own destiny. Denouncing in his 2012(a) text the "self-marginalization" of local teachers in relation to native teachers, he calls, quoting terms from P. Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1<sup>e</sup> ed., English, 1972) for "a concerted effort to 'chang[e] the consciousness of the oppressed and not the situation that oppresses them'"<sup>33</sup>.

It is on the occasion of the definition of learner autonomy that B.K. quotes a well-known French didactician in FFL, Henri Holec, for his introduction to a book edited by him and published in 1988 by the Council of Europe. He cites his proposals as characteristic of an "academic autonomy" different from "social autonomy" (in the sense of collective autonomy of teams of teachers), both of which seem to him insufficient compared to the "*liberatory* autonomy" that he defends in the tradition of P. Freire:

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<sup>32</sup> On the contradictions, paradoxes and even inconsistencies in the *CEFR*, see my analyses in Maurer & Puren 2019, pp. 51-54, with their various bibliographic references.

<sup>33</sup> B.K. never uses the concept of "alienation" in the works I consulted, although it is central to Paulo Freire's work, and would have been very appropriate in the context of this quotation, since it is the alienation that is the source of self-marginalization. It is possible that he considered it too Marxist-philosophical to use it again in his publications.



*If academic autonomy enables learners to be effective learners, and social autonomy encourages them to be collaborative partners, liberatory autonomy empowers them to be critical thinkers. Thus, liberatory autonomy goes much further than the other two aspects of learner autonomy by actively seeking to help learners recognize sociopolitical impediments to realization of their full human potential and by providing them with the intellectual tools necessary to overcome those impediments<sup>34</sup>. (B.K. 2001, p. 547)*

In his interview with *MarcoELE*, addressing the magazine's teacher readers, his call for autonomy takes on libertarian overtones that neither H. Holec nor probably the editors of this magazine would be willing to take on board:

*Liberty is not something that is given; liberty is something that is taken. My advice to teachers: go, take your liberty.*

*I know it is easily said than done. I know teachers everywhere work under tremendous governmental and institutional constraints. Seldom do they have the freedom to make their own decisions on crucial matters such as curriculum design, textbook production / adoption, classroom teaching, etc. And yet, it is within such constraining environment that they have to find a way to make a difference. They can, and they should. (2012b, p. 6)*

## **2.5. The two tools for empowering teachers: a "macrostrategic framework" (1994) and a "postmethod pedagogy" (2001)**

I have already, in the previous chapter 2.4, analyzed B.K.'s two programmatic articles, of 1994 and 2001, with regard to teacher autonomy, an autonomy which is, according to him, at the "center" or "heart" of his project for the decolonization of English teaching. In this chapter 2.5, we will analyze again these two articles, each one successively, but this time focusing on the very tools that these two articles propose, namely, in the "strategic framework", the ten "macrostrategies" as well as the few examples that he gives of corresponding "microstrategies", and, in the "postmethod pedagogy", his three "organizing principles". Readers who wish to do so may now refer to Appendices 1 and 2 of my text, which provide extracts from B.K.'s presentation of these two tools.

### **2.5.1. The "strategic framework" of the ten "macrostrategies" (1994), a "communicative meta-methodology" perspective**

For his proposals, which are intended to be "postmethodological" while avoiding recourse to eclecticism, which, according to him, "invariably degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled and uncritical pedagogy" (1994, p. 30), B.K. proposes in 1994 a first strategy which consists in developing a "strategic framework" made up of ten "macrostrategies". This framework is "designed to help beginning and experienced teachers develop a systematic, coherent, and personal theory of practice." I will be forgiven the following lengthy quote, but it is so that my comments can be understood without the need to refer to K.B.'s article<sup>35</sup>.

*The proposed strategic framework for L2 teaching consists of strategies and microstrategies. Macrostrategies are general plans derived from theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical knowledge related to L2 learning/teaching. A macrostrategy is a broad guideline, on which teachers can generate their own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies or classroom techniques. In other words, macrostrategies are made operational in the classroom through microstrategies. As I see them, macrostrategies are theory neutral as well neutral. Theory neutral does not mean atheoretical; theory means that the framework is not constrained by*

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<sup>34</sup> I agree with this analysis of B.K. regarding autonomy in the H. Holec work of the 1980s-1990s, highly dependent on the individualistic ideology of learner-centeredness, but I consider that even academic autonomy must be limited (cf. Puren 2014d). It was not until the 2000s, with the developments of the Social Action-Oriented Approach ("perspective actionnelle", in French), that "collective autonomy" training appeared in DLC as a goal (cf. e.g. Puren 2014a, chap. 3.5 « Un nouvel enjeu éducatif: l'autonomie collective » ("A new educational challenge: collective autonomy"), pp. 11-12).

<sup>35</sup> I refer interested readers to learn more about this macrostrategic framework, with some examples of corresponding microstrategies, in Appendix 1, pp. 36-38.

*the underlying assumptions of any one specific theory of language, learning, and teaching. Likewise, method neutral does not mean methodless; means that the framework is not conditioned by a single set of classroom principles or classroom procedures associated with any one particular language teaching method.*

*The strategic framework comprises the following 10 macrostrategies: (a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated interaction, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches, (d) activate intuitive heuristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualize linguistic input (g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) raise cultural consciousness, and (j) ensure social relevance. These strategies are couched in imperative terms only to connote their operational character and not to convey any prescriptive quality. (p. 32).*

This passage, which is very dense, deserves several comments, even if one limits oneself, as I will do here, to those that fall within the framework of the theme chosen for my present article.

(1) Very paradoxically in relation to the nature and function of the metamethodological perspective in DLC (cf. *above* chap. 1.2), B.K. proposes a deconstruction of the communicative approach alone at one level, that of macrostrategies, which would then allow teachers, at the level of "microstrategies", to reconstruct this same methodology themselves ... B.K., in other words, wants to give himself a meta perspective... without taking a step back. These macrostrategies in fact correspond to the major classical orientations of the communicative approach, whether they are more or less specific to this approach –interaction (b), the focus on the learner (h), the implementation of the constructivist hypothesis (d, e, i), the integration of different language activities–, or taken from the general principles of the so-called "active methods" (a, c, f, j)<sup>36</sup> .

(2) The proposals of B.K., therefore, do not aim at anything other than an intelligent, *i.e.* adapted, implementation of the communicative approach: I do not see in what way they would make it possible to manage a "postmethodologies condition" (in the sense of his expression *postmethod condition*, as we have seen above), whereas they are not "post-communicative".

(3) These macrostrategies are not "neutral", as B.K. claims: since, as he says himself, they are "derived from theoretical, empirical and pedagogical knowledge for L2 learning/teaching", they are all dated and situated. As for the "theoretical insights", it necessarily corresponds, contrary to what he claims, to underlying assumptions of a specific theory of language, learning and teaching. He sees them as "neutral" only because he remains within the communicative paradigm, which, like all paradigms, creates false evidence. I have often quoted in my lectures these lines from Évelyne Bérard in her book on the communicative approach, as operating paradigms as machines for creating unquestionable certainties:

*It is certain that learning or teaching a language can only be done in a communicative framework, insofar as it is necessarily a question of communicating in a foreign language. (1991, pp. 62-63)*

(4) I have already argued, in chapter 1.4 above, that one of the weaknesses of B.K.'s proposals is his failure to take into account models as necessary interfaces between theory and practice. B.K. quotes H.G. Widdowson, one of the well-known theorists of the communicative approach<sup>37</sup> , in the following passage:

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<sup>36</sup> The classification I propose is debatable because it depends on the perspective one adopts. From a general pedagogical point of view, one can consider that all the macro-strategies that I classify as specific characteristics of the communicative approach correspond to principles of the so-called "active pedagogy". But from a language-culture didactics point of view, these characteristics distinguish the communicative approach from previous methodologies, active, direct, and of course traditional.

<sup>37</sup> Widdowson's best known work in France, *Teaching language as communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1<sup>e</sup> ed. 1978) was published in French in 1981 under the title *Une approche communicative de l'enseignement des langues* Paris, Hatier-CRÉDIF, 192 p. The 1990 work cited by B.K. is *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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*Unlike eclecticism, which is constrained by the conventional concept of method, principled pragmatism is based on the pragmatics of pedagogy (Widdowson, 1990), in which "the relationship between theory and practice, ideas and their actualization, can only be realized within the domain of application, that is, through the immediate activity of teaching" (p. 30). (1994, p. 31)*

I think, as I have already argued in chapter 1.4, that B.K.'s conceptual framework lacks, as does Widdowson's, the theory-practice interfaces that are the models, which make it possible to think of the "theory-practice relationship" in a complex way. In the rest of the chapter, I base myself on Puren 2015a, 2019i-es and 2020a to present these relations:

-The "pragmatics of pedagogy", to use B.K.'s expression, is not realized by the immediate activity of teaching: it is a process within a system in which inputs of different origins and status –empirical, methodological, technological, social, and theoretical– confront each other with the situated practices of teachers and their theoretical models to generate praxeological models (cf., in Puren 2015a, diagram p. 50). Among the methodological inputs that are permanently available are constituted methodologies and "methodological objects" (cf. *above* chap. 1.5), so that there is always possible eclecticism in teaching practices, and this is desirable because these inputs come, like the others, to enrich the development of praxeological models.

-The models can be initially of empirical or theoretical origin. The analysis of the historical evolution of cognitive models of teaching-learning (cf. Puren 016) thus shows that the development of certain models began with a theoretical "entry" (structural exercise, through behaviourism; conceptualization of errors by the students themselves, through constructivism), but that the development of other models began with a pragmatic "entry" (immersion and communicative interaction, for example: one learns language by being immersed in a linguistic bath, one learns to interact in language by interacting between learners in class).

Encapsulated in these cognitive models, as in other disciplinary models, are types of theory-practice relationships, validated by the teaching activity of thousands of teachers over decades, transmitted through professional training, and reproduced in textbooks: the "activity of teaching" is not "immediate," to use B.K.'s phrase; instead, it is strongly mediated by history, training, and tools (cf. in Puren 2019b, the eight different types of "didactic mediation," pp. 43-80). B.K.'s spontaneistic and individualistic understanding of the theory-practice relationship among teachers is undoubtedly an effect of the "immediacy paradigm", that is also the great epistemological feature of the communicative approach (cf. Puren 2020g).

(5) The advantage of models is that they allow for the greatest possible variety and therefore adaptability of devices and practices.

-We have already discussed the issue of autonomy. It is not enough to "promote learner autonomy", macrostrategy (*h*) in B.K.'s list above. Autonomy, in fact, can only be concretely managed in the classroom in relation to heteronomy, both of which must be thought of, among other things, as the two terminals of a continuum on which the teacher must position his or her devices in the most appropriate way at each moment (cf. Puren 2014d). In project-based pedagogy, for example, the greater autonomy left to learners at the moment of designing their project is then "paid for" by a greater directivity on the part of the teacher, who is the most competent to know what his or her students are going to need in terms of language and cultural resources, where they will be able to find them, and how to work with them. In the article cited above, I proposed a model consisting of, in addition to the continuum, six other possible types of relationship between autonomy and heteronomy.

-Another example is the strategy (*g*) "integrating *language* skills": since the beginning of the 20th century, this strategy has involved written/oral comprehension and written/oral production, to which interaction with the communicative approach has been added, and more recently mediation. One of the particularities of this communicative approach, in fact, has been to favour, because they seemed more "natural" than repetitive targeted exercises, exercises leading to the simultaneous and/or successive mobilisation of several of these language activities (for an example, see Puren

075). Regarding this macrostrategy, B.K. makes one of those rhetorical reservations that are actually intended to reinforce the claim:

*Although more classroom-oriented research is required to determine the full impact of integration/separation of skills, all available empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical information points to the need to integrate language skills for effective language teaching. (p. 39)*

It is empirically evident, however, that targeted and repetitive exercises (such as structural exercises) also have their usefulness, as do other non-repetitive exercises targeting a skill whose strategies we want to work on, such as successive listenings in the class of the same oral document with, between each one, collective assessments of partial comprehension and hypotheses to be validated/invalidated during the next listening. The combination or articulation of these various types of language activity makes it possible to conceive of a great many models of the didactic unit, contrary to the single macrostrategy proposed by B.K.

This framework of macrostrategies proposed by B.K. is part of the metamethodological perspective, or "didactic perspective", since these macrostrategies are supposed to allow teachers to vary their teaching methods according to their audiences, objectives and teaching-learning environments. But while this perspective was historically developed in France in the 1970s, based on different methodologies, B.K. paradoxically implements it based on a single methodology, the communicative approach, which severely limits the richness of the models that can be obtained by articulating and/or combining different microstrategies.

### **2.5.2. Postmethod pedagogy (B.K. 2001), a didactological perspective**

At the beginning of his 2001 article, B.K. situates himself in the context of an evolution of ideas following the first reflections of various authors, including himself, during the 1990s:

*Continuing and consolidating the recent explorations and taking my TESOL Quarterly article on the postmethod condition (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) as a point of departure, in this article I attempt to provide the fundamentals of a postmethod pedagogy. (p. 538)*

His political observation and project are the same, as can be seen in his initial presentation of this pedagogy, in which he announces his three "principles for organizing L2 teaching and teacher training"<sup>38</sup> :

*Visualizing a three-dimensional system consisting of the parameters of (a) particularity, (b) practicality, and (c) possibility, I argue that a postmethod pedagogy must (a') facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive language education based on a true understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities; (b') rupture the reified role relationship between theorists and practitioners by enabling teachers to construct their own theory of practice; and (c') tap the sociopolitical consciousness that participants bring with them in order to aid their quest for identity formation and social transformation. (p. 537)*

And it is always a question of being situated in a "postmethodological" framework, as can be seen in the description he gives of the first principle of this pedagogy:

*A pedagogy of particularity, then, is antithetical to the notion that there can be one set of pedagogic aims and objectives realizable through one set of pedagogic principles and procedures. (p. 538)*

B.K. gives there indeed, by means of this "notion" that he criticizes, a good definition of a constituted methodology: "[a] set of pedagogic aims and objectives realizable through [a] set of pedagogic principles and procedures".

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<sup>38</sup> The addition of the first set of letters (a), (b) and (c) is mine, so as to indicate that each of the elements is then taken up and explained by its purpose and means.

If the political statement and project of the strategic framework and the postmethod pedagogy are the same, the two tools are of a different nature from a didactic point of view of languages-cultures. The first, as we have seen, is from a didactic perspective, the second is from a didactological perspective<sup>39</sup> .

We see this change:

(1) in the definition he gives of his term *pedagogy*, where the expression itself indicates an evolution in his thinking (cf. "not only [...] but also"):

*I use the term pedagogy in a broad sense to include not only issues pertaining to classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation measures, but also a wide range of historical, political, and sociocultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence L2 education. (p. 538)*

The recourse in the didactic reflection to all these "experiences", in fact, necessarily leads to the implementation of ideological, ethical, and epistemological positions characteristic of the didactological perspective.

(2) and in the fact that its stated project is now that of a "language education"<sup>40</sup> :

*More than any other educational enterprise, language education provides its participants with challenges and opportunities for a continual quest for subjectivity and self-identity [...]. (p. 543)*

B.K. seems, in fact, to have radicalized his idea of "postmethodologies" by abandoning the sole methodology, on which, as we have seen, his 1994 strategic framework was based. When he refers in his 2001 article to the communicative approach, it is no longer a question of criticizing, as before, the unsuitability of the contents and the modes of implementation, but the communicative objective itself, which amounts to criticizing this methodology as such:

*All pedagogy, like all politics, is local. To ignore local exigencies is to ignore lived experiences. Pedagogies that ignore lived experiences will ultimately prove to be "so disturbing for those affected by them –so threatening to their belief systems– that hostility is aroused and learning becomes impossible" (Coleman, 1996, p. 11). A case in point is the sense of disillusionment that accompanied the spread of communicative language teaching. From South Africa, Chick (1996) wonders whether "our choice of communicative language teaching as a goal was possibly a sort of naive ethnocentrism prompted by the thought that what is good for Europe or the USA had to be good for KwaZulu" (p. 22). From Pakistan, Shamim (1996) reports that her attempt to introduce communicative language teaching into her classroom met with a great deal of resistance from her learners, making her "terribly exhausted" and leading her to realize that, by introducing this methodology, she was actually "creating psychological barriers to learning" (p. 109). (B.K. 2001, p. 539)*

This abandonment is consistent with the shift from the goal of language teaching in his 1994 article to the goal of language education in his 2001 article. This is another striking parallel between the evolution of B.K.'s ideas and those of the experts of the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe in the 2000s, who, as Bruno Maurer points out in his 2011 book, abandon questions of language teaching methodology for a project of "language education"<sup>41</sup>. What we see in both cases is the inability to maintain the recursivity between the three constitutive perspectives of a complex

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<sup>39</sup> On the three constitutive perspectives of DLC, methodological, didactic and didactological, cf. *above* chapter 1.2.

<sup>40</sup> In the 2001 text, the term *language education* alternates with *L2 education*. The concrete examples given, however, concern the teaching of L2 English.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, the page entitled "The Council of Europe and language education" on the Council of Europe website, [www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/language-policy-in-the-council-of-europe](http://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/language-policy-in-the-council-of-europe) (last accessed 25/11/2023).

didactics of language-cultures, concretely, at this point, to loop the system by starting again from the didactological perspective towards the methodological and didactic perspectives. We can therefore understand the criticism of the two authors of the review of B.K.'s 2006 book, in which he develops his idea of postmethod pedagogy:

*One weakness of the book is that Kumaravadivelu provides purely theoretical and philosophical notions of postmethod language pedagogy. In this respect, readers, particularly practicing language teachers, should make a great effort to put such ideas into practice* (Widodo & Zakaria 2008)

An important difference, however, between B.K.'s position and that of the experts of the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe, is that the latter, with their concept of "language education", also takes into account –and even favors– simultaneous or successive teaching of several foreign languages. B.K., on the other hand, remained focused on the teaching of English as an international language. The diversity of languages and cultures that he envisages is that of the different language and cultures of the learners in the classroom in relation to the foreign language-culture being taught. He writes and quotes in his 1994 article:

*[...] most L2 classes are not monocultural cocoons but rather multicultural mosaics in which cultural knowledge is likely to diverge based on learners' cultural linguistic background as well as ethnic heritage, class, age, and gender* (Tannen, 1992). *[...] We can do so by taking our learners on the path of "cultural versatility" if we "structure tasks and assignments so as to [...] elicit a synthesis between the learner, the learner's home culture, and the target cultural objective"* (Robinson, 1991, p. 118) (B.K. 1994 p. 41)

In this quotation, I have left *cultural versatility* in English, which is the ability to approach an issue from different perspectives given by different cultures, because the context makes it difficult to decide, it seems to me, between different meanings such as "cultural flexibility", "intercultural openness" or even "multicultural competence". What seems more certain to me is that the expression does not correspond to the notion of "pluricultural competence", in which, as the authors of the CEFR write (cf. *above* chapter 1.5.)

*[...] the various cultures (national, regional, social) to which that person has gained access do not simply co-exist side by side; they are compared, contrasted and actively interact to produce an enriched, integrated pluricultural competence, of which plurilingual competence is one component, again interacting with other components.* (COE 2001, p. 6)

In other words, B.K. does not apply to different languages and cultures the concept of "system", which he mobilizes in relation to the three organizing principles of his postmethod pedagogy<sup>42</sup> :

*The boundaries of the particular, the practical, and the possible are inevitably blurred. They interweave and interact with each other in a synergistic relationship in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.* (p. 545)

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

For my critical analysis of B.K.'s work, I have chosen, as I announced in the general introduction, to use my own tools, and more generally my personal conception of the didactics of language-cultures.

This choice has certainly led me to place much more emphasis on my disagreements than on my points of agreement, which are, moreover, very numerous and important: the promotion of teachers' autonomy, the recognition of their knowledge and skills, the priority given to the intersubjective agreement of the actors over external injunctions, the importance of teamwork, the refusal of any applicationism, the criticism of the perverse effects of any single methodology, the essentially contextual logic of any didactic reflection and proposal, the close relations between the

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<sup>42</sup> The following quotation is the closing paragraph of B.K.'s own summary of the three principles of his postmethodological pedagogy (see the reproduction of this summary in Appendix 2, p. 42).

field of language teaching and social needs, objectives and environments. I also share his opinion on the fundamental function of teachers' conceptualization of their own practices, which I once called "theorization"<sup>43</sup>, and which I now call "modeling", a notion that seems to me to be more epistemologically accurate, and which above all makes it possible to get out of the trap of a direct confrontation between "theory" and "practice".

In order not to repeat here unnecessarily all the reservations and criticisms that I have expressed about B.K.'s ideas, I will limit myself to a few more general considerations, beginning with the above paragraph. I will limit myself to a few more general considerations, beginning with the above paragraph.

It is not only their personal practices of the moment that need to be conceptualized and modeled by the teachers, but all the collective and historical practices that are encapsulated in the constituted methodologies. This modeling reveals these methodologies with their own conceptual logics and geographical and historical variants, as well as with their composite structure of micro and meso level elements, some of which are constants, others trans-methodological borrowings. B.K., on the other hand, refers to a "communicative approach", that of English as an international language, which he considers as a single compact block, because he uses it as a repulsor.

I think that there is really no possible autonomy for teachers without the support of a strong and autonomous discipline that has already built its own models, starting with its own epistemological model. I have used mine here, made up of the three methodological, didactic and didactological perspectives, which have appeared successively in the course of the evolution of the discipline, but which must all now function in permanent recursion, as complex logic requires. I think I have shown, by applying this model to his work, that B.K. moves from one dominant perspective to the next, personally replaying the historical evolution of the didactics of language-cultures without using it to complexify contemporary thinking.

The discipline DLC, whether we call it that or something else, is the great absentee of B.K.'s work. However, it is only from this discipline that we can question what cannot be questioned, even collectively, from practices alone, whether they are teaching, training or research practices, namely paradigms. We have seen that B.K. remains, in the different macrostrategies that he proposes for his 1994 strategic framework, in the **communication paradigm**. If he does not loop the three perspectives through which he has passed in the course of the evolution of his disciplinary reflection, it is undoubtedly because the last one, the didactological perspective, corresponds perfectly to his final priority project, which is ideological and political; but it is also because he has remained with another paradigm, the **optimization-substitution paradigm**. He thus simply replaces the strategic framework of 1994 with the postmethod pedagogy of 2001, whereas if he had applied **the complex adaptation-addition paradigm**<sup>44</sup>, he would have systematically linked the ten macrostrategies of the former with the three organizing principles of the latter, for the greater benefit of didactic reflection.

I have shown in my works the great "ideological porosity" of the didactics of language-cultures with the ideas of each epoch, the one studied by the so-called "History of Ideas" (cf. Puren 2006f); in my *Essai sur l'éclectisme (1994)*, I noted in particular the conjunction between the crisis of methodologies and the crisis of ideologies (cf. Puren 1994e, p. 5 & pp. 42-43), a crisis that many contemporary philosophers have pointed out (cf. above p. 11, with the reference to J.- F. Lyotard). This crisis of ideologies has not prevented the emergence of new ideologies, such as those of "authoritarian capitalism" and "illiberal democracy"; the crisis of methodologies, notable in the 1980s, has not prevented the subsequent emergence of new methodologies, such as in Europe that of the "Social Action-Oriented Approach" in the years 2000-2010 ("perspective actionnelle" in French: cf. Puren 2011c), and probably soon that of various forms of plurilingual approach, such as the "integrated plurilingual methodology" proposed by Bruno Maurer in Maurer and Puren 2019 (part 5).

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Puren 1999h chap. 2 "How to theorize one's practice? (the formation of questions)", pp. 20-35.

<sup>44</sup> On these two paradigms, see e.g. Puren 2014a, p. 4.

Even if his activism is highly respectable, I found it a pity that B.K. limited himself to the relatively dated and situated field of his ideological commitment, because he would certainly have brought other interesting ideas to a more general didactic reflection. Even if I consider some of his ideas wrong, or not transferable to other times and places, many others seem to me very right, and relevant beyond his field of analysis; and, above all, I consider that both of them bring a valuable contribution to the necessary scientific debate in our discipline.

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## **APPENDIX 1: "A strategic framework for L2 teaching" (B. Kumaravadilevu 1994, pp. 33-42) - Extracts**

**N.B.** I have announced in **bold+italics** the passages dedicated to microstrategies.

[...]

### **Macrostrategy 1: Maximize Learning Opportunities**

It is customary to distinguish teaching acts from learning acts, to view teaching as an activity that creates learning opportunities and learning as an activity that utilizes those opportunities. [...] If we, as we must, treat classroom activity as a social event jointly constructed by teachers and learners (Breen, 1985), then teachers ought to be both creators of learning opportunities and utilizers of learning opportunities created by learners. As creators of learning opportunities, it is crucial that teachers strike a balance between their role as planners of teaching acts and their role as mediators of learning acts. [...] (p. 33)

### **Macrostrategy 2: Facilitate Negotiated Interaction**

[...] Negotiated interaction means that the learner should be actively involved in clarification, confirmation, comprehension checks, requests, repairing, reacting, and turn taking. It also means that the learner should be given the freedom and encouragement to initiate talk, not just react and respond to it. [...]

Negotiated interaction can be facilitated through several microstrategies. Designing group activities is one of them. [...] 1985). Asking referential questions which permit open-ended responses, rather than display questions which have predetermined answers, is another microstrategy that can generate meaningful exchanges among the participants (Brock, 1986). Yielding greater topic control to the learner is yet another microstrategy that provides an effective basis for building conversations. [...] (pp. 33-34)

### **Macrostrategy 3: Minimize Perceptual Mismatches**

[...] What impact classroom activities will have on the learning process depends as much on learner interpretation as on teacher intention. It is, therefore, essential to sensitize ourselves to the potential sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation. [...] (p. 36)

#### **Macrostrategy 4: Activate Intuitive Heuristics**

[...] no one has sufficient explicit knowledge about the structure to provide adequate explanation and instruction. [...] teachers can assist their learners' adequate grammar construction best by designing classroom activities "in such a way as to give free play to those creative principles that humans bring to the process of language learning ... [and] create a rich linguistic environment for the intuitive heuristics that the normal human being automatically possesses" (Macintyre, 1970,

*[Example of **microstrategy**]:* [...] learner is to provide enough textual data so that the learner can infer certain underlying grammatical rules. [...] (p. 36)

#### **Macrostrategy 5: Promote language awareness**

The emphasis on activating the intuitive heuristics of the learner is not meant to proscribe explicit presentation of underlying structures wherever feasible and desirable. Such a presentation has the potential to induce learning processes if it is done to foster language awareness in the learner. [...] (p. 37)

#### **Macrostrategy 6: Contextualize linguistic input**

[...] It is thus essential to bring to the learner's attention the integrated nature of language. One way of doing this is to contextualize linguistic input so that learners can see language "as a comprehensive conglomerate, uniting all the levels of structure or rule complexes of a language, viz., the structure of words and phrases, the structure of sentences, the structure of texts and the structure of interaction" (Dirven, 1990, pp. 7-8). [...] (p. 38)

**Microstrategies** that help the teacher promote syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic language use can be derived from, among other things, language learning scenarios (Di Pietro, 1987), problem-solving tasks (Brown & Palmer, 1988), simulations and role-playing (Crookall & Oxford, 1990), and discourse-based activities suggested by Cook (1989) and Hatch (1992). [...] (p. 38)

#### **Macrostrategy 7: Integrate language activities**

The nature of L2 learning involves not merely an integration of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components of language but also an integration of language skills traditionally identified and sequenced as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. [...] (p. 38)

#### **Macrostrategy 8: Promote Learner Autonomy**

[...] It involves helping learners learn how to learn, equipping them with the means necessary to self-direct their own learning, raising the consciousness of good language learners about the learning strategies they seem to possess intuitively, and making the strategies explicit and systematic so that they are available to improve the language learning abilities of other learners as well.[...] (pp. 39-40)

**[Microstrategies** are designed to help learners] take responsibility for their learning and bring about necessary attitudinal changes in them. This psychological preparation should be combined with strategic training that helps learners understand what the learning strategies are, how to use them for accomplishing various problem-posing and problem-solving tasks, how to monitor their performance, and how to assess the outcome of their learning. [...] (p. 40)

#### **Macrostrategy 9: Raise Cultural Consciousness**

[...] Raising cultural consciousness minimally requires that instead privileging the teacher as the sole cultural informant, we treat learner as a cultural informant as well. By treating learners as cultural informants, we can encourage them to engage in a process of participation that puts a premium on their power/knowledge. [...]

**[Microstrategies]** We can do so by identifying the cultural knowledge learners bring to the classroom by using it to help them share their own individual perspectives the teacher as well as other learners whose lives, and hence perspectives, differ from theirs (Swaffar, 1991; Walters, 1992). We can by taking our learners on the path of "cultural versatility" if we "structure tasks and assignments so as to [...] elicit a synthesis between learner, the learner's home culture, and the target cultural objective" (Robinson, 1991, p. 118). Such a multicultural approach can also dispel stereotypes that create and sustain cross-cultural misunderstandings and miscommunication. [...] (p. 41)

### **Macrostrategy 10: Ensure social relevance**

Social relevance refers to the need for teachers to be sensitive to the societal, political, economic, and educational environment in which L2 learning/teaching takes place. [...]

Learning purpose and language use are perhaps most crucial in determining the social relevance of an L2 program. As Berns (1990) illustrates, different social contexts contribute to the emergence of various communicative competences and functions in an L2 speech community, thereby influencing L2 learning and use in significantly different ways. [...]

The immediate concern facing the classroom teacher is whether to pursue a realistic goal of producing competent speakers with adequate communicative ability or an unrealistic goal of producing imitation native speakers. [...] **From a microstrategic point of view**, such a goal should inform the teacher's decision making in terms of appropriate instructional materials, evaluation measures, and target competence. (p. 42)

### **APPENDIX 2: "Towards a postmethod pedagogy" (B. Kumaravadilevu 2001) - Extract**

**N.B.** *The division into paragraphs and the addition of bold are mine.*

[...] one way of conceptualizing a postmethod pedagogy is to look at it three-dimensionally as a pedagogy of particularity, practicality, and possibility.

**As a pedagogy of particularity**, postmethod pedagogy rejects the defense of a predetermined set of generic principles and procedures aimed at achieving a predetermined set of generic goals and objectives. Instead, it seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive and place-specific pedagogy that is based on a genuine understanding of **local** linguistic, socio-cultural, and **political** particularities

**As a pedagogy of practicality**, postmethod pedagogy rejects the artificial dichotomy between theorists who have been assigned the role of producers of knowledge and teachers who have been assigned the role of consumers of knowledge. Instead, it seeks to rupture such a reified role relationship by enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize.

**As a pedagogy of the possible**, postmethod pedagogy rejects the narrow view of language education that limits itself to the linguistic functional elements that obtain inside the classroom. Instead, it seeks to branch out to tap the sociopolitical consciousness that participants bring with them to the classroom so that it can also function as a catalyst for a continual quest for identity formation and social transformation.

The boundaries of the particular, the practical, and the possible are inevitably blurred. They interweave and interact with each other in a synergistic relationship in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.