



Comparative essay

**“Comparing Tamura, Kansanen and Roger’s
Conceptions of Methodology”**

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English as a Foreign Language Methodology

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On every moment of our lives, we are constantly exposed to situations which become a reason for learning something new. The learning process that started from our very first breath never ends, and it is extremely important for living beings since these lessons are those which guide us on our path. In fact, these processes of knowing new things occur in several areas which are separately introduced to us when we enter the formal education system, for instance sciences, mathematics, literature or religion. As part of this process, learning a foreign language is now required on the part of schools as the integration into the globalization process, in which we, as a country, are being part of, requires that students graduate from schools handling a foreign language -English- that is going to allow them to successfully deal with different communicative situations (MINEDUC, 2013). Accordingly, different teaching styles have been developed and put into practice according to how society has been progressing through time and the aim given to the learning processes. Since methodology plays a fundamental role in the teaching-learning process, then the perspectives and thoughts from different authors (Kansanen, 1999; Tamura, 2006; Rodgers, 2003) will be expounded, considering whether there are agreements and disagreements about the topic.

In the first place, Kansanen (1999) deepens the concept of didactics—which is the German terminology he uses for methodology- by splitting the concept into General Didactics and Subject Didactics; he not only differentiates the two categories, but also establishes a relationship between them, basing this connection on equality and a constructive cooperation, but also saying that their thinking diverge from one to each other since subject didactics might be developed in detail whereas general didactics is developed as a comprehensive model but does not cover the instructional process in its entirety. On the other hand, if we focus on what Kansanen (1999) implies when he mentions that *the core of subject didactics is outlined as the teacher's relation to another relation, that between the student and the content (p. 1)*, it could be considered that even though Tamura (2006) does not explicitly mention these concepts –subject and general didactics- on the read papers, she does deal with them. The same occurs with Rodgers

(2003) as he does not directly separate methodology into these two ideas, but he mentions the relationship the teacher has towards the relation between the student and the content. The way teacher, student and content is deeply reviewed in the following paragraphs.

Secondly, Kansanen (1999) describes didactics not only saying that it is the instructional process, but also stating that it is *a totality that guides the instructional process according to the aims and goals stated in the curriculum (p. 1)*. Besides, he states that an ideal approach would be one where this process is seen as a totality, meaning by taking into consideration all the possible factors which could affect and be an influence on learners and teachers. In addition, he highlights that *didactics always is connected with some context in the society, with some institution, and it is here that a curriculum comes into the picture (p.1)*. This idea of giving importance to the context surrounding the process agrees with what Rodgers (2003) proposes when he talks about the 'Method Synergistics' recognizing that there are features, which he labels as "classroom external", that might influence the learning of second languages. Furthermore, he brings up a project called the KILA Model, which includes four kinds of considerations, such as Knowledge, Instructional, Learner and Administrative considerations, also mentioning that these four must be in congruence and synchrony for achieving a successful educational design. He supports this model by saying that methodology solely represents a subset in the Instructional process, adding that *we now require a methodology designed in consonance with other instructional considerations, just as these instructional considerations need to be in consonance with the other three elements of the KILA Model (p. 6)*. Then, the previous ideas about the context developed by Kansanen (1999) and Rodgers (2003) relate to Tamura's (2006) ideas when she says that teachers must consider the specific features which are offered to students of a specific mother tongue when teaching, meaning that the methods which are used for teaching the foreign language should take into account the obstacles that the learners will have to overcome in order to learn it. Finally, for highlighting the importance of keeping the external factors in mind when planning a

lesson, Tamura (2006) talks about methodology saying that its main aim is *to enhance the process of teaching English by empowering and facilitating teachers to work proficiently (p.169)*, in other words, methodology advises the teacher in order that an efficient job is done within the classroom.

Thirdly, according to Friedrich, cited by Kansanen (1999), the relation of the participants of the Teaching-Studying-Learning process, which is how he calls the instructional process since he considers that there must be studying from the part of the student, is usually described with the didactic triangle. This is often drawn with student, teacher and the content –not necessarily meaning subjects. From this starting point, there exists the most common relation which includes teacher and student, fairly often described as a pedagogical relationship. Despite the fact that Tamura (2006) does not explicitly include this triangle, two initiatives of the teacher which exemplify this relationship are described: the first one says that the teacher has *to awaken and develop the potentiality and ability of students for studying (p. 169)*, meaning that the teacher is expected to help the students for being better and performing; moreover, according to the third initiative, the teacher has *to inspire, to kindle the interest of the student in studying (p. 169)*, in this case the teacher is responsible of influencing and motivating the student. The relationship described as didactic, emerges from the link between the content and the student, and from the means of the teacher over the way the student approaches the content. For instance, one of the principles which are emphasized by Lado, cited in Tamura (2006), is related to the relationship between the student and the content: *The development of habits by means of pattern practice (p. 170)*, this might be considered as a didactic relationship, for the teacher helps the student to approach the content by repetition –strategy. Additionally, Rodgers (2003) mentions Strategopedia which might be considered as a didactic relationship as its main goal is that teachers give students the appropriate strategies to face the content.

In the fourth place, when Rodgers (2003) talks about Strategopedia, he develops his prediction by mentioning a teaching approach called Learner Training (LT) which purpose is to equip learners with the necessary learning strategies for

students to be responsible of self-direction. What is more, Holec, cited by Rodgers (2003), maintains that *to teach the learner to learn, [...] is considered the best way of ensuring that learning takes place*; also, research on the topic (Rodgers, 2003) has suggested that if learners apply these strategies in language learning, that application will produce significant improvements in the process. As students develop strategies for learning, they start getting rid of the need of an instructor and becoming an independent person; consequently, there occurs something which has been referred to as a 'pedagogical suicide' or 'pedagogical paradox'. (Kansanen, 1999)

Fifthly, Tamura (2006) believes that in order to reach a successful teaching practice, it is necessary to make use of a wide variety of approaches when developing the class since this way it is possible to maintain the students' attention in the lesson, encouraging them and providing an atmosphere in which anxiety or shyness is going to be diminished, fostering their participation and involvement. Furthermore, Rodgers's (2003) proposal of a Synergistics method also implies the mixture of several methods. The main point of this method is to only select those elements of each approach which best support effective learning; thus, he examined different method practices and next proposed those features he considers might positively influence the learning of second language. Moreover, he references to Gardner's view of intelligence which claims that there are eight types of intelligence and that not all students learn the same way depending on their different aptitudes. Nonetheless, teachers cannot carry out a lesson by implementing eight different methodologies for accommodating the diversity of talents. Therefore, Rogers claims that the challenge is to develop practical, yet realistic, means for teaching and assessing the full range of students who have different learning styles. Kansanen (1999) does not refer to this topic.

To conclude, we would like to emphasize the importance that the three authors give to the context. In order to get as close as possible to a successful learning, we believe that –not only for the teaching of English- teachers can not only focus on

the content, but it is also important that they are capable of recognizing how the society, the moment, the environment and the institution in which their students are immersed could negatively affect and influence the process, and also how these factors might foster the learning process. In addition, the teacher should motivate students, help them to figure out their capabilities and aid them to develop strategies in order that they can practice on their own since studying is also part of the process, as Kansanen (1999) states. Hence, keeping an open mind about new teaching tendencies and methodologies, the changes that a society undergoes and the learners we are going to face on a future is important for developing one's own teaching style and figuring out the best way that students can actually learn. Additionally, Tamura (2006) concludes emphasizing that, when teaching, it is imperative that there exists a desire, as well as there must be pleasure, when doing it. For finishing, we would like to highlight when she says *interacting with my students is of tremendous fulfillment because it bears the mark of learning social aspects of human wisdom and understanding, it opens my eyes toward cultural and linguistic cognition (p. 187).*

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