Contents

CHAPTER **1** # Five Thousand Years in Five Thousand Words

Before reading this chapter, consider the following six points. Think about whether you agree or disagree with them, and why. Whatever your response to the statements, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with them, they may help you read more thoughtfully and reflectively. These six statements also summarize some of the main learning points in this chapter.

- Language teaching and learning, including English Language Teaching (ELT), has a much longer history than many of us may realize.
- Language teaching methodologies have been with us for a very long time indeed, and show no signs of leaving us any time soon, in spite of claims that we are in a 'post-methods era'.
- Criticisms of methodologies are not new. Methodologies have always been criticized, and probably always will be. This does not mean we can or should do away with them.
- The development of methodologies in language education has not taken place along a nice, neat linear trajectory, in which each methodological era builds logically on the previous one. In our field, the methodological development has been circular – going in circles – and cyclical – coming and going. That development has often been chaotic, and it has been at least as much emotional, and based on feelings, as it has been rational, and based on data.
- Methodologies are at the interface of many different aspects of language teaching and learning, including knowledge, skills and understanding, as well as values,

> beliefs and motivations. As a result, definitions and descriptions of methodologies can be highly complex. They can also be relatively straightforward and concise.
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> - Language teachers need to be able to articulate their bases for accepting certain language teaching methodologies and for rejecting others, based on a principled and **informed eclecticism**.

Introduction and Overview

It is not possible to compress 5000 years of history into 5000 words, but in this chapter, we will cover many of the main highlights of the first 50 centuries of language teaching. We will also consider some key questions, including: What is a 'language teaching method'? What is a 'language teaching methodology'? And: Where do these ideas come from? In the second part of this chapter, we look at several different definitions and descriptions of 'method' and 'methodology', including some of the classic definitions that have been central in shaping our understanding of these key concepts. After looking at areas of overlap in meaning, and the complexity of these concepts, we will then discuss the '**anti-methods**' and '**post-methods**' period. One of the recurring points in the chapter is the importance of language teachers today knowing something about the millennia of language education we have inherited, and within that, the centuries of English language teaching and learning that are the foundation of what we do today.

The First Five Thousand Years

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to be a language teacher 100 years ago? Or a thousand? Or even 5000 years ago? Over the many years that I have been asking

language teachers this question, they often look bemused and confused, partly because such questions seem so far removed, in time and space, from the immediate and pressing classroom concerns of today and tomorrow. Another reason for such puzzled looks is that many language teachers do not know that there is a documented history of language teaching stretching back thousands of years. Even those relatively few teachers who know that our field has such a history are not sure what is the point of knowing anything about that history.

The stories in the international media about adopted children spending years trying to find their biological parents show an extremely deep-seated desire to know where we have come from. Likewise, knowing our own professional history can also help us. For example, a character in one of the late Sir Terry Pratchett's (1948–2015) best-selling comic fantasy *Discworld* books says:

> It is important that we know where we come from, because if you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, you don't know where you're going. And if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong. (Pratchett, 2010, p. 477)

That idea also relates to the line in the song 'Any Road' by the Beatles guitarist George Harrison: 'If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.'

We do not necessarily 'go wrong' when we do not know our own history, but a strong case can be made that, if we want to know where we are now, and where we might be headed, we need to know how we got here. Some writers and researchers working in the field of language methodology have also highlighted the importance of teachers having some historical understanding of the field. For example, Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson note in their *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*: 'we believe that educators should have a sense of the history of the field, not only of contemporary practices' (2011, p. xv). Larsen-Freeman and Anderson do not give

reasons for that belief. Nor do they suggest how this 'sense of history' can be gained, other than implicitly, by presenting the methods along a historical timeline, but with relatively little, if any, actual discussion of the history of the field. Or, if there is such a discussion, it is usually confined to the last 50 years or so, as noted by Wheeler (2013).

This brings us to the question of how much documented, verifiable history there is regarding language teaching and learning. According to Claude Germain's book, *Évolution de l'Enseignement des Langues: 5000 Ans D'Histoire* (1993), there is up to 5000 years of such history. Germain starts with the Babylonians, who lived in the ancient lands of Mesopotamia, in the part of the world that we know today as Iran. This may have been the first time and place where language teaching formally took place, as a result of two cultural and linguistic groups, the Sumerians and the Akkadians, living side-by-side, borrowing liberally from each other's languages, competing and exchanging places, over long periods of time. Germain takes the reader on an epic journey, from Mesopotamia to ancient Egypt and ancient Greece; from there to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, on into the nineteenth century, and finishing up in the twentieth.

In terms of ELT, Howatt's *A History of English Language Teaching* (1984) notes that documented ELT started in the 1400s. That is still more than 700 years of history, but compared with the teaching and learning of other languages, ELT was a relative latecomer. However, as we shall see in the following chapters, although ELT did not become established until several centuries after the teaching and learning of some other languages, the methods employed in ELT would come to dominate the language teaching and learning world.

There was a time, not so long ago, when some knowledge of the history of language teaching methodologies was considered an integral part of the education of future language teachers. However, the vocal anti-methods and post-methods critics (see below) have questioned whether such a detailed knowledge is necessary today – or even if it was ever needed.

But, because our field has a much longer, richer and deeper history than many language teachers may realize, just knowing that – even without knowing any of the details – can be potentially empowering, in a number of ways. One way is by helping us see where we are going, through understanding more about how we got here. Another is by helping us realize that although language education as a discipline may appear to be relatively new, compared with, for example, medicine or law, our field has a history that is as long and as rich, as wide and as deep as (m)any of the others. So, before we launch into chapters on the different methodologies, we should spend a little time briefly familiarizing ourselves with our own history.

One of the most thoroughly researched books ever written on the history of language teaching is Louis Kelly's *25 Centuries of Language Teaching*. The book covers the period from 500 BC to 1969, the year the book was first published, and includes a list of well over 1100 *primary* sources (pp. 409–455). However, in spite of such an achievement, Kelly's book appears to be largely unheard of by most of today's language teachers. That is a great pity, especially as Kelly made many observations that still apply, including the points that 'Nobody really knows what is new or old in present-day language teaching procedures' and 'much that is being claimed as revolutionary this century is merely a rethinking and renaming of early ideas and procedures' (1969, p. ix). This is an important point, because there is always someone, somewhere claiming to have discovered – and who now happens to be selling – some new, innovative and ground-breaking method that will revolutionize language teaching and learning (see Chapter 7).

This is not to agree with the position that 'there is nothing new under the sun'. But there does appear to have been a long, strong tendency in our field to jump from one 'methodological **bandwagon**' to another. As a result, as language teachers, we can find ourselves running from one new methodology to another – and sometimes back again – without stopping to ask whether this is really the best way to move language education forward. As Mark Clarke put it, in his

article 'On Bandwagons, Tyranny and Commonsense': 'As a profession, we seem to have a strong propensity for bandwagons, an inclination to seek simple, final solutions for complex problems' (1982, p. 444). Dale Lange made the same point some years later, when he commented that, in relation to foreign language teaching, 'Unfortunately, the latest bandwagon "methodologies" come into prominence without much study or understanding, particularly those that appear easiest to apply in the classroom' (1990, p. 253). If we can finally and fully stop bandwagoning, we can stand still for a while and step back, so we can see where we are, how we got here, and where we may be headed.

The most recent example of this tendency to jump on whatever bandwagon happens to be rolling by could be **translanguaging**, which is defined by Canagarajah (2011) as 'the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system' (p. 401). This particular potential bandwagon gained momentum and picked up speed in 2014, with the publication of the book *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education* (García & Wei, 2014). Two of the proponents of translanguaging, Lasagabaster and García, claim that it is 'a pedagogical strategy … which fosters the dynamic and integrative use of bilingual students' languages in order to create a space in which the incorporation of both languages is seen as natural and teachers accept it as a legitimate pedagogical practice' (Lasagabaster & García 2014, p. 557).

In most of the many hundreds of language classes that I have taught and observed, all over the world, over the last 25 years, the students were constantly shuttling and scuttling between their first languages and the target language. The main distinguishing feature was the teacher's reaction. In my classes, and in many of those that I observed, the teacher was OK with the learners making such first language–target language moves. But in some of the more severe classes observed,

use of the first language was not allowed. However, that position appears to have become increasingly uncommon, as the value of the learners' first language has been seen as an asset rather than as an interference.

Turning a noun into a verb, in this case, making 'languaging' out of 'language', does display a healthy linguistic creativity in terms of creating neologisms. Likewise, using 'codemeshing' (Canagarajah, 2011) instead of the long-established 'code-mixing' and 'code-switching' to describe how language users move between their languages is an effective way to create a (meta)language of translanguaging. Also, for those relatively few language teachers who still believe in the target-language-only myth, and who do not 'welcome other language structures into the classroom' (Hermann, 2015, p. 2), translanguaging can remind them of the value and importance of learners' first languages. And in terms of the politics of pedagogical practices, moving from a more compartmentalized model of bilingualism to a more open model may be helpful (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). But any claims that this is some sort of major breakthrough in the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages would be at best an overstatement, at worst an apparent attempt at rolling out the next bandwagon.

To return to Kelly, one of his more controversial claims is that 'The total corpus of ideas accessible to language teachers has not changed basically in 2,000 years' (p. 362). However, again, this should not be taken to mean that language teaching methodologies have not changed during that time. On the contrary, Kelly explains that 'What has been *in constant change* are the ways of building methods' from that total corpus of ideas, and that 'the part of the corpus that is accepted *varies from generation to generation* as does the form in which the ideas present themselves' (p. 362, emphases added). Kelly's reference to shifting generational acceptability and changing preferences helps to explain why the field of language teaching has suffered from this kind of 'bandwagoning'.

Some language teachers may be resistant to trying different methodologies that may be new to them, but not new to the field. This response is part of a normal and natural aversion to making mistakes, especially publicly, and particularly in front of one's peers, supervisors, managers and so on, and for teachers, in front of their learners. On this point, Kelly has some reassuring words: 'Very few inherently bad ideas have ever been put forward in language teaching' (p. 363). That may be another controversial claim, but given the breadth and depth of Kelly's work, it is worth considering such claims. We will look at this idea that there have been 'very few bad ideas' in some of the following chapters, especially Chapter 7, on **alternative** and **humanistic** methods.

One reason for many language teachers assuming that our field has only been around for the last half-century is the publication, in 1963, of Edward Anthony's brief but important paper 'Approach, Method, and Technique', with those three levels arranged within a hierarchy. As Anthony put it, 'techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach' (p. 64). Fifty years later, Anthony's paper is still being cited as a starting point. Another reason for this incorrect assumption that our field has a history of only 50 years or so are statements made in influential books, for example, Jack Richards' and Theodore Rodgers' *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (1986, 2001, 2014). In that book, Richards and Rodgers state: 'The whole foundation of contemporary language teaching was developed during the early part of the twentieth century' (2001, p. 1). However, the foundations were laid long before the twentieth century, with contemporary language teaching being built on foundations laid centuries and even millennia ago, as noted by Wheeler (2013).

Anthony (1963) also observed that 'Over the years, teachers have adopted, adapted, invented and developed a bewildering variety of terms which describe the activities in which they engage and the beliefs which they hold' (p. 63). Although much has changed during the 50-plus years since Anthony's

short paper was published, the 'bewildering variety of terms' has continued to grow and even multiply. For example, more than 40 years after Anthony's paper, Kumaravadivelu complained that a 'plethora of terms and labels such as approach, design, methods, practices, principles, procedures, strategies, tactics, techniques, and so on are used to describe various elements constituting language teaching' (2006, p. 83). As explained in the Introduction to this book, this is one of the reasons for writing this book, to help language teachers understand the ever-expanding number of terms and the activities they refer to, in the context of the teacher-readers' day-to-day classroom realities and practices.

One example of the longevity of Anthony's three-level definition is the fact that nearly 40 years after it was put forward, Brown described it as 'a definition that has quite admirably withstood the test of time' (2002, p. 9). However, Larsen-Freeman initially described Anthony's definition as 'too indeterminate for our purposes here' (1986, p. xi). But by the third edition of the same book, 25 years later, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson appeared to have changed their minds: 'Following Anthony in certain of the chapters we will introduce a particular method by showing how it is an example of a more general approach to language teaching' (2011, p. xvi). This shift demonstrates an important principle regarding the origins, history and development of language teaching methods and methodologies, in relation to the non-linear, circular, cyclical nature of such methods, but one which is not usually noted, and rarely commented on: What Goes Around, Comes Around. As noted above, that idea should not be taken to imply a belief that there is nothing new under the sun, but such shifts are compelling evidence to support Kelly's finding, cited above, that 'much that is being claimed as revolutionary this century is merely a rethinking and renaming of early ideas and procedures' (1969, p. ix).

Garon Wheeler (2013) starts his book *Language Teaching Through the Ages* by giving several compelling answers to the

question 'Why should a language teacher be well-versed in the history of the field?' (p. 2). One reason is that 'Everything happening now in our profession has some cause, some root in the past, something that has led to that action, belief or technique' (p. 2). Wheeler gives many examples from his own language learning experiences, such as his discovery that the direct method (see Chapter 5) that his teachers were using in 1976 to teach Arabic in Morocco was not new, as Wheeler assumed it was, and that it had in fact been popular in the late 1800s. He also describes his surprise at finding that the so-called 'natural method', popularized by Stephen Krashen in the 1980s was not the cutting-edge breakthrough it appeared to be, as the basis of that method could be found 'in works from centuries ago' (p. 1). Wheeler also discovered that 'the umbrella term "natural method" is more than a hundred years old' (p. 1). Wheeler answers his question with another good reason for knowing some history: 'The more we know about the past of language teaching, the more memories we have upon which to base our actions. As a result, we can be wiser in our choices' (p. 2).

Wheeler's last point, regarding informed choices, is an essential part of teachers deciding which methodologies to use and when, where they have the freedom to make such choices. Those choices are based on the needs of the learners, the context, the resources available, and many other factors, as part of a principled and informed eclecticism, which was described by Mellow (2002) as 'a desirable, coherent, **pluralistic** approach to language teaching' (p. 1).

ACTIVITY 1.1

According to Kelly (1969), 'Very few inherently bad ideas have ever been put forward in language teaching.' Have you read or heard about or seen any 'bad ideas' in your language teaching and learning context? If so, what were some of the things that made them 'bad'?

The Multiple Meanings of 'Method' and 'Methodology'

Originally, Larsen-Freeman defined a language teaching method as a superordinate, 'comprising both "principles" and "techniques"' (1986, p. xi). The principles were based on five aspects of language teaching: the teacher, the learner, the teaching processes, the learning processes, and the target language and culture. Larsen-Freeman also explained that 'Taken together, the principles represent the theoretical framework of the method' (1986, p. xi), and that 'The techniques are the behavioral manifestations of the principles – in other words, the classroom activities and procedures derived from an application of the principles' (1986, p. xi). By that, Larsen-Freeman meant that what language teachers do in the classroom is the observable application of a set of principles. The principles themselves may not be stated explicitly, but by looking at what teachers do in the classroom – as we will do in the coming chapters – we can see how principles and practices can connect and inform each other.

Larsen-Freeman's definition is an example of how complex the notion of a method can be. First, there is the ternary set of the relationships between methods, principles and techniques, which is similar to – but not quite the same as – Anthony's triumvirate of technique, method and approach. This difference between Anthony's definition and Larsen-Freeman's definition supports Larsen-Freeman's point that the term 'method' is used by different researchers, authors and practitioners to mean different things (1986, p. xi). Definitions of 'method' in language education are further complicated by additional multiple relationships, such as those between the five aspects of language teaching identified by Larsen-Freeman, so that 'a particular technique may be compatible with more than one method' (1986, p. xii). This lack of a simple one-to-one relationship can be a frustrating complication, but one that reflects the overlap between different methods, and the relationships between notions of methods, approaches and techniques, and between

principles, practices and pedagogy. A third trio was thrown into the mix by Richards and Rodgers (2001), who stated that 'any language teaching method can be described in terms of … the levels of approach, design and procedure' (p. 32). In terms of a clear, concise and generally agreed-upon definition of method, the waters have been further muddied by attempts – well-meaning but nonetheless causing more confusion – to substitute alternative terms, such as 'pedagogy' instead of 'method' (Brown, 2002).

The different sets of relationships within and between the previous definitions of 'method', and the associated terms, can cause confusion. However, this is not the result of any of the authors' explanations, but because of complex sets of relationships between what language teachers do in the language classroom, how they do it, and why they do it that way, instead of some other way. Also, the relationships can be characterized as being chaotic, rather than **causal**, and circular or cyclical, rather than linear, in the same way that the history of our field is not linear. As Kelly (1969) put it, 'While one can ascribe a linear development to sciences, the development of an art is cyclical' (1969, p. 396). Many language teachers, when I ask them whether language teaching is more of an art or more of a science, respond by choosing the art option. A few brave souls raise their hands to choose the science option, and give the grammar of language as an example of science-like principles, and many choose a combination of both art and science, making it more of a craft (Lange, 1990). But most of the respondents choose the art option, which relates to Kelly's idea that 'the development of an art is cyclical'. That might also help to explain why the field of language teaching and learning methods tends to follows cycles, rather than the apparently more linear development of the sciences, although that too may just be an appearance of linearity, hiding the randomness and the messiness.

In language education, this methodological development is, in fact, a more messy process, which may help to explain why some methods appear to come and go, ebb and flow, while

others appear to come and stay. It is even conceivable that some features of language teaching methods have always been with us, possibly for thousands of years, in some way, shape or form.

In a later edition of their book, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) expand upon their original three-part definition, by including a note on what is *not* a method: 'We are using the term "method" here not to mean a formulaic prescription, but a coherent set of principles linked to certain techniques and procedures' (p. xvi). Larsen-Freeman and Anderson also note the on-going challenges with using the term 'method': 'Admittedly, we have sometimes found it difficult to use the term "method" with more recent innovations' (p. xvi). At those times, they 'resorted to the term "methodological innovations"' (p. xvi), which shows that even the established experts in our field can be challenged by the plethora of terminologies and overlapping, multiple meanings.

In 2001, Rodgers stated that a language teaching method is 'a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning' (p. 1). Although this is a relatively straightforward definition, it still needs some unpacking. For example, 'system' has more than a dozen meanings in English, including the somewhat tautological 'a way of doing things; a method' (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *CALD*), as well as 'a set of connected items or devices that operate together' (*CALD*). Although the latter is usually applied to, for example, computer systems, it can be modified to fit the language classroom, as a set of connected theories, beliefs and practices that operate together. Incorporating Rodgers' definition above, we have a set of connected theories, beliefs and practices about language, teaching and learning that operate together (in the classroom). Although there are a number of moving parts within Rodgers' definition, notions of connectedness and working together are central, and it is relatively succinct.

The use of techniques or principles based on hypotheses and/or theories was built into an early definition of 'method' from Richards and Rodgers: 'a coherent set of learning/

teaching principles rooted in clearly articulated theories of what language is and how it is learnt, which is implemented through specific types of classroom procedures' (1986, p. 468). In relation to language teachers' use of informed eclecticism in their choice of methods, where they have a choice, Richards and Rodgers highlight the importance of teachers being able to clearly articulate their understanding of theories, and/or their beliefs based on practice. More recently, Penny Ur (2013) defined a language teaching method as 'a set of principles and procedures based on a theory of language and language acquisition' (p. 468). Although Ur's definition raises the question of whose or which theory of language/acquisition is being used as the basis, it may also be a healthy sign that, as our field matures, our definitions may be becoming more concise.

However, as professionals who 'do language for a living', we may still be inclined towards the position taken by Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872): '"When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less"' (original emphasis, p. 205). Therefore, in spite of 'methodology' meaning simply 'the study of methods', Ur decided to use 'methodology' to mean 'a collection and combination of methods or procedures' (p. 468). Therefore, we have at least two distinct meanings of 'methodology' in language education now: 1. the study of methods used in language teaching and learning; and 2. a plural collective noun, referring to two or more language teaching methods.

Another aspect of the meaning of 'methodology' was added by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011): 'A study of methods is also a means of socialization into professional thinking and discourse that language teachers require in order to "rename their experience", to participate in their profession, and to learn throughout their professional lives' (p. xi). The notion of professional socialization highlights a number of important reasons for the study of methods and methodologies in relation to three key roles and responsibilities of language teachers: as members of a community of professional practice; as reflective

practitioners; and as lifelong learners. In terms of the importance of methodological studies, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson conclude that 'A study of methods is invaluable in teacher education' (p. xi).

> **ACTIVITY 1.2**
>
> How would you define the terms 'method' and 'methodology', and how would you use them to explain what you and your learners do in your language classes?

Confusingly and circuitously, Kumaravadivelu (2006) defined the term 'method' as referring to 'established methods conceptualized and constructed by experts in the field'. He distinguished method from methodology, using the latter to refer to 'what practicing teachers actually do in the classroom in order to achieve their stated or unstated teaching objectives' (2006, p. 86). In this book, I will use 'method' and 'methodology' to refer to what teachers and learners do in their language lessons and classes. But I will use 'method' when referring to a specific, named method, such as Grammar Translation or the Audio-Lingual Method, in the more singular sense, and when referring to specific aspects of a particular method. In contrast, I will use 'methodology' to refer more generally to the plurality of teachers' and learners' practices, including the theories, publications, policies and so on that surround a particular. These kinds of ideas about method and methodology stand in stark contrast to the position of the anti-methods and post-methods protagonists, whose views will be discussed in the following section.

The Anti-Methods and Post-Methods Era

The anti-methods movement, as the name implies, refers to a group of language educators who oppose the whole notion of 'method' as an inherently unhelpful and even destructive force

in language teaching and learning. The post-methods movement is a more recent incarnation of the same belief. But as well as claiming that all methods are bad, the proponents also claim that we should be – or even that we are now – beyond the notion of methods, as though that were just a colonial or commonwealth phase that we were going through, and that we have now – or should have by now – grown out of.

For example, Phillipson (1992, 2000), Kumaravadivelu (2003) and Canagarajah (1999) have challenged the notion of 'methods' based on such claims. However, as with the history of language teaching and ELT, the anti-methods movement has a much longer history than Phillipson and his contemporaries appear to be aware of. For example, *Methods of Teaching Modern Languages: Papers on the value and on methods of modern language instruction* (Elliot et al.) was published more than 120 years ago, in 1893. In terms of history repeating itself, we find that in the 1890s there was the same kind of discontent with the current state of affairs regarding language teaching, and the same calls for change and innovation then, as we hear today.

This discontent is seen in the opening chapter of Elliot et al., titled 'Methods of teaching modern languages', based on the talk 'Modern Languages as a College Discipline', given by Professor Elliot in 1887: 'The fact of the matter is, that our whole system of modern language instruction needs overhauling' (Elliot et al., 1893, p. 7). Following up on Elliot's complaints about and disappointments with modern language teaching methods at that time, in the second chapter, Professor Calvin Thomas presented his paper on 'Observations upon methods in the teaching of modern languages' (Elliot et al., 1893, pp. 11–28). Thomas stated categorically: 'it is certain, that a good deal of language teaching that goes on in this country [the USA] is suffering severely because of laying too much stress upon matters of method' (1893, p. 11). These methodological complaints pre-date the current criticisms by more than a century, but more recent complaints

about methods are presented as challenging modern or post-modern insights, which move the field forward in new and important directions. As his talk progressed, Thomas became even more vigorous in his condemnation of the focus on methods: 'Quite a large portion of the teaching fraternity are making of method, if not a fetish to worship, at least a hobby to ride' (Elliot et al., 1893, p. 11). And reiterating the point of history repeating itself, just over a century after Elliot et al., Lilia Bartolome published a paper in the *Harvard Educational Review* titled 'Beyond the methods fetish' (1994, pp. 173–194).

It does appear that those opposed to methods have felt more strongly than those in favour, who are often careful and cautious in their support of methods. For example, although not referring to language education specifically, Donaldo Macedo (1994) passionately called for 'anti-methods pedagogy that refuses to be enslaved by the rigidity of models and methodological paradigms' (p. 8). And a century after the 1880s presentations and publications of Elliot and Thomas, Stern (1983) – who *was* referring specifically to language education – criticized what he saw as 'a century old obsession' with methods that he decried as having 'been increasingly unproductive and misguided' (p. 251).

However, rather than espousing such impassioned pleas for the rejection of methods and methodologies, perhaps a more reasonable middle ground needs be found. In spite of the methods-as-fetish analogy (re-)employed by Bartolome, she does propose what is, in effect, a helpful compromise. Bartolome does this first by rejecting 'the "one size fits all" assumption [behind] a number of teaching methods currently in vogue, such as cooperative learning and whole language instruction' (pp. 175–176). She then states that 'it is important that educators not blindly reject teaching methods across the board, but that they reject *uncritical appropriation* of methods, materials, curricula, etc.' (p. 177, emphasis added). Bartolome's use of 'uncritical appropriation' can be contrasted with the notion of 'informed eclecticism', discussed above, in which language

teachers need to be able to articulate their reasons for working with certain methods and rejecting others. Those reasons will be made up of many different components, including the knowledge, skills and experience of the teacher, aligned with the needs, wants and motivations of the learners.

ACTIVITY 1.3

What do you understand by 'a principled and informed eclecticism'? Is this a part of how you decide which language teaching methods to use with your students and which not to use?

Concluding Comments

Given the cyclical, circular, non-linear nature of language teaching and learning, it seems likely that 'fashions in language teaching methodology' (Adamson, 2005, p. 604) will continue to come and go. One possible consequence of those cycles may be that the relatively recent fashion for proclaiming a 'post-methods era' in language education will also pass, perhaps to be replaced with a new 'Renaissance' of methods and methodology. That Methodological Renaissance, in turn, may eventually pass, and so the cycle will continue. Some years ago, David Bell asked the question: 'Do [English language] teachers think that methods are dead?' (2007, pp. 135–143). Based on interviews with teachers, their discussion board postings, language teaching/learning autobiographies, and teaching journals, he concluded that the English language teachers in his study – like the thousands of language teachers I have met over the last 20 years – do not believe that methods are dead. What all of this means for language teachers today is that, whatever the historical anti-methods and more recent post-methods promoters may complain about and claim, language teaching methodologies have been with us for a very long time indeed, and show no real signs of leaving us any time soon.

Suggested Readings

Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson's *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2011, third edition) is referred to many times throughout this book, and if you are looking for detailed descriptions of a variety of language teaching techniques, theirs is a very useful book.

Like Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson's book above, Jack Richards' and Theodore Rodgers' *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2014, third edition), which is also referred to many times in this book, is a more detailed (and more recent) description of a number of language teaching approaches and methods.

For those of you interested in knowing more about the history of our field, Garon Wheeler's *Language Teaching Through the Ages* (2013) is an excellent summary of thousands of years of language teaching and learning.

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