Rossi-Kennedy Methodology at the Core of Teaching/Learning the Skill of English Speaking

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Abstract
This article discusses the Rossi-Kennedy Methodology, its concepts and results, which makes it innovative for its relation to the development of higher psychological functions. The objective of this research is to test the concepts which encompasses the Methodology. The PID (Pragmatix Instructional Design) aims to assist adults as well as children, but more specifically learners who present less ability in developing the Skill of English Speaking. Training between 2-3-hour lessons was applied, individually, to Brazilian learners of English. Teacher-learner interactions, mediational strategies (e.g., Portuguese/English), were analyzed based on the eight concepts that encompasses the Methodology. The eight concepts are: DAs - Divergent Areas, Mechanisms, Instability/Interference, PSD - Pragmatix Situational Design, PIS - Pragmatix Interference System, MOT - Moment Of Tension, Demystifying, PID - Pragmatix Instructional Design, which were described revealing how the higher psychological functions can be developed more successfully. The result presents a high average of concept marks recognition defined by the methodology, the increase in a number of full sentences reproduced by the learners after training, culminating in the Skill of English Speaking acceleration development.

Keywords: TLSES, Demystifying, PSD, PID, MOT.
1. Introduction

The study of languages has been discussed for over a century looking forward to finding an efficient method that can assist everyone. Rossi-Kennedy Methodology presents the Teaching/Learning the Skill of English Speaking (TLSES), which is aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, in the sense that thought and language are constructed in the social environment with the help of mediators, and with Lantolf (2000), that sociocultural theory "is not a theory of the social or cultural aspects of human existence... it is, rather, a theory of mind", which is the core of Rossi-Kennedy Methodology.

LS Vygotsky developed the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) concept in the last two years of his life (1932–34), and tends to be known for valuing the role of adult-child collaborative interactions in children's intellectual development. However, many researchers claim that this concept is applicable to students of any age and ability, including adult learners and specifically adult learners of a second language as advocated by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), and Kinginger (1998). McCafferty (1994) argues that the child development process applies to adult learners as well. Shabani, Khatib and Ebadi (2010), for example, investigate the role of the ZDP in the professional development of ESL teachers.

Hasan (2002) also argues that teachers should “rethink the interconnections between the semiotic, the social and the cognitive”, all elements that are part of Vygotsky's theoretical framework, including the ZPD concept. Krashen (1982), discusses the connections between the practice of teaching a second language and the known processes of second language acquisition. Based on the research results, he outlines the possible theory and then lists some implications. Considering EFL/ESL teaching to adults, among other things, Krashen says:

"Some second language theorists have assumed that children acquire while adults can only learn. The acquisition-learning hypothesis states, however, that adults also acquire, that the ability to learn languages does not disappear at puberty. This does not mean that adults will always be able to reach levels similar to native speakers in a second language. This means that adults can access the same natural language acquisition device that children use". (Krashen, 1982).

Rossi-Kennedy Methodology, as well as Krashen, also addresses the affective filter hypothesis, and refers to affective factors that come into play during a second language teaching/learning process. It emphasizes that “those whose attitudes are not ideal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less information but will also have a high or strong Affective Filter - even if they understand the message, the contribution will not reach the part of the brain responsible for the language acquisition, or the language acquisition device” Krashen (1982).

Rossi-Kennedy Methodology follows a training framework according to its concepts, developed for Teaching/Learning the Skill of English Speaking. Figure 1 presents the process flow for the application of PID (Pragmatix Instructional Design), which is part of the Rossi-Kennedy Methodology framework.

The parts presented in the flowchart demonstrate the process of applying the training. Initially, the methodology has its support on the Demystifying concept which is important in
several ways. It advocates that the teacher listens to the learner in order to acquire a variety of knowledge related to him. Among other things, to consider what types of emotions surface, for example, and how to encourage or demystify them. Having listened and interacted with the learner, it is important to explain the concepts about langue/parole\(^1\) and the role of verbal structures in the oral narrative constructions, so he understands the proposal of the PID. The Demystification concept brings awareness of the teaching/learning process to both, teacher/learner.

While the Demystifying concept, defined by the methodology, generates a rapport through shared important information, between teacher and learner, PSD (Pragmatix Situational Design), is a concept developed for the teacher to identify, at the beginning of the training, where the learner’s knowledge stands, considering the methodology, in order to guide the teaching process successfully.

Next, the learner’s PSD is identified and reveals in which stage, of which mechanism, the training should start. All steps of all mechanisms follow a logical sequence, during practice. It organizes the oral discourse structure, and the learner’s thoughts. For example, starting with M1, step (1) - the learner looking at the image being pointed out by the teacher, imitates formulating one by one, a series of 5 utterances. The pace is set by the learner and if there is no instability, the training moves forward to step (2), in which the teacher asks questions about the utterances applied in step (1) and the learner, based on the model, answers. If there is no instability, the training moves forward to step (3) in which the learner, based on the model and the previous utterances, asks the teacher questions, and the teacher answers them properly, and once again, if there is no instability, the training moves forward to step (4) which, supported by the practice of steps (1, 2 and 3), the learner builds his first organized full sentences speech. The number of sentences will expand exponentially, with each of the 10 subsequent mechanisms that the learner is submitted. According to the Rossi-Kennedy Methodology, upon completing mechanism number 11, the learner has developed a cognitive prototype to build the oral speech he/she wishes.

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\(^1\) According to Saussure is that langue refers to the rules behind the way the language is arranged and used, while parole refers to the actual utterances of language, both written and spoken (Saussure, 2021).
Another concept that Rossi-Kennedy Methodology relies on during the training is the Instability/Interference that reveals, to the teacher, what kind of problems come to the surface during the 4 steps of training, and how the Instability should be addressed through the concept, PIS (Pragmatix Interference System), considering the learner’s emotional filter. It is noteworthy that in addition to PSD (Pragmatix Situational Design), there are brief checks that happen dynamically when Instabilities come to the surface in any of the 4 steps of training, which consist of the learner being guided by the model and being able to, imitate the teacher, perform responses, ask and assemble the oral speech. Thus, the classification of English levels like, basic, intermediate, advanced and derived are not used by the Rossi-Kennedy Methodology. PSD can precisely identify where the problems are and manage them through PIS leading to foreign language speaking skill development, even if the learner has difficulties.

The Mechanisms concept was identified while comparing (Portuguese and English), more precisely in the DA (Divergent Areas), which demands special attention from the teacher. These 11 mechanisms are verbal structures that work as connectors, and when properly trained, propels exponential sequential development of the higher psychological functions. Figure 2 illustrates the internalization of the 11 mechanisms, starting from bottom to top, which sustain the implementation of different oral discourse.
MOT (Moment Of Tension) is also added to the list of concepts that solidifies, even more, the assertiveness of Rossi-Kennedy Methodology. MOT must be regulated according to the limits of each particular learner, and for this to happen, the teacher must know how to locate the genesis of the learning process. MOT marks the moments when the learner reaches new learning ground, when the learner is striving for a breakthrough and needs help to make it happen.

By identifying the MOT and applying the appropriate concepts, the teacher can help the learner to make connections between the mechanisms - established by the Rossi-Kennedy Methodology - already internalized and the new ones that are being directed (potential development). Interacting to facilitate the resolution of an MOT leads to the next MOT generating learning/development on the go. As the learner expands through the internalized mechanisms, the process/training moves forward until a new Instability comes to surface again to continue expanding new potential developments.

After internalizing the target mechanism and its connection to the other mechanism in the sequence, the learner is able to apply what they have learned to create an original oral narrative. Thus, the procedure progressively generates learning and development. This generative and organizational approach is the driving force behind the Rossi-Kennedy Methodology.

This tension is relevant in the sense that it anticipates the process of learning the skill of speaking the English language, which occurs exponentially. MOT comes into play when someone, through interaction, becomes involved in the process of learning or understanding something new and is related to the development of the higher psychological function, being
regulated according to the characteristics of each learner and it is up to the teacher to know how to deal with the different tensions - MOT and emotional. Figure 2 illustrates the visual structure of the cognitive prototype supported by the proposed mechanisms.

Based on the development of oral narratives in a short period of time, Rossi-Kennedy Methodology, comes to innovate the acquisition of a second language process to Teaching/Learning the Skill of English Speaking (TLSES). The uniqueness of this Methodology is considered to be the concepts that make it different from the others, because while these start from 'parole' to teach 'langue', the former uses 'langue', which is finite, to develop 'parole', which is infinite, and understanding that there is 'parole' without a verb but there is no 'langue' without a verb, we come across a logic leading us to propose that, without the verbal structure of any oral utterance, the development of teaching/learning how to speak the new language can be compromised. Whereas, the mechanisms recognition, which are based on verb structures, found from the comparison between English and Portuguese languages, as the mother tongue, proposed by the methodology, can be essential to teach and promote learning development.

2. Related Work

In his productions, Leontiev (1981) aims to share the views of modern psychology on language teaching, in an effort to assist language education teachers with no special training in psychology. The first section of Leontiev’s book provides a kind of systematic exposition on the problems of psychology, rephrased to be of use to the practicing language teacher. The second section discusses the problem of "intensive teaching" of foreign languages. Early in Chapter 5, "Conscious Grasp and Automatization in Language Acquisition," he describes the concept of different levels of consciousness. According to Soviet science (Leontiev, 1981), this concept encompasses four states that transmute “conscious states into unconsciousness”:

1. Actual consciousness when the object of conscious grasp is the clear focus of our attention;
2. Conscious control, when we are not directly aware of the object of conscious grasp but may gain such awareness at any moment;
3. Unconscious control, when the object of conscious grasp is related to a standard preserved in the memory, without any conscious interference;

The four states ranging from conscious to unconscious mastery represent stages in the process of language acquisition.
3. Methods

This study included Brazilian participants, adults between 20 and 35 years of age, who met the criteria established in the project. The training followed according to the process established by the flowchart (Figure 1). The procedure proposed by the Rossi-Kennedy Methodology in this project includes dynamics that should be explained in Portuguese, in case of a need, and that use the Set Point book (Rossi-Kennedy, 2013). This book tells a story through images, which is used by the learner/teacher to develop together the competence of M1 and M2.

The training consists of 4 steps, 1) through imitation, showing what the learner needs to do; give the learner the model. This will reassure him, as he will know that he will be guided, for example: teacher points at the image of the city and says: “this is Meltown”. Afterwards, the learner points to the Image and imitates: “this is Meltown”. 2) following the model, learner answer the questions. For example: Teacher points to the city image and asks: “Is this Meltown?” Afterwards, the learner points to the Image and answers: “Yes, this is Meltown”. 3) following the model, the learner will practice asking questions. Taking step (2) as a model, the learner will ask questions about the same image and the teacher will answer them. 4) construction of oral narratives that can occur with the assistance of the mediator or independently. The teacher demonstrates the task in English and the student independently reproduces the model. For example: “this is Meltown; this is a hotel…” (translation: This is Meltown, this is a hotel).

This project was approved by the Ethics Committee in Brazil, under number CAAE: 43145220.7.0000.8054. This project has been submitted to a provisional patent pending.
4. Results

The micro analysis level approach, more specifically, genetic analysis (Wertsch, 1991), was used to examine the interactions that took place between the learners and the teacher. The application of genetic analysis to the project helped to solidify the concepts proposed by the methodology. Analyzes were carried out on the transcripts originating from the material recorded by videoconference, individually for each learner. Having as an analysis process the identification of the elements that reveal emotional behavior, identifying how the learners' stress was regulated, observing the semiotic mediation tools, and analyzing the effect of applying the concepts as a whole to provoke the MOT and finally achieve the cognitive development being demonstrated through speech characterized as final.

Considering this process, we sought to clearly identify the conditions for mastering mechanisms 1 and 2 during the steps: 1) - imitate the teacher; 2) - answer the questions; 3) - ask questions; 4) - to elaborate the oral narrative, which served as the genesis for each participant in particular through the PSD (Pragmatix Situational Design) concept. Figure 3 represents the concept.

![Figure 3: Concepts form PSD.](image)

Source: (Authors)

Knowing the learner’s PSD (Pragmatix Situational Design), the teacher can act assertively while managing the Instabilities that occur not only during the mapping, but also during the training. As Lapkin, Swain and Psyllakis (2010) assert, “assistance given by the more knowledgeable person should be graduated, providing no more help than is necessary, thus
allowing an individual still to exercise his or her agency. Assistance should also be contingent on the specific need of the learner and should be withdrawn as the learner internalizes the knowledge or process, thus developing from other-regulation to self-regulation (Lapkin et al., 2010). The studies review that employing the semiotic mediation tool of Portuguese (L1) for example is very useful to lower the learners’ stress, especially for those who are more intimidated. It is important to be assertive while drilling in English without releasing his emotional tension using Portuguese, this would also affect the learning result.

This procedure is like an orchestra, which has to play together harmoniously; according to Leontiev, the “teacher’s task consists in creating a climate, which will avoid states of purely emotional tension in the student.” Once the teacher controls this emotional tension, operational tension comes into play, which “allows a person to settle into that activity, and always leads to the best possible performance” (Leontiev, 1981), and when the tools are employed appropriately, the learner becomes engaged and forces h/her own MOT, which leads to the internalization of the targeted functions.

We count as instabilities the moments in which the learner expresses lack of knowledge of a structure that, in times, can be a mechanism at one of the 4 steps, for example. Let’s say that the learner is in step 3 developing the competency of making questions and accidentally he does it with an answer instead. There, an instability is located. Considering that Instabilities are marks identified by the methodology, which are recognized by other teaching techniques, but look at them differently.

The results reveal the amount of Instabilities that occurred during the training of Mechanisms (1) and (2), and mechanism (1) has, in a shot, the largest number of Instabilities, indicating that the student who does not master the mechanism (1), will not be able to speak. That is, mechanism 1 is the basis for the development of the entire speech structure, as it is present in the construction of several other mechanisms, as illustrated in Figure 4.

The values presented seem simple, but demonstrate a highly important relationship, which directly interferes in the teaching/learning process. The value 96 represents the number of Instabilities/Interferences that occurred during M1 training. Instabilities were considered only when there was Interference by the teacher, as the Interference is intended to direct the learner’s learning, through provoking the MOT, a process that leads learner’s to the development of higher psychological functions. The value 70 presented by M2 reveals the decline of moments of Instabilities and Interferences, leading us to conclude that M1 is the driving gear of the entire cognitive prototype for teaching/learning the English Speaking Skill as a Foreign Language for Brazilians whose first language is Portuguese.
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Figure 5 illustrates the relationship and implication between steps (1, 2, 3, and 4) that represent how pre-teaching understanding can help teachers in the mediation process and promote learning. In step 1 of M1 there is a moment of adaptation to the training process, however we realize that the biggest difficulties arise in step 2, whether it is in either of the two mechanisms, but on the other hand, we face a considerable decline during steps 3 between (M1 and M2). With this, we understand that there is an inversion relationship between the moments of Instabilities/Interferences and the MOTs, because when those decrease, the possibilities of operating these and promoting speech development increase, meaning that, if the teacher does not recognize these moments and processes, the teacher misses that opportunity.
Comparing steps 4 between (M1 and M2), we need to consider that the learners use both mechanisms in the construction of the oral narrative, characterized here as final. Having recognized the first 2 mechanisms as the most relevant, we can conclude that the internalized information load was high, as it was implemented in a single meeting, so this loss should be recorded, but not as a matter of concern because in sequential training these instabilities would be reviewed through the PSD (Pragmatix Situational Design) as determined by the methodology.

Figure 5: Instabilities/Interferences Flow During Training.

It can be observed how these 2 mechanisms evolved in the construction of the final oral discourse through the recognition of the concept related to Instabilities, which showed us how important it is for the teacher to recognize them. It is also observed how the management of Instabilities through the PIS (Pragmatix Interference System) controlled the emotional tension to force the MOT.

Figure 6 demonstrates the exponential speech construction development. Result of an organized process related to language structures and guiding concepts. After going through the first three steps, which allow the learner to develop in the construction of affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences, step 4. It is the moment when the learner will tell the story of the Set Point book and will independently build sentences for this. The teacher has the opportunity to understand, through these creations, the evolution of the learner in his trajectory, as well as the Instabilities that remained after the training process of the Mechanism(s), so that new Interferences can be made through the PIS.
Figure 6: Average of Sentences per Speech.

Source: (Authors)

The result analyses of each learner, based on the methodology, is determined by the number of sentences, which are counted during the production of the speeches. According to Figure 6 it is noticeable there is a substantial growth in the number of sentences built, which was achieved in between 2 and 3 hours of training.

We also see that when advancing in training, learners increase their ability to create sentences, demonstrating vocabulary expansion, more confidence and independence during oral narrative construction, proving the effectiveness of Rossi-Kennedy Methodology.

5. Conclusion

Rossi-Kennedy Methodology is the generative seed to propel learning and development, especially to those who struggle and lose faith in himself/herself and in the process; it carries an Instructional Design which gives the teachers the procedure, step by step to achieve the wanted results; it opens the doors for the teaching/learning of other languages in a much simpler way, and most importantly, the methodology can collaborate with different other subject matters.

Rossi-Kennedy Methodology also presents, through this study, the hypothesis that these concepts will be able to identify different types of cognitive processes, such as:

a) those learners whose cognitive system is perfect and therefore organizes information by itself;

b) those whose cognitive system is good, but it needs help organizing and filing information from outside;
c) those whose system presents a certain difficulty in acquiring the skill of speaking a second language, and therefore it needs more training;

d) those whose cognitive system presents a very precarious condition for retaining information, and therefore demands a large dose of desire of both, learner and teacher, and finally,

e) those adults who could not possibly develop the skill of speaking a second language.

Considering the hypothesis above that we can frame different types of cognitive systems, then the suggestion that immersing in the country of the targeted language is a solution for those who cannot develop the speaking skill without being immersed, is false.

The learning of a language which is not the first one, whether it is learned in the country of L2 or not, the studies indicate that the learning development, indeed depends on the cognitive system and not on the place geographically speaking. Thus, the adult learner that is not wired, cognitively speaking, even if he is in the country of L2, this learner will not advance in the skill of speaking, which can be achieved the TLSES (Teaching/Learning the Skill of English Speaking).

The methodology also recognizes, through this study, that the learners can become an instructor once this learner has acquired the cognitive prototype which contains the 11 mechanisms. This step can be very fruitful in different venues like for example, one can improved his Speaking Skill while teaching.

It is important to stress that although the participants of this study have been trained individually, it is identified and recognized that the application of the PSD can be applied for training groups.

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