Commonly Confused Verbs – Praxis Paper

A historically popular method of grammar instruction that still persists in classrooms today is the audiolingual mode of communication (Diaz-Rico, 2012). The audiolingual method requires the student to focus in on the audio mode of communication. It is repetitive in nature where it simply expects the students to hear and memorize the correct pronunciation of the words and habits of speech. When applying this form of teaching to commonly confused verbs (such as lie/lay, sit/set and rise/raise), students who cannot discern the different vowel sounds within these pairs are not served. The method relies on listening and repeating, at the expense of other more helpful modes. The audiolingual method does not make concrete the knowledge of how to use these verbs correctly. It also does not include the individual in his or her own learning, since it offers “limited exposure to the culture and fail(s) to emphasize self-motivated language acquisition” (Diaz-Rico, 2012, p.53).

In contrast, the purpose behind the Multiliteracies Project is to build clarification and concrete understanding of language semantics through multimodal approaches, and to involve the student in his or her own learning. Regarding the verbs *lie*, *sit* and *rise*, the person (or thing) performing the action can do the action independently; whereas with *lay*, *set* and *raise*, there must be an object or item (be it tangible or intangible) in the sentence to perform the action on. In addition, *lie*, *sit*, *set* and *rise* are all irregular verbs. This can get quite confusing for the teacher to translate to students. In this challenging case of commonly confused verbs, a teacher often needs to come up with creative and stimulating ideas to help clarify how to recognize and use the verbs properly, be it from different perspectives or for multiple learning styles. Teachers need to implement a more modern theory of teaching English as a Second Language, one that does not view the individual “as mere users of a system, who produce no change” (Kress, Multiliteracies, 2000, p.155), but one that is actively involved in building a system that he or she will use.

Therefore, this teaching tool is intended to inspire teachers to use multimodality in teaching the difficult grammatical concept of commonly confused verbs and their tenses. It will be a storybook, presented online as an audio-visual reading, called “The Perfect Egg.” Through humour, textual and visual effects this book highlights the proper use of each verb. The tool will form one part of a four-part, 75-minute lesson plan which uses the learning strategies of model talk, visual scaffolding, Total Physical Response, reading aloud and the students’ writing and illustrating of their own story to connect the content theory to practice and provide them with opportunity for active language use. With this student-centred approach to language teaching it will encourage students to become actively involved in his or her own learning.