

Lecture 2 TEACHING METHODS and SLA

The plan:

A method as a practical implementation of an approach.

The appropriate procedures and techniques

Content of teaching

“Method “is a way towards the attainment of an ultimate goal of instruction. Traditionally, the term 'method' has been defined as the theoretical-applied aspect of pedagogical science concerned with the scientific and practical foundations and assimilation of the branch of knowledge of any given academic discipline.

The FL teaching method has also been presented as an academic field. However, due to its applied nature (since it is concerned with the mastering of a foreign language), it has been defined as having 'scientifically-based educational aims and content as well as involving the formation of the most effective methods for mastering a foreign language.

Theory and practice of TFL is a young developing science and it is challenging too. Some specialists say that it is rather an art than a science (scientific art).

o Method

A theory is put into practice at the level a method.

It includes decisions about:

The particular skills to be taught,

The roles of the teacher and the learner in language teaching and learning,

And the order in which the content will be presented.

Jeremy Harmer (2001) describes ‘procedures’ as “an ordered set of techniques.

They are the step-by-step measures to execute a method. A common procedure in the grammar-translation method, for example, is to start by explaining the grammar rules and exemplifying these rules through sentences that the students then had to translate into their mother tongue. According to Harmer, a procedure is “smaller than a method and larger than a technique.”

Techniques are part and parcel of procedures.

They are the actual moment-to-moment classroom steps that lead to a specified outcome. Every procedure is realized through a series of techniques. They could take the form of an exercise or just any activity that you have to do to complete a task. It also involves a specific syllabus organization, choices of the materials that will boost learning, and the means to assess learners and evaluate teaching and learning. It is a sort of an organizing plan that relies on the philosophical premises of an approach.

An example that will be important to us in our discussion of language teaching consists of experiments that compare teaching methods. Quite simply, a group of students is taught a foreign language using method A (e.g. audio-lingual), and another group is taught the same language using method B (e.g. grammar-translation).

The results of such an experiment would certainly be of interest to theoreticians, since a particular theory might predict that students studying using one method would do better than students using another. The experiment itself, however, is designed for practical ends, i.e. to decide which method we should use in our schools.

It is the theory and practice concerning the teaching of FL in schools and other educational institutions.

Ø Grammar-translation Approach

This is the classic way of teaching language. It began as a method to teach Latin and Greek and was generalized to teach any second language.

The Grammar-translation Approach uses the students' native language to teach the target language.

If you're over 30, have ever learned language via the textbook or have spent many a night memorizing a list of 30 foreign words, you've experienced the Grammar-translation Approach.

Ø Direct Approach.

It's a response to the Grammar-translation school and, this time, rather than the written form, the emphasis is on the spoken language and the development of oral skills.

Activities like word-picture association, question-answer patterns, dialogues and role playing give the students the chance to figure out the rules for themselves.

And good news for your students—there are no grammar drills or analyses of written sentences.

Listening and comprehension become central to this approach. There are no vocabulary lists to memorize, but there are a lot of words and phrases to listen for and become more familiar with.

Direct Approach has also been called as “The Anti-grammatical Method” and “Reform Method.”

Ø Reading Approach

Reading approach is one of methods that can be used by teacher. It is one of way that will help students to solve their problem in reading. In reading approach, students will improve their knowledge and get something new because they are demanded to read more.

Reading becomes important because it is an active skill which involves inferencing, guessing, predicting etc. By reading students will know about the tenses, kinds of tenses and how to use it. They also will know about the different of culture by reading cross cultural understanding, and they will learn how to pronounce the words correctly. In reading approach, many things that will be achieved by students and they can master English well.

This is a very specific approach designed for a specific type of language learner. The type of student that most appreciates this method probably never intends to interact with native speakers in the target language. She may be a doctoral candidate studying German in order to understand the experts in her field.

A student like this requires only one linguistic skill: Reading comprehension. So you do away with pronunciation and dialogues. Vocabulary words are learned in context. The little grammar that you teach must be oriented towards understanding a piece of reading.

Ø AUDIOLINGUAL APPROACH

This approach is also known as “The Army Method.”

The approach, which blossomed in the 50s and 60s, is all about structural patterns. Proponents believe that a language can be reduced to a basic set of sounds. Combine them and you have spoken words. Those words, when phonetically joined, become phrases and later become sentences.

Unlike the Reading Approach, the Audiolingual Approach gives higher priority to the spoken form than the written form. Classes are generally held using the target language. Activities like role playing and dialogues are drilled into students until they get the pronunciations and rhythm right. And because Audiolingualism borrows from the behaviorist school of psychology, languages are taught through a system of reinforcement.

Mistakes on the other hand, are quickly, but gently corrected. The end goal is the forming of linguistic speaking habits through correct repetitions.

During the 1970s and 80s, the broadening of international contacts created a social demand for a practical knowledge of MFL. This, in turn, inspired the search for communicative FL teaching methods.

This in turn, accounted for the changes in MFL teaching methods and the appearance of different methods such as the communicative method (E. I. Passov), the intensive method and its offshoots (G. A. Kitaigorodskaja, G. Lozanov method), function-orientated approaches (M. A. K. Halliday)

This period was established as a 'communication-orientated approach'.

Ø The Silent Way

The Silent Way uses silence as a teaching tool. Your students might feel you're giving them the silent treatment if you don't keep things friendly and explain the process to them. You're really encouraging them to do the talking themselves.

You're encouraging learners to be independent, to discover and figure out the language for themselves. Learning the target language is therefore seen as a creative, problem-solving process—a engaging cognitive challenge.

So how does one teach in silence?

Well, because you talk as little as possible, you need to employ plenty of gestures and facial expressions to communicate with your students. You can also use props.

Ø Natural Approach

The natural approach is a method of language teaching developed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It aims to foster naturalistic language acquisition in a classroom setting, and to this end it emphasizes communication, and places decreased importance on conscious grammar study and explicit correction of student errors.

The Natural Approach takes its cues from how first language is naturally learned by children. That process is then simulated for teaching adults a second language.

Natural Approach sees a difference between “learning” and “acquisition.”

Learning a language requires textbooks, grammar lessons and rote memory. Acquiring a language only requires an immersive process of repetition, correction and recall.

The Natural Approach believes that the more the students lose themselves in the activity, the better their handle on the language will be.

Ø Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response is an approach to language teaching where gestures, actions and movements play a vital role in language acquisition.

TPR was created by Dr. James J Asher. It is based upon the way that children learn their mother tongue. Parents have 'language-body conversations' with their children, the parent instructs and the child physically responds to this.

But since languages differ, the same conceptual distinction may be expressed in a variety of forms. One language might opt for a single word-ending for ‘more than one’ and use this as an invariant form on every noun, much like the -s ending for plural in English. Another might make use of ten or more different plural markers depending on the gender of the noun (masculine, feminine, or neuter), the “shape” of the noun (e.g., whether it ends in a consonant or a vowel), its use with a numeral (five gold rings) and what numeral (five, ten, three hundred), and so on, much as in Russian or Arabic (see, e.g., Gvozdev 1961; Omar 1973). It should take children longer to learn how to express ‘more than one’ in these languages than in English. For one thing, there are more forms to learn, and then there are conditions on when to use each one. Differences in formal complexity affect rate of acquisition.

While no one language appears to be easier to learn overall, there are many trade-offs from one language to another in what is easy and what is hard. The plural system for nouns in a language that uses just one ending to mark ‘more than one’ should be easy. Yet the same language may have an elaborate system of verb tenses and verb forms in each tense, which makes verbs hard to learn. Children may find some aspects of a language easier to master than others, and children exposed to different languages may well learn at different rates on equivalent parts of the system. To find out, we need to establish what’s hard and what’s easy in acquisition for each language.

One of the techniques is conversation. Conversation demands that its participants attend to each other and to whatever is being talked about. This means keeping track of what others know at each point in the conversation. The participants share common ground and add to it with each utterance. Both joint attention and the updating of common ground play a role in acquisition (Clark 2002b). In learning to participate in conversations, children learn more of their language and more about how to use it (Snow 1978). And in tuning in to a language, they tune in to those distinctions that are obligatory; they come to assume distinctions that are always encoded in that language but not necessarily in others. They learn to think – and plan – for speaking in that

language (Slobin 1996). Conversation provides a forum for using language. It displays language embedded in larger systems for communication and so should present children with critical material for making sense of language as they try to understand others and make themselves understood.

Conversational exchanges between children and adults should also be a forum for learning to become a member of the society and the culture. From birth on, the exchanges children participate in attune them to the language around them. This holds as much for sound patterns as for words or for constructions used to convey temporal and causal relations among events; as much for intonation contours and tone of voice (with positive or negative affect) as for details of constructing words from roots and affixes. Understanding in conversation may depend as much on what is not said as on what is said. Knowing some of the elements of a language doesn't necessarily allow one to interpret utterances appropriately. One has to learn the conventions on use. For example, the request in English *Can you open the door?* is both a question about ability (can) and a request for someone to perform the action of opening. The context of use then determines how the addressee should construe it. What counts as a request or as an assertion and the range of forms that can be used depend on the conventions of the speech community. (These are not necessarily the same even in communities using the same language.) Construals also depend on the inferences that are licensed in context.

Language is not an autonomous system for communication. It is embedded in and supplemented by gesture, gaze, stance, facial expression, and voice quality in the full array of options people can use for communicating. In learning language, children may first rely on nonlinguistic options, both in their initial understanding and in their own early use. They might understand affect first from adult voice quality and gesture, and infer the locus of attention from adult gaze or stance before they understand that words pick out referents. And they might rely on iconic gestures referring to or anticipating reference to things later named with words. Adults may draw children in to language by leaning on nonlinguistic means to signal affect or to direct attention. They may even indicate to young children how things work at first through gestures rather than words.

Discussion questions

1. How do different teaching methods (e.g., communicative approach, grammar-translation, task-based learning) support or hinder second language acquisition?
2. What is the role of input and output activities in helping learners acquire a second language?
3. How can teachers balance the teaching of grammar and communication to promote effective SLA?
4. In what ways can technology and digital tools enhance second language acquisition in modern classrooms?

5. How should teachers adapt their methods to meet the needs of learners with different learning styles and proficiency levels?