



Language Teaching Methods and Techniques

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Abstract

The language teaching method is one of the key issues of educational research in the 21st century. That's largely due to today's interconnected world. Now learning a new language, especially the English language, has become a key to success in all spheres of life, and a must to achieve professional development, gain advanced skills which fit the requirements of 21st - century challenges, and start new careers. As language teaching is a two-way process in which both teachers and learners seek the best ways to achieve the expected targets, the history of the language teaching field has been

characterized by a huge number of theories, approaches, and studies that search for the best teaching methods and techniques which fit language learners' needs and help them to achieve the desired outcomes. This paper is a descriptive study designed to identify the most used approaches of the SL (Second Language) teaching process. It tries to clarify the main principles of the most common teaching methods and their implications on instructional techniques. Additionally, learning context and factors that affect language acquisition are reviewed. First, we should understand the difference between approach and method.

According to Anthony (1963), the approach is a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching. However, the method is an overall plan for a systematic language presentation based on a selected approach (Anthony, pp: 63-67).

* **Grammar Translation (GT)**

This method is the most classical and aims to read the literature of SL. (Malone,p.4). In addition, it was hoped that, through the study of target language grammar, students become more familiar with their native language grammar (Larsen, p.11). This method includes some activities. According to Krashen, it includes an explanation of a grammar rule with example sentences, vocabulary, presented in a bilingual list, and reading selection emphasizing the rules and the vocabulary. Moreover, exercises provide practice. Additionally, translation from FL (First Language) to SL and vice versa (Krashen, p.127).

* **Direct**

This method focuses on how to use a foreign language, through teacher's questions and student's responses, that create a communicative environment and provide students with

target language structures and a great deal of comprehensible input. In addition to, grammar is studied inductively (ibid, p.135). This method helps students to think and to speak in the target language, avoiding speaking in the native language. Moreover, this method effectively develops students' competence in conversation.

* **Audiolingual**

It is an oral method that depends on a dialogue presented by the teacher or recorded on a tape, and students should mimic and memorize the dialogue. Then drills are presented to students aiming to make structures' patterns "automatic" and grammar is induced from these drills. Moreover, this method takes the student's attention away from the new structure but grasps meaning from vocabulary (Ibid, p.130).

* **Silent way**

According to Larsen, this method was set by Calep Gattegno, (1963) who said that "one of the basic principles of the silent way is that "teaching should be subordinated to learning", referring to the idea of how teaching serves the learning process not dominate it. The basics of this method depend on the idea that the teacher encourages students to speak

more, meanwhile, the teacher should be silent most of the time, and from this point of view, it is named the “silent way”, which means that the role of the teacher is to respect the autonomy of the learners in their attempts at relating and interacting with the new challenges, but students should make use of what they know. As a result, students will be able to use the language for self-expression to express their thought, perceptions, and feeling. So, they need to be independent of their teacher to develop their criteria for correctness (Larsen, pp.53-67). Its features according to Richards and Rodgers, focus on the creativity of students leads to facilitating learning and using physical objectives, like rods. In addition to, solving problems using the target language (Richards & Rodgers, p.99).

* **Suggestopedia**

It is one of the effective humanistic methods, in which there is respect for the students’ feelings. It is originated by Georgi Lozanov. He asserts that we set up psychological barriers to learning and use five to ten percent of our mental capacity. So, this way attempts to help students overcome the barriers of learning SL. (Larsen, p.73). Three elements are

essential for applying this method: an attractive classroom, a dynamic teacher, and a state of relaxed alertness in the students. Suggestopedia procedures are designed to aid the comprehensibility of input. Initial dialogues are based on situations familiar to the student, and the topics of the dialogues are designed to be of inherent interest, and also to be of some practical value and relevant to students’ needs. Its primary aims are to relax the student and to remove mental blocks. Moreover, to build confidence. It depends on the net of grammatical structures provided by successful communication (Krashen, pp:143-144).

* **Community Language learning**

This method takes its principles from the more general Counseling-Learning approach developed by Charles A. Curran. (Larsen, p.89). The Counseling-Learning Model involves an educative process that is focused on a delicate relationship between teacher and student with all the complex subtleties this implies, rather than a highly intellectualized process with emphasis on discipline, study habits, memorization, and similar concepts. It is a process that attempts to go beyond the learning of mere facts. It is modeled

after a counseling-therapy model which seems to bring about self-invested learning (Brady, p.22). In other words, Curran thinks that a teacher should be a counselor and take the student's feelings and reactions to internalizing another language into consideration. In addition, a teacher must support his students and encourage them to remove their fears of learning another language. According to Curran, there are six elements necessary for non-defensive learning: Security, Aggression, Attention, Reflection, Retention, and discrimination. He also believes that in this kind of supportive learning process, language becomes the means for developing creative and critical thinking. Culture is an integral part of language learning. The material, Students generate, and after feeling secure a teacher prepares it with published textbooks including pronunciation patterns, vocabulary, and grammatical patterns. This method focuses on understanding and speaking skills at the beginning, with reinforcement through reading and writing (Larsen, pp.99-101).

*** Total Physical Response (TPR)**

According to Krashen, this method originated by James Asher

(1977), it depends basically, on obeying commands given by the teacher that involve an overt physical response, such as “stand up, sit down, go to the door ...”. These commands become more complex as the class progresses. This method, as described by Asher includes, in the first 45 hours, 70% listening (commands), 20% speaking, and 10% reading and writing. As Asher said the three principles of this method are delaying speech until the student internalized the spoken language he listened to, understanding the spoken language coming through the imperative utterances of the instructor, and expecting the student's competence to talk after understanding spoken language (Krashen, p.140). These imperative words involve grammatical structures and Vocabulary (Larsen, P.115).

*** Communicative Language Teaching**

“Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication”

(Larsen, p.121). This method focuses on functions and the students recognize that one function can be expressed by many different forms and a single form can serve different functions. As Malone said, communicative language teaching is designed around a set of classroom principles (Malone, p.7).

1- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.

2- The interaction of authentic texts into the learning situation.

3- An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

4- An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

In the following section we will discuss how the teacher applies methods in the classroom and what effective techniques support the success of the learning process:

*** Effectiveness of the teaching techniques**

Teachers play an important role in the learning process, so they should select the method that fits students' needs at different levels. Moreover, they should develop their skills and

match their styles with the learning environment. In general, we cannot determine which method fits which skill, in spite of, many types of research that had been done in this area.

However, we present here a brief description of the most used of them: Malone(pp:8-10) presented the following instructional techniques:-

1- TPR: this technique is based on "comprehensible input" without asking the student to produce speech "Silent way", so it is a non-threatening technique. However, it depends on command patterns. Forms of language are restricted.

2- Cooperative Learning: it depends on "Task-based language teaching", small group activities (positive interactions), face-to-face meaningful interaction and, tasks.

3- Language Experience: Teacher and students share an experience of some type and then discuss it in SL. The teachers asked the children to write a text about the experience. The teacher elicits beginning sentences, then the children read them.

4- Dialogue Journals: teacher and students create a written conversation on topics of personal or group interest. Then students write about the topic in

the SL in their journal and the teacher responds in their journal. Teachers, by this technique, can evaluate the written content and model correct language. It is a non-threatening technique.

5- Academic Language Scaffold: provides the learner with SL input that beyond their current level. The teacher or more advanced classmates act as the scaffold that helps the learner build his vocabulary and fluency through completing a shared task.

6- FL support for SL learning: in this technique FL can be used as a medium for SL learning As Butzkamm (2007) referred to.

7- Culture studies: much of learners' cultural knowledge is embedded in their mother tongue, SL learning requires a transfer of FL cultural knowledge to Knowledge of the SL culture.

Larsen (1990, 2000) presented six common methods with techniques:-

*** Audiolingual**

- 1- the lesson begins with a dialogue set by the teacher
- 2- the students repeat the dialogue, and every student plays a role in the dialogue, while the teacher plays the other one.
- 3- Roles switched among the students.
- 4- The teacher corrects the errors.

5- The teacher uses grammar drills.

6- The teacher always gives positive reinforcement to the students.

7- The teacher uses “minimal pairs” and “grammar games”.

*** Community learning method**

1- At first, the teacher tells the students what they are going to do. (non-threatening technique).

2- This technique is used to record the generated language as well as gives the students the opportunity for community learning to come about.

3- After recording the conversations, the teacher transcribes “tap-recorded target language conversations.

4- Each student is given the opportunity of translating his conversation and the teacher writes the native language equivalent vocabulary.

5- This technique provides the students with practice in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar patterns, and writing skills.

6- The topic of the conversation and how every student expresses it, support the community learning process.

*** Comprehension Approach / TPR**

1- The techniques in this approach depend on conveying meaning in the target language through actions.

2- The techniques emphasize listening skills.

3- At first, the teacher performs the action with the students. Later the teacher directs them.

4- Retention is enhanced when learners respond physically.

5- Feelings of success and low anxiety facilitate learning.

6- Listening comprehension comes first. Students will speak when they are ready.

* **Suggestopedia**

1- The teacher creates a cheerful environment in the classroom.

2- Peripheral learning: for example, by hanging posters containing grammatical patterns of SL.

3- The teacher should be supportive of the students.

4- Roleplay: the student is asked to pretend that he is someone else and speak and perform in the target language.

5- Musical accompaniment. music is played during the teacher's reading.

6- The students reread the dialogue loud, individually, or in groups.

* **Silent way**

1- The teacher focuses on the difference in pronunciation between sounds like "the" and "thee". He can do this by a "sound-color chart" on which each English sound is assigned a distinctive color).

2- Teaching should be subordinate to learning. So, the teacher should think about what the students are going to learn not about what he wants to teach. Moreover, he should be silent most of the time and supply the students with correct answers.

3- Peer correction: the students should help each other in a cooperative manner, not in a competitive one.

4- The teacher can use "Rods" to make the meaning clearer, and also clarify the complicated structures.

5- Self-correction gestures: the teacher may use his palms or any gestures to locate the trouble spot for the student.

6- Fidel Chart: by using these color-coded charts, the students can associate the sounds with their spelling.

* **Communicative approach**

techniques depend on this approach are as follows:-

1- Authentic materials; to help students transfer the language they learned in the classroom to the outside world, the teacher should use language material authentic to native speakers of the target language.

2- Ask the students to work in groups or individually. Give them texts of sample arguments, in written form.

3- Scrambled Paragraph: to teach students cohesion and the coherence of

the language, the teacher should use scrambled text and ask them to unscramble it.

4- Language games: games give the students valuable communicative practice.

5- From all the above-mentioned techniques, we can recognize that they are helpful tools to the learning process, but every teacher can create other tools according to the learning environment and his learners' needs.

*** Learning context**

Joseph, & Barbara F said that Hymes D. (1972) noted that “the key to understanding language in context is to start not with language but with context” (Joseph, & Barbara F, 2004, p.153). The contexts that the learning process of SL takes place, have a great role in the achievement and the outcomes of the learning, As Dominic mentioned FL is acquired by native speakers in the social group that helps the child acquire it smoothly, and in this environment the learner receives the input language directly in the target language. However, the SL learners receive instruction in a more formal manner.

Moreover, instructions are most cases taught by a non-native speaker with help of a native speaker (Dominic,

p.11). These different contexts and different environments affect greatly language acquisition.

A study presented by Mora J.C investigated “Study abroad” effects on the process of English acquisition, as a foreign language, at an advanced stage by measuring learners' gains in linguistic competence over time. The participants were from a larger pool of European exchange undergraduate students at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. All of them were advanced EFL students and bilingual speakers of Catalan and Spanish. Mora concluded that "for the advanced SL learners, language-specific articulatory features such as the laryngeal timing patterns we measured through VOT duration was more sensitive to the learning context, ... Despite the fact that the relative weight of FI and SA varied according to the phonetic/phonological examined, both learning contexts had a positive effect on the subjects' perceptual and productive ability in English” (Mora, pp:2, 13)

*** Learning environment**

several studies in the field of learning acquisition proved that environmental factors have an important role in LA, and the most common factors that are estimated that

affect greatly learning acquisition are: Pastel coloring, appropriate lightning, controlled acoustics, and proper air ventilation. When the environment is supportive to the student he can perform better and can get a higher achievement. According to Brooks C, the students who take their lessons in high-technology classrooms, get higher achievement than their peers in traditional classrooms (Brooks, 2010, C. Issue,5, p.719-726).

Vlabona presented a study, aiming to examine the effect of the learning environment on learning foreign languages and focusing on the English Language. His study was conducted on 230 students in a non-public language institution. It depended on both quantitative and qualitative techniques. He used the case study as an instrument of research. The result showed that the students felt relaxed and showed a positive attitude to the English Class by being sympathetic listeners and active interlocutors. They used high-tech equipment, during the class, like, CD player, DVD, or electronic vocabulary for instant help in practice reflecting the students' feeling of relief. As a result, he concluded that the learning environment in language labs rather

than traditional classrooms affected the students' cooperative skills, the interpersonal attitudes of the respondents, and the level of motivation in Learning English (Valbona, 2011, pp:127-137).

*** Impact of technology on teaching**

Using technology in teaching language has proved a great success. Timothy set some advantages of using a computer, as one of the technological tools, in developing English language students' skills (Timothy, pp:56-59):-

- 1- Using computers can help students to acquire experience in a language beyond that in the classrooms.
- 2- It can enhance verbal communication.
- 3- By using many applications, the student can enhance his reading skills by reading many books or stories in groups, using real voice or sound effects.
- 4- It helps the students build their vocabulary and associate the vocabulary with pictures
- 5- It helps in promoting long-term recall of vocabulary.
- 6- It enhances writing skills through a lot of applications that develop spelling skill.
- 7- Using graphics or clip art enables the student to develop their writing

skills and to convey their thoughts easily.

8- The teacher can correct the grammatical mistakes by highlighting a part of speech, underlining, or italicizing them.

9- Presentation software (PowerPoint) is used as a tool for content-rich teaching aids or to produce interactive games.

10- Podcasting: audio files can be accessed via websites and provide content information to the public

11- Write-board: it provides a space where students collaborate on the production of writing tasks.

* **Learning styles**

” Learning style is the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others” (Dunn & Griggs, p.3).

* **Aspects of Learning styles**

Ehrman and Oxford (1990) presented 9 dimensions of learning styles:-

1- Sensory preferences: Visual, auditory Kinesthetic (produced by movement), and Tactile (produced by the sense of touch).

2- Personality types: (extraverted vs. introverted), (intuitive – random vs.

sensing – sequential), (thinking vs. feeling), and (closure-oriented/ judging vs. open / perceiving).

3- Biological differences: such as physical factors, and location.

4- Desired degree of Generality: it is better to make a balance between Generality and Specialty.

According to Reid (1995), the written survey is the most common tool to assess the SL learning styles.

* **Learning strategies**

“Specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques... such as seeking out conversation partners. The learner should choose the strategy that fits his learning style.

Oxford (1990) presented six major groups of SL strategies:-

1- Cognitive.

2- Metacognitive.

3- Memory – related.

4- Compensatory.

5- Affective.

6- Social.

There are many tools to assess strategies, for example, report surveys, observation, interviews...

* **Complex features of Language**

Learning and teaching language processes require that teachers and learners understand the main aspects of the language system to know what

should be taught and learned. So, a good understanding of complex features of language yields great learning.

This section gives a brief about the complex features of the language.

According to Bloch & Trager, “A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group operates” (Bloch, B., Trager, p.5) language is a system of:-

* **Sounds (phonology)**

Children or learners acquire the sounds of their native language or SL first. They tend to acquire vowels before consonants. The sound system is different from one language to another one, and also acquisition sounds process differs in children according to age. Sounds stand for words, and words stand for objects that have a meaning. So, teachers have to understand this sound system well, especially non-native speaker teachers, because it's the first and critical stage of acquiring a language. They have to teach well manner of articulation of nasals, glides, stops, liquids, and fricatives. Affricates) and the place of articulation: labials, velars, alveolar, palatals.

* **Morphology**

“The study of morphology is the study of word formation” (Gass & Slinker,p.11) For example, the word “unforeseen” is made up of three morphemes: un, (negative function); fore, (earlier in time); and seen, (visualized). Each part is referred to as a morpheme, which can be defined as the minimal unit of meaning and there are two classes of morphemes: bound and free (ibid).

* **Syntax**

It refers to the study of constructions and the relation between the components of a sentence. For example, the phrase; “I met the man who had saved the child”. This sentence consists of the subject “I”, the verb “met”, and the object “the man who had saved the child”, and this object is a noun phrase that includes a relative clause. That is called syntax or grammar.

* **Semantics**

It refers to the study of meaning. There are many ungrammatical sentences that are meaningful, or at least interpretable (Ibid, p.12).

* **Pragmatics**

It refers to the way in which we use language, for example, when we say, in English, in a phone call: Is John

there? It means that we want to speak with John (Ibid, p.13).

* **Lexis**

According to Crystal, this term is used in linguistics to refer to the vocabulary of a language and the unit of vocabulary is generally referred to as a lexical item or lexeme. The way lexical items are organized in a language is the lexical structure or lexical system. Lexis may be seen in contrast with grammar, ‘grammatical words’ (whose sole function is to signal grammatical relationships as of, to and the in English) and “lexical words” (words which have lexical meaning, (lexical verbs (v. auxiliary verbs) and lexical noun phrases (v. non-lexical NPs, such as PRO) (Crystal, p. 279).

* **Grammar and Lexis**

In the Hallidayan approach, Grammar deals both with choices between individual items (e.g., this/that, I/you) and between categories (e.g., singular/plural or past/future), while lexis deals only with open set choices between discrete lexical items (Rob, p.28).

* **Function**

This term has many uses in linguistics, one of which, is to refer to the relationship between a linguistic

form and other parts of the linguistic pattern in which it is used. In grammar, for example, the noun phrase can ‘function’ in clause structure as subject, object, complement, etc., Functional explanations of grammatical phenomena are also to be found in communicative and discourse-based grammar. More specifically, the term functional is used for an element that is distinctive, or contrastive, within a language system, as in one definition of phonology as functional phonetics. Also, it refers to the role language plays in the context of society or the individual (social function) (Crystal, p. 201).

The teacher should have a background in linguistics and should know how to analyze and teach all of the features of the language, which depends on his audience, contexts, and learning environment. For example, the teacher of the English language should recognize the universals, and differences between word order patterns to teach the English sentence pattern: “Subject-Verb-Object”. And, he should understand the tendencies of this pattern in morphology or syntactic structures. Moreover, he should understand the word classes and word formation to explain many patterns of

this area, like, complex lexis related to a variety of areas, compound nouns and adjectives, subject-specific, etc.,

* **Conclusions**

To conclude, teaching methods and techniques are vital factors to the success of education. choosing good and suitable teaching methods leads to successful language learning. So, teachers should be proficient in selecting the method that fits what is taught and at the same time matches the learner's needs and styles. Additionally, teachers should be aware of the main factors which influence the quality of the learning process. They should use technological tools that help greatly in achieving a successful teaching and learning process.

Also, as the learning process depends on teachers and learners, teachers should pay attention to giving the learner enough space to be involved in his learning environment and let him choose and apply his learning strategy and preferences in the classroom.

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