



Language teaching methods

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Abstract

Imagine for a moment what would happen if everyone in this world became dumb. There would be no communication; no exchange of ideas. In every part of the world people communicated among themselves through their language arbitrarily accepted by every member of the community. Let us begin by defining the terms method. A method is a theoretical construct and syllabus design is the practical aspect of this construct. *'But since we prefer method as an umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice'*.

Keywords: language, teaching, methods, communication

Introduction

When talking about the teaching of English as a second language, three words, approach, method, and technique, are frequently used. If a teacher follows a certain approach in his teaching, we understand that he is applying a certain idea or theory and that he bears in mind certain theoretical principle. A method comprises a set of procedure or a collection of techniques, used in a systematic way, which will result in efficient learning. It consists of a number of techniques approved in an order.

Methods

Method refers to what of a teaching programmer. It involves classroom behavior, tasks and moment-to-moment method of coaching, the role of the learner and the teacher. A method includes three components:

- Approach
- Design
- Procedure

Approach

Approach is concerned with the theory of nature language and language learning. For instance, in language teaching practices two important theories of language learning have been put forward.

Design

Design concern itself with:

- The general and specific objective of the course;
- A syllabus model;
- Types of learning and teaching tasks;
- Roles of learners and teachers; and
- Role of teaching materials.

Procedure

Procedure is concerned with what happens in the actual classroom. Therefore, it includes classroom technique, practice and behaviors. In order to better value the distinction

between the three, it would be worthwhile to quote Edward Anthony who made some forty years back, a parallel distinction between approach, method and technique.

Types of Methods

- Grammar- Translation Method
- The Direct Method
- Communicative Method
- The Bilingual Method

Grammar-Translation Method

All we know today is that translation has occurred in the foreign language instruction through ages. However, it was in the late eighteenth century that the technique of teaching grammatical rules with translation in the foreign language became popular. The grammar-translation method cannot probably be traced back to the tenets of any particular master teacher or methodologist but it seems to be rooted in the formal teaching of Greek and Latin which prevailed in Europe for many centuries. Though Latin and Greek were not learnt for communication they were considered to be useful for intellectual discipline and were seen as prestige symbols.

The uniqueness of the grammar-translation method follows:

- Grammar was taught prescriptively through the presentation and study of rules.
- Practice was provided through translation exercise, from the target language into the mother tongue and vice versa.
- The focus of translation was the sentence.
- Terms was taught through bilingual word lists, which learners had to memorise.
- This method focused on the skills of reading and writing and did not pay much attention to those of listening and speaking.
- The mother tongue of the learner was used to explain new items and make comparison with the equivalents in the target language.
- Accuracy was the desired outcome of this method.

The Direct Method

The development of late nineteenth century was reaction to the less than satisfactory grammar-translation methods of language were tried as a corrective to the shortfalls. The common characteristic of all these methods was the use of the target language as means of instruction and communication, and the avoidance of translation as a technique. The term 'direct' refers to the fact that learners are in direct contact with the target language. The direct method courses were characterised by:

- Experience to the spoken form of the language
- Speaking before reading
- Even in reading, a link to be established between the spoken and written word
- Direct association between foreign words and phrases, and objects and actions

Communicative Method

Language is a means of communication. They all concentrated on the components of the English language, namely words, structures, word-order, grammar etc. The communicative method almost ignored this function of the language and succeeded in imparting knowledge of language forms and rules. Communicative methods followed by:

- The method is function-based and task-centred
- While conveying the message is primary, accuracy is secondary
- Judicious uses of the mother tongue are translation is allowed to help student to perform the task
- Pair work and group work are frequently used in the classroom.

The Bilingual Method

This method was first adopted by Dr. C.J. Dodson who also experimented it on students and achieved good results. This method considered a combination of the direct method and the grammar translation method. It aims to make the learner's bilingual- the ability to use two languages equally well.

The Principles followed in the bilingual Method:

- The method utilizes the students' language habits
- Sentence is the unit of teaching not a word
- Pattern practice in the target language is immediately taken up rigorously
- Use of the mother tongue is gradually tapered down and in the later stages there may not be any need for it.

Conclusion

The methods have been tried out earlier with varying degrees of success. The common aspect of these is that certain important features of the method have been totally absorbed by pedagogy. The methods mentioned above are valuable to us even today for their distinctive features. While reading this section, try to see if the beliefs you have about teaching have their roots in any of these methods. Definition and redefinition of terms may seem relatively unimportant, but in the context of studying different methods, they are significant because they are tokens used in thought.

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