

Teaching Method in a Brief Definition

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Abstract— This paper about teaching methods in ES classes.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1940s, the definitive solution to successful ESL instruction has been discovered many times. Like bestsellers, pop stars, and ice-cream flavors, second-language theories and methodologies enjoy a few afternoons or years in the spotlight and then stumble into the dusk of old age. There is always another tried-and-true methodology from yet another expert theorist who may or may not have had first-hand experience learning a second language. Before the late nineteenth century, second-language instruction mirrored the so-called Classical Method of teaching Latin and Greek; lessons were based on mental-aerobics exercises—repetition drills and out-of-context vocabulary drills as well as lots of reading and translations of ancient texts. Brown notes that languages were “not being taught primarily to learn oral/aural communication, but to learn for the sake of being ‘scholarly’ or...for reading proficiency” (15). Theories of second-language acquisition didn’t start to pop up until the instructional objective became oral competence.

Grammar-Translation

From the turn of the nineteenth century until the late 1940s, the grammar-translation method ruled. In the few instances of attempted coups, it lost some ground, but academia always beckoned it back. Despite its antiquity, or because of it, the grammar-translation method is still alive and well in language classrooms throughout Europe, Asia, and even in the Americas

The Direct Method

Second-language theorists maintain that the first real method of language teaching was the Direct Method, which was developed as a reaction against the monotony and ineffectiveness of grammar-translation classes. The Direct Method was the brainchild of Charles Berlitz, a nineteenth-century linguist whose schools of language learning are famous throughout the world. It borrowed and applied

Gouin’s findings of the previous generation, seeking to imitate his naturalistic approach. In light of Gouin’s miserable failure in German, Berlitz wanted to immerse students in the target language. He believed, as did Gouin, that one could learn a second language by imitating the way children learn their first language; that is, directly and without explanations of grammatical points and using only the target language. Therefore, grammar was taught inductively. The objectives were speaking and listening comprehension, not translation; for this reason, vocabulary was introduced in context and through demonstrations and pictures; and an emphasis was placed on correct usage and pronunciation. Students learned to write by taking dictation in the target language. method until behaviorism began to shine its light on the field of second-language teaching.

Behaviorism

We can thank researchers such as Pavlov, Skinner, and Watson for behaviorism-based techniques employed in US classrooms as well as the Audiolingual Method of second-language instruction. Skinner’s theory of operant conditioning is based on the concept that learning results from a change in overt behavior. Applied to language acquisition, one learns language by emitting an utterance (operant), which is reinforced by a response by another (consequence). If the consequence of the imitated behavior is negative, one does not repeat the behavior; if the response is positive, one repeats the behavior. Repetition then leads to habit formation. Thus, behaviorists agree with the likes of Francis Bacon and John Locke that one is born a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, and all learning is the result of outside stimuli. From this thinking sprang the popular Audiolingual Method, which left grammar-translation by the wayside.

Community Language Learning

Developed by Charles Curran in 1972, Community Language Learning dispensed with the hierarchical student-teacher relationship and adopted a counselor-client relationship. The idea was to eliminate any sense of challenge or risk-taking from the emotionally delicate client, which theoretically would free him/her to learn a second language without really trying. The counselor would translate and gently facilitate all learning activity.

The Silent Way

The Silent Way found its way into classrooms following the publication of Gattegno's text, also called *The Silent Way*. According to Sidhakarya, the Silent Way "is based on a theory of learning and teaching rather than on a theory of language" (paragraph 1). The objective is to make learning automatic by encouraging students to discover, rather than memorize, the lexicon and prescriptive rules of the target language. This is achieved by teaching students to associate physical objects—specifically, color-coded rods—with phonemes. The teacher is supposed to be a facilitator who only intervenes in students' learning if they are wandering hopelessly off course. In addition to the colored rods, classroom materials include a sound/color wall chart, with each color representing a phoneme; a 500-word color-coded word chart; a spelling chart, or Fidel, that color-codes all possible spellings for every phoneme; and wall pictures that represent everyday scenes.

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The Communicative Method (CLT)

In perusing the literature regarding second-language methodologies and their supporting theories, it is almost impossible to make sense out of the discrepancies in terminology and theoretical bases. For some, the Direct Method is without theoretical basis; for others, it belongs to behaviorism. For some, the grammar-translation method is not a method, but a non-theory-based approach; for others, it is indeed theory-based, because it teaches by rote and assumes that repetition will lead to the formation of correct linguistic habits. For some, the Communicative Method was developed during the 1960s; for others it is a more recent phenomenon that comprises all sorts of methodologies; and still others consider it another name for the Natural Approach. In my own experience as an instructor of foreign language, the only difference between the Natural Approach and the Communicative Method is that in the Communicative classroom, students are expected to avoid using their native language.

CONCLUSION

Language learning methodologies certainly mirror the times in which they thrive; but some have claimed to have virtues that are not evident beyond their theoretical framework. I have attended many faculty meetings in which the chair insisted that teachers

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