

Former Methods of Learning English Language

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1.The Grammar-Translation Method

In the 18th century foreign languages started to appear on the school curricula, requiring a systematic approach to teaching them. The standard system was similar to the system for teaching Latin. Rather than speaking, the goal was for students to be able to read literature in the target language, and benefit from the mental discipline of studying a language.

Textbooks combined abstract grammar rules, vocabulary lists with translations, and sentences for students to translate. Sentences were chosen to illustrate grammar, with no relation to actual communication.

During lessons, the teacher presented grammar structures, rules were studied, and the students worked through translation exercises.

Grammar-Translation was influential until the 1950's. Often the frustration of language learners who experienced this method is that they spent years studying, but still could not **speak the language**.

2.The Direct Method

- **The Direct Method** achieved worldwide publicity through Berlitz, since Maximilian Berlitz had created a form of this method. An increase in travel in the second half of the 19th century created the need to speak languages.
- It was noted (not for the first time) that children learn to speak with no reference to grammar at all. The Direct Method put proficiency in speaking the language at the top of the agenda and was the first of many ‘natural’ methods that claim to teach a second language the way first languages are learned. Lessons were taught exclusively in the target language.
- Teachers were usually native speakers and used a lot of demonstration, pictures, gestures, and association of ideas to make meaning clear.
- The goal was to build up communication skills through question and answer drills between teacher and student, and there was a carefully graded progression from simple grammar structures to more complex. Grammar was taught through the use of examples chosen to help the student ‘work out’ the rules and there was a focus on everyday vocabulary.

3. The Audiolingual Method

- In the 1960s both Grammar-Translation and the Direct Method were questioned as applied linguistics became a mature discipline. US entry into the second World War created the need to teach oral proficiency in foreign languages quickly to troops.
- Behavioral psychology also influenced the development - speech was just another habit to be acquired. No rules, no need to even comprehend (at least not at first).
- **Dialogues and drills** form the basis of classroom activities according to the Audiolingual Method: dialogues are used for repetition and memorization, and then specific grammatical patterns in the dialogue are selected and become the focus of between 10 and 15 possible types of drill exercise.
- **While the role of the students** is almost entirely reactive, and they have little control over the content, pace, or style of learning, the role of the teacher is central and active.
- **The teacher models**, controls the direction and pace of the lesson, and monitors responses to correct all mistakes. The teacher would focus on pronunciation, intonation and fluency, and would correct immediately.
- Principles of Audiolingualism can still be identified in the type of “learn-in-a-month” programs that promise “You listen, you repeat, you understand!” Today there is greater understanding of the student’s role in learning, and the need for real communication as a key aspect in language learning.

4.The Silent Way

- Developed by Caleb Gattegno. Gattegno saw foreign language learning as an intellectually engaging process of problem solving and discovery.
- The teacher remains silent and guides the learning process while responsibility for working out the rules falls on the learner. In silence, the student concentrates on the task to be accomplished. Colored Cuisenaire Rods and various charts were used to guide the students - these rods might represent key points of the lesson, e.g., language items or the actors in a story.

5. Suggestopedia

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(Developed by Georgi Lozanov)

By inducing a relaxed but aware mental state in the learner through the use of music, classroom décor, and ritualized teacher behavior, Lozanov claimed that the power of memory could be optimized. The students should assume a 'pseudo-passive' state. The instructor was expected to dress immaculately, behave solemnly throughout, create situations where students were most 'suggestible', and then present material in a way that encourages retention.

While it is rare for any of these methods to be used today as the exclusive method for a particular language teaching institution, quite a few of their techniques, or principles, have been incorporated within current language teaching. For example,

- Student-centered instruction,
- Cuisenaire rods remain a useful and effective tool in teaching,
- Creating a relaxed and stimulating learning environment.

6. Total Physical Response

- was also developed in the 1970's. TPR is 'natural' method developed by psychologist James Asher based on the observation that children learn in stress-free environments by responding physically to commands before they start speaking. Asher made clear that TPR should be used in association with other methods and teaching techniques.
The method was built around the coordination of speech and action – TPR tries to teach language through physical activity. Asher believed also that if a method is undemanding and involves game like functions, this creates a positive mood in the learners, facilitating learning.
- While the first role of the students is to listen and perform, they are encouraged to speak when they feel ready. Gesture, use of voice, and mime are very important.
- TPR techniques are used within a variety of current approaches and methods and are effective and fun, e.g., for Kids' language instruction. Stephen Krashen's hypotheses on language acquisition reinforced TPR and Asher's claim that what you understand you will later produce automatically.