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## **Language Teaching Methods**

### **Introduction:**

In order to develop an approach in the language teaching domain, one needs to refer back to the different previous movements that have paved the way to the emergence of current teaching approaches and methods.

What do the terms approach/ method refer to?

In what way can we benefit from research findings in the domain of language teaching and learning to decide on the appropriate approach, method, technique?

### **Definition of Approach/ Method/ Technique**

In the period extending from mid 1880's and mid 1980's, language teaching witnessed a constant quest for the most suitable teaching method that successfully teach learners a foreign language.

Historically, language teaching described a series of methods; each was abandoned as a new one took its place.

Edward Anthony, 1963, provided a definition that has withstood the test of time.

For him, the term "method" is the second of three hierarchical elements, namely approach method and technique.

The term approach, on the other hand, refers to a set of assumptions (beliefs) dealing with the nature of language, the nature of learning and teaching.

- A method is an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based on a selected approach and a technique is the specific activity which takes place in the classroom, that is consistent with a method and therefore in harmony with an approach.

### **Method Redefined**

In 1982, 1986 Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers reformulated of the concept of "method". Anthony's approach, method, and technique were renamed respectively as approach, design, and procedure with a superordinate term to describe this three step process, now called "method".

According to Richards and Rodgers, a method is "an umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice." (1985: 154)

An approach is assumptions, beliefs and theories about the nature of language and language learning.

A design is the relationship of the theories to classroom materials and activities including six important features:

- Objectives
- Syllabus (criteria for selection and organization of linguistic and subject matter content)
- Activities
- Learner roles,
- teacher roles
- and the role of instructional materials

A procedure refers to the techniques and practices that are derived from the approach and the design.

### **The Grammar Translation Method**

For so long, foreign language learning in schools was synonymous with the learning of Latin or Greek which were taught by means of what has been called the classical method, a traditional method, the indirect method, the grammar translation method.

This method focuses on:

1/ grammar rules

2/ Isolated vocabulary terms were listed for the sake of memorization.

3/ Teaching was conducted using the mother language while the foreign language was rarely used in class. Instruction focused on translating texts.

4/ Doing written exercises: followers of this method paid little attention to improving the speaking skill in their learners. The major aim behind this method was to develop a reading proficiency at the expense of communicative competence or teaching learners how to speak the target language.

Despite the existing weaknesses of this method, it is still practiced in some educational settings. It remained popular because:

- Few specialized skills were demanded on the teacher's part.
- The construction of tests about grammar and translation is easier than that of other types of tests.
- With regards to reading proficiency, this method has proved being successful.

However, it is “remembered with distastes by thousands of learners for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translation of stilted or literary prose” Richards and Rodgers (1986: 4)

In addition, as Richards and Rodgers (1986: 5) state, it has no flowers. It is a method with no theory. There are no attempts of linking it to issues of linguistics, philosophy or educational theory.

### **The Direct Method**

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the direct method became known and practiced. Its major principle is that second and foreign language learning should be like first language learning with constant oral interaction and spontaneous use of the language.

Richards and Rodgers (1986: 9-10) summarized the characteristics of the direct method as:

- 1- Instruction is conducted exclusively in target language.
- 2- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught.
- 3- Oral communicative skills are developed through questions and answers between a teacher and a student in small classes.
- 4- Grammar is taught inductively (implicitly/indirectly)
- 5- Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary is taught by association of ideas.
- 6- Both speech and listening comprehension are taught.
- 7- Correct pronunciation is emphasized

This method was criticized for its weak theoretical foundations in that the comparison between the acquisition of the first and the second/third language is not always right.

### References:

Richards, Jcque and Rodgers Theodore. 1986. “Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. C.U.P