# Unit 5
## The Development of Methods and
## Approaches to Language Teaching

## *Content*

1. The grammar: translation method.

2. The direct method.

3. The Reading method.

4. The oral approach and situational language teaching.

5. The audio-lingual method.

6. The communicative approach.

7. Which method.

**Techniques, methods and approaches**

It is worthwhile discussing briefly the difference between three words which are often used when talking about TEFL: *Techniques, methods and approaches.*

When we use the words *approach* we mean that an idea or theory is being applied: that whatever the teacher does, certain theoretical principles are always borne in mind.

When we talk about a technique, we mean a procedure used in the classroom.

Finally, *a method* is a set of procedures or a collection of techniques used in a systematic way which it is hoped will result in efficient learning.

* *A technique* then is the narrowest term, meaning one single procedure.

* *A method* will consist of a number of techniques, probably arranged in a specific order.

\*    The word approach is much more general and has the implication that whatever method or techniques the teacher uses, he does not feel bound by these, but only by the theory in which he believes[1].

## 1. The Grammar – Translation Method.

The grammar translation method is derived from the teaching of classical language: Latin and Greek. It prevailed in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) list the principle characteristics of the method as follows:

1. Grammar translation is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language.

2. Reading and writing are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening.

3. Vocabulary selection is based solely on the reading texts used, and words are taught through bilingual word lists, dictionary study, and memorization[2].

4. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice[3].

5. Accuracy is emphasised. Students are expected to attain high standards in translation.

6. Grammar is taught deductively – that is, by presentation and study of grammar rules, which are then practised through translation exercises[4].

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[1] (Hubbard, et al, 1985, p. 30-1).

[2] In a typical Grammar – Translation text, the grammar rules are presented and illustrated, a list of vocabulary items are presented with their translation equivalents, and translation exercises are prescribed

[3] Much of the lesson is devoted to translating sentences into and out of the target language, and it is this focus on the sentence that is a distinctive feature of the method

[4] In most Grammar – Translation texts, a syllabus was followed for the sequencing of grammar points throughout a text, and there was an attempt to teach grammar in an organized and systematic way

7.  The students' native language is the medium of instruction. It is used to explain new items and to enable comparisons to be made between the foreign language and the student's native language (pp. 3-4).

**Evaluation.**

Teachers find the grammar – translation method less demanding and it can be used with larger groups of classes.

*   The teacher simply sets the class a written exercise.

*   Students listen, copy, write exercises and correct their own mistakes in class as the teacher discusses the correct forms of the language exercises.

*   The teacher finds it easy to make tests similar to the exercises done in class and to assign grades for them.

*   The teacher is not expected to be highly professional since he follows the textbook page by page.

The main defects of the method are:

*   students are trained to use old-fashioned and artificial forms of language, many of little practical use.

*   Students have to work very hard on laborious and monotonous vocabulary learning, translation and endless written exercises, but with little or no opportunity to express themselves.

*   The method, in other words, neglects communication skills and the use of language to express one's own meaning.

**2. The Direct Method.**

The direct method, which became popular in the early years of the 20th century, came as a reaction to the grammar – translation method. It emphasied the

effective use of language rather than the intellectual analysis of the grammar – translation method.

*   The direct method lays much stress on aural – oral skills.

*   Speech is introduced first, and reading and writing are deferred to a later stage so that the written forms of language will not confuse the students in the initial stages.

*   Reading materials are introduced when students have already discussed them orally.

*   The teacher prepares the students for a reading text through an oral presentation of new words and phrases.

*   Then texts are read aloud by the teacher and the students.

*   The students learn to infer meanings of unknown elements from the context rather than by using bilingual vocabulary list. When students cannot discover the meaning in this way, the teacher gives explanations in the language by using pictures and gestures.

Meaning is conveyed directly through the use of demonstrations, gestures, mime, and actions, and an association is established between the forms and meanings of language. Statements and questions are learnt by the use of actions, and students repeat both the language model and the action[1].

Students' comprehension is tested by questioning and discussion in the target language and not be means of translation exercises.

Students learn to write the language first by transcription, then by writing summaries of what they have read or discussed orally, then by writing

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[1] For example, students may learn such sequences as: "I am writing my name". "I am going to the blackboard". And the teacher may ask questions like: "where are you going?" "where is he going?"! where did you go?"

compositions. They learn grammar through intensive practice in an inductive way[1].

The target language is used all the time in speech and in writing. Students are supposed to create a direct bond between written words and their associations without the use of translation into the native language. However, the teacher may use native language translation as a last resort[2].

**Evaluation.**

\*    The direct method provides and exciting and interesting way of learning through activity without the use of the mother tongue.

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[1] (*Students have just read a text about Mrs. Black and can see a picture in the book.*)
Teacher: Right! Now, Mrs. Black is in the supermarket. She's shopping. She's got a trolley. What's in it? Lots of things.
Listen!
*She's got some butter. She hasn't got any sugar.*
*She's got some butter. She hasn't got any sugar.*
*Some butter... any sugar. Some butter... any sugar.*
*Some... any. Some...any.*
How do we use these words? Listen again!
*She's got some bread. She hasn't got any tea.*
*She's got some butter. She hasn't got any sugar.*
Let's see if you can do it. Marios! Butter.
Marios:  She's got some butter.
Teacher: Good!
Theresa! Tea.
Theresa: She hasn't got some tea.
Teacher: Um… Is that right?
Anna: No!
She hasn't got any tea.
Teacher: Good, Anna. Again, Theresa!
Theresa: She hasn't got any tea.
Teacher: Good! Now, when do we use some and when do we use any?
Well, let's look at it like this.
(He writes sentences on the blackboard.)
She's got **some** bread.
She hasn't got **any** tea.
She's got **some** butter.
She hasn't got **any** sugar.
Do you understand this?
Students: Yes!
Teacher: Good! (Hubbard, et al, 1985, pp. 3-4)

[2] The aim here is to develop the ability to think in the new language whether in conversation, reading, writing, in learning grammar
(see supplementary, No. 5).

\*    It is more successful with infants than adolescent learners, as the latter, possess well – established native – language speech habits which are likely to interfere with the way they express themselves in their early attempts at spontaneous communication.

\*    The method requires teachers who are native speakers or those who have similar fluency in the target language. Thus, the foreign language teacher needs to be fluent and resourceful in the language to express meanings in different ways without the use of his mother tongue.

As an attempt to counteract the defects of the direct method, teachers used a modified version of it.

\*    They used the native language when it became difficult to explain the meaning of words and phrases by the use of sketches or gestures.

\*    They also used some translation exercises of words and phrases as a check on the comprehension of students.

\*    They also reintroduced some functional grammatical explanations in the native language while retaining the inductive approach; They added more practice in grammatical structure with the use of substitution tables.

This sort of a modified direct approach reflects the tendency to be eclectic when using a particular method of teaching.

## 3. The Reading Method.

Dissatisfaction with the direct method led to the emergence of the reading method.

In the reading method,

\*    new forms of the language were taught through direct apprehension of meaning without a conscious effort to translate what students were reading.

*   A focus was placed on developing silent reading and increasing individual reading rates.

*   Frequency word-counts were graded to conform to certain levels of achievement.

*   The introduction of new vocabulary was carefully controlled.

*   Basic word lists were grouped around themes of interest and were based on levels of frequency.

It was believed that students could read easily if they were trained in correct pronunciation, comprehension of uncomplicated spoken language, and the use of simple speech patterns[1]. Then, students could read a loud to comprehend and hear the text mentally as they were reading silently[2].

## 4. The Oral Approach ad Situational Language Teaching.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) list the main characteristics of the approach as follows:

1.  Language teaching begins with the spoken language. Material is taught orally before it is presented in written form.

2.  The target language is the language of the classroom.

3.  New language points are introduced and practised situationally.

4.  Vocabulary selection procedures are followed to ensure that an essential general service vocabulary is covered.

5.  Items of grammar are graded following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones.

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[1] (Palmer and Redman, 1932).

[2] This oral approach to reading was similar to the direct method. This made it possible for teachers of the direct method to accept such an approach
(see Supplementary No. 6).

6. Reading and writing are introduced once a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established (p. 34)[1].


**Theoretical Basis.**

The situational language teaching method is based on the structuralist approach to language teaching which puts much emphasis on language forms.

* Speech is considered basic, and the mastery of the structures of language is viewed as being at the heart of speaking ability[2].

* The situational language teaching method is also based on the behaviourist theory of learning which sees language learning as habit formation.

* The syllabus on which the situational language teaching method is based is a structural syllabus which contains a list of the basic structures and sentence patterns of English arranged according to their level of presentation.

* Structures are taught within sentences, and vocabulary is chosen to enable sentence patterns to be taught.

A typical structural syllabus around which the situational method is based is provided by Frisby (1957, P. 134);

| Sentence pattern | Vocabulary |
|---|---|
| 1st lesson this is …. | Book, pencil, ruler, desk. |
| That is… | Chair, picture, door. |
| 2nd. Lesson These are .. | Window. |
| those are … | Watch, box, pen. |

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[1] During the 1960s, the key feature of the approach was its third principle, and term situational was used to refer to the oral approach. Hornby (1950) used the term "the situational approach". Later the term "structural situational approach" and "situational language teaching" came into common usage. The term Situational Language Teaching will be used here to cover the structural situational and oral approaches
[2] Thus, students are given controlled sentence patterns to be practised in various situations.

| 3rd lesson Is this ..? yes it is<br><br>is that…? Yes it is. | Blackboard. |
|---|---|

**Classroom Techniques.**

The situational method presents new sentence patterns and structures of language through situations which help demonstrate the meanings of language items, such as concrete objects, pictures, and realia[1].

The lesson proceeds through stages.

*   In the presentation stage, the teacher sets up the model of the new sentences for the students to repeat. He, then becomes a skilful manipulator who uses questions and comments and other cues to elicit correct sentences from the learners.

*   During the practice stage, the teacher gives the students more opprtunity to use the language in less controlled situations, but takes note of students mistakes which might form the basis of subsequent lessons.

*   The learners listen and repeat after the teacher during the initial stages of learning.

*   Later, more active participation is encouraged through learners initiatives and through questions.

*   In situational language teaching grammar is taught in an inductive way.

*   Words and structures are not explained in either the native or the target language, but induced from the way they are used in situations. These are extended to other situations of generalisations.

Classroom procedures used in this method may vary according to the level of the class. However, at all levels, these procedures aim to move from controlled to

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[1] The techniques employed consist of guided repetition and substitution activities, chorus repetition, dictation, drills, and controlled oral-based reading and writing tasks.

free practice of structures and from oral use of sentence patterns to their use in speech and writing.

## 5. The Audio – Lingual Method.

The audio – lingual method developed out of the oral approach (aural – oral approach or structural approach as it was called) which puts much emphasis on correct pronunciation and grammar. It came as a reaction to the direct method and reading method which were found to be unsuccessful for real life communication.

In linguistics, this approach to the study of language took the form  of a descriptive analysis of language forms. It was the combination of the structural linguistic principles and procedures of the aural-oral approach with the insights of the behaviourist psychology that resulted in the aduio – lingual approach.

### Theoretical Basis.

The audio-lingual method is based on a theory of language known as structural linguistics[1]

In structural linguistics, speech is language. In other words, language is oral since we learn to speak before we learn to read or write. Thus, speech has top priority in language teaching. This scientific approach to language analysis laid the foundation for a scientific approach to language teaching[2].

The method also derives from a theory of learning known as behavioural psychology. Learning, according to this theory, is a mechanical process of habit

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[1] This is a scientific approach to the study of the elements of language (phonemes, morphemes, words, structures, sentence types) through actual examples of language use. To learn a language it is essential to know these elements and the rules by which they are combined

[2] Moulton (1961) proclaimed the linguistic principles on which language teaching methodology should be based. These were: "language is speech not writing… a language is a set of habits… teach the language not about the language… a language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say… languages are different"

formation and proceeds by frequent reinforcement of stimulus and response sequences.

Among the more central learning principles of the audio-lingual method are the following:

1.  Foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation.

2.  Language skills are learned more effectively if the items to be learned in the target language are presented in spoken form before they are seen in written form.

3.  Analogy provides a better foundation for language learning than analysis. Analogy involves the process of generalisation and discrimination.

4.  The meanings that the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context not in isolation[1].

**Objectives of the Method.**

The audio-lingual method aims at developing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The method has short-range and long-range objectives. Short-range objectives include training in listening comprehension, accurate pronunciation and control of the structure of language…. Etc. Long-range objectives aim at the same mastery of the language that native speakers have.

**Classroom Techniques.**

In the early stages of learning, the audio-lingual method focuses on oral skills with gradual attention being paid to other skills as learning develops. Listening comprehension, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary are all taught to develop

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[1] (Rivers, 1964, pp. 19-22).

oral fluency. When reading and writing are introduced, students read and write what they have already practised[1].

## 6. The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach evolves around two aims: the teaching of language use, and the teaching of language in realistic situations. The approach aims primarily at communicative competence in the learners and developing procedures for teaching the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. Thus, both grammatical and functional meanings are stressed with more emphasis on the latter.

## 1. Classroom Procedures.

Littlewood (1981) presents the following methodological procedures that underlie the communicative activities:

**Pre-communicative activities:**

1. Structural activities.

2. Social interaction activities.

**Communicative activities:**

1. Functional communicative activities.

2. Social interaction activities.

In pre-communicative activities, the teacher isolates linguistic elements of language and provides the learners with opportunities to practise these elements in isolation through quasi-communicative activities such as drills or question-

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[1] (see supplementary No. 7).

and-answer practice. The emphasis here is on the production of accurate responses.

In communicative activities, the learners activate their pre-communicative knowledge of the language to use them in real communicative situations.

Littlewood distinguishes between (functional communication activities" and "social interaction" activities[1].

Text-based, task-based and realia materials are designed to support communicative language classes.

Task-based activities include exercise handbooks and pair-communication practice[2].

Realia materials aim at providing authenticity in the classroom. Such materials can include:

* signs,

* magazines,

* advertisements,

* newspapers,

* graphic, and

* visual sources.

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[1] Functional communication activities include such tasks as:
* learners comparing sets of pictures.
* noting similarities and differences,
* discovering missing features in a map or picture,
* solving problems from shared clues,
* Following directions.
 Social interaction activities include.
* conversation and discussion,
* dialogues and role plays,
* simulations, and
* debates

[2] In pair-communication materials, there are two sets of materials. Each set contains different kinds of information and partners must fit the required information into a composite whole. Other activities assume different role relationship for partners (an interviewer and an interviewee)

The communicative approach assigns a more active role for the learners to play in the classroom than traditional methods of teaching[1]. They are expected to interact with each other as well as with the teacher. Success or failure in communication is the joint responsibility of both the speaker and the teacher.

**Teacher's roles:**

The teacher's role in the communicative approach is mainly to

\*     facilitate the communication process in the classroom.

\*     act as an organizer of resources and as a guide to classroom activities.

\*     assume the role of an active participant within the group.

   The teacher also assumes other roles as needs analyst, counsellor, and group process manager.

\*     As a need analyst, the teacher is responsible for determining and responding to learners' need such as their learning goals, their leaning style, and their learning motivation for studying the language.

\*     As a counsellor, the teacher is expected to play the role of an effective communicator seeking to paraphrase, confirm, and evaluate students contributions.

\*     As a group manager, the teacher is responsible for organising the classroom as a setting for communicative activities.

\*     During this process, the teacher monitors and encourages communicative practice.

\*     He points out alternatives and assists groups in self-correction and discussion.

   To develop real communication,

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[1] (see Supplementary No. 8).

\*   the teacher should show interest in and concern for the activities of the students.

\*   He should prepare activities based on students' experience of everyday life and communication needs as topics for motivating the study of conversation.

\*   He should share the students' feelings and thoughts and encourage openness in social atmosphere[1].


## 7. Which Approach:

ELT methodology witnessed a transition change from traditional grammar-translation methodology to audio-lingual teaching, to cognitive code-learning theory, and then to the communicative approach. Various teaching techniques were used to reflect these changes[2].

What tends to be said is simply that the choice of a particular method will ultimately depend on the different goals of language teaching. A formal approach is needed when attention is being paid to the mastery of linguistic features. On the other hand, an informal approach is required when the focus of attention is on natural language use[3].

And this essentially is where matters stand. Thus it must be noted that the introduction of a certain approach into the classroom will largely depend on the policy of the educational system regarding the role that a second or a foreign

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[1] It is in such an atmosphere that the relationships between the teacher and the students become stronger and their communication more genuine.

[2] You may have noticed that some of the methods discussed above focus on the learning of grammatical structures and vocabulary. The communicative approach, which has become much in vogue nowadays, acknowledges that structures and vocabulary are important, but communication will be inadequate if only these are taught. Students need to learn how to use linguistic items in spontaneous conversation

[3] For this reason, Ellis (1984) suggests one should not evaluate the various approaches in absolute terms but only relatively:
A 'bad" approach is one that offers formal interactions when informal ones are required and vice-versa; a 'good' approach is one that offers interactions of the type the learner expects to take part in real life. (p. 201)

language is supposed to play in the community. It would be misleading, for example, to introduce an informal approach into an educational system which favours the formal approach where the emphasis of the examination papers is on the "usage" rather than the "use" of the language.

At any rate, no matter what the policy is, and no matter, what approach is being adopted, it has seemed to all commentators, and broadly speaking I agree, that the logic of teaching a foreign language is to emphasise both "usage" and "use" with the latter given first priority.

It is clear, then, that a great deal of emphasis should be placed on the use of language for communicative meaningful interaction in a way similar to what happens in natural discourse. To enable natural discourse to happen in the classroom, Hasan (1988) argues for the incorporation of discourse skills which will focus on the process if interaction for real communicative purposes as part of teaching activities[1].

It is necessary that participants express themselves freely in natural discourse. Teachers should be trained to be flexible, to respond to the interests and questions of their students, and to give students the freedom to initiate and participate in the on-going communication.

It is essential, therefore, that, the teacher's traditional role be change. He should not act as a controller but as a manager or supervisor of classroom discourse. "His major aim should be to teach students how to process and use the language naturally"[2].

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[1] Thus Hasan (1988) argues:
the fundamental problem in ELT, then, is to enable natural discourse to happen. It is typically presumed that such discourse ought only to happen under circumstances in which the teacher retains control both of the content of the lesson, and on a different level, of the management of the class. And it is typically recognised that the simultaneous maintenance of naturalness and control is so difficult that it is almost a contradiction (pp. 247-248)

[2] Hasan (1988) suggests that this can be done in two ways:
One is an alteration in the quantity of questions, the other is an alteration in their quality. Both will result in alteration of teacher role. Fewer questions ought to mean less teacher direction and therefore.... student control. A difference in quality ought, equally, to alter the balance and type of student talk. Wh-questions, famously, demand longer answers... Referential questions, to take an obvious example, invite real information, and at least for the moment, relinquish control (p. 252)

**The Eclectic Approach.**

The methods and approaches discussed above might work in some situations but not in others. Dedicated teachers need, therefore, to examine new approaches and a mixture to techniques drawn from several approaches in classroom situations. This eclectic approach has long been recommended by giants of the language teaching profession as Henry Sweet and Harold Plamer[1].

A teacher working on an eclectic approach therefore tries to use all the best techniques of all the well-known methods in his classroom procedures[2].

Eclectic teachers change their methods to suit particular types of learners and to meet the objectives of the course. They are expected to be imaginative, energetic, willing to experiment in order to make their lessons interesting and to use a variety of techniques.

Having discussed the various methods and approaches to teaching English in some details, it is now time to consider the applications of such methodology in teaching specific language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is to these skills that we now turn in the following units.

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[1] Palmer (1921), for instance, calls for a multiple line of approach in which a variety of techniques from different approaches can be applied in classroom situation: Palmer says:
We use each and every method, process, exercise, drill, or device which may further use in our immediate purpose and bring us nearer to our ultimate goal; we adopt every good idea and leave the door open for all future developments; we reject nothing except useless and harmful forms of work. The multiple line of approach embodies the eclectic principle…, for it enjoins us to select judiciously and without prejudice all that is likely to help us in our work. (p. 141, quoted in Rivers, 1981, p. 55)

[2] He should, however, be a true eclecticist trying to select techniques purposefully and seek a balanced development of all four skills at all  stages, with an emphasis being placed on the early development of oral skills.

# Supplementary No. 5: The Direct Method

Richards and Rodgers (1986) list the practical principles and procedures of the Direct Method as follows:

1.      Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.

2.      Only everyday vocabulary and sentences where taught.

3.      Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression around question – and – answer exchanges between teachers and students in small intensive classes.

4.      Grammar was taught inductively.

5.      New teaching points were introduced orally.

6.      Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.

7. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.

8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasised.

These principles were followed in the teaching of oral languages as in the following guidelines:

Never translate: demonstrate.

Never explain: act.

Never make a speech: ask questions.

Never imitate mistakes: correct.

Never speak with single words: use sentences.

Never speak too much: make students speak much.

Never use the book: use your lesson plan.

Never jump around: follow your plan.

Never go too fast: keep the pace of the student.

Never speak slowly: speak normally.

Never speak too quickly: speak naturally.

Never speak too loudly: speak naturally.

Never be impatient: take it easy.

This overemphasis on oral practice distorts the similarities between naturalistic first language learning and classroom foreign language learning. Spoken materials of the direct method are based on artificial spoken sentences not related to realistic use of language. They are connected with the situation of the class. Students never practice the use of language to perform actual acts of communication: how to buy a ticket, to use a telephone, to ask for directions, and other things related to the real life beyond the classroom

# Supplementary No. 6: The Reading Method

Written exercises were intended to help students remember vocabulary and structures essential to the comprehension of the text. Grammar was taught to help readers with quick recognition of certain verb forms, tenses, negatives, and other modifications, though it was not necessary that students produce such features. Only rudimentary basic elements of grammar were to be taught at this stage.

In the classroom, the reading method usually begins with an oral phase. In the initial stages, students become accustomed to listening to the sound system of the language and to listening and speaking in simple phrases. This introductory stage to the sound system of language will assist learners to read. After students read the text, they are given oral practice in association with the text. This can take the form of question and answer on the text.

The course is divided into intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading takes place under the teacher's supervision and is more analytic. It provides practice in grammar, vocabulary and reading complete sentences. Students are required to infer the meaning of unknown words from the context without the use of translations. The teacher then will be able to check the comprehension of his students by the use of questions and not by translation. In extensive reading students work alone on extracts of passages graded according to their level of difficulty.

The students read with an appreciation of the target language and its culture. They may be given some projects to read about the background of the country in which the target language is spoken.

**Evaluation.**

The reading method increases the ability of the good learners to read, but it can be frustrating for students who have reading difficulty. Extensive reading gives the students the opportunity to progress at their own rate; but if not controlled, extensive reading can lead to satisfaction with quantity rather than quality, where students follow the development of thoughts of a reading passage rather than the details.

The reading method produced students who were not able to communicate orally and use the language for real life purposes beyond the simplest way of saying things. Closer contact between nations after world way II made it clear that the reading method was not enough if language was meant to be used beyond the personal level. National interests demanded that oral communication be taught as a basic goal of language teaching. New approaches were required to meet such demands.

# Supplementary No. 7: The Audio-Lingual Method

Audio-lingual classroom practices consist of dialogues and drills. Key structures of language are contextualised and illustrated through dialogues to be repeated and memorised. After a dialogue has been memorised, specific grammatical patterns and features of the language such as pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation are selected for practice exercises. Various kinds of drills such as repetition, inflection, replacement, restatement, completion, etc can be used to practise language structure. A tightly structured approach to the presentation of new language items is used in an attempt to avoid making mistakes.

Students textbooks are not used in the early stages of the course because the printed word may distract the learners from the oral input. Instead, the learners are primarily listening, repeating, and responding to instructions mainly extracted from the teacher's book. Students' textbooks, which provide dialogues and cues for drills and exercises are introduced to the learners at a later stage.

Access to a language laboratory, tape recorders and audio-visual equipment should be made available in an audio-lingual course. In some cases, accurate models for dialogues and drills are provided by the tape recorder. It provides further drill work to classroom practice.

According to the behaviourist theory, learners are viewed as organisms that can be directed to produce correct responses. Thus, teaching focuses on the external aspects of learning rather than on the internal processes. Learners play a reactive role by responding to the stimuli and are not encouraged to initiate interaction.

Like the situational approach, the teacher's role in the aduio-lingual method in central. The teacher presents models of language, controls the direction of learning and monitors and corrects learners' performance. It is through such

active interaction between the teacher and the learners that language is learned. Language failure results from the improper application of the method, from the teacher not providing sufficient practice, or from the learners not memorising essential patterns and structures, but the method itself is perfect

Brooks (1964) proposes the following procedures for a language teacher working on the audio-lingual method to follow:

1.    Students first hear a model dialogue (either read by the teacher or on a tape) containing the key structures that are the focus of the lesson. They repeat each line of the dialogue, individually and in chorus. The teacher pays attention to pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Correction of mistakes of pronunciation, or grammar  is direct and immediate. The dialogue is memorised gradually, line by line. A line may be broken into several phases if necessary. The dialogue is read aloud in chorus, one half saying one speaker's part and the other half responding. The students do not consult their book throughout this phase.

2.    The dialogue is adapted to the students' interest or situation through changing certain key words or phrases. This is acted out by the students.

3.    Certain key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as the basis for pattern drills of different kinds. These are first practised in chorus and then individually. Some grammatical explanation may be offered at this point, but this is kept to an absolute minimum.

4.    The students may refer to their textbook, and follow up with reading, writing, or vocabulary. Activities based on the dialogue may be introduced. At the beginning level, writing is purely imitative and consists of little more than copying out sentences that have been practised. As proficiency increases, students may write out variations of structural items they have practised or write short compositions on given topics with the help of framing questions, which will guide their use of the language.

5.      Follow up activities may take place in the language laboratory, where further dialogue and drill work is carried out.

It is clear that these procedures put much emphasis on oral drills and pattern practice. This is no surprise as audiolingualism is an oral approach to language teaching. It, therefore, involves extensive oral instructions. It can be seen that only the target language should be used. This means that translation or the use of the native language should be discouraged.


**Evaluation.**

The techniques of the audio-lingual method ensure active participation of all students. Choral group responses may protect some unsuccessful learners from the embarrassment of uttering strange sounds and phrases in front of their classmates. The techniques of the audio-lingual method do achieve success in developing comprehension and fluency in speaking very early in the target language learning process. Students learn segments of language from the beginning which can be of immediate use of communication. They, therefore, experience a sort of achievement from the beginning as they use the language at such an early stage

However, if not well exploited, the audio-lingual method trains students to repeat words and phrases in a mechanical way without being able to use them for meaningful interaction in actual communication. As Rivers (1981) states:


> If audio-lingual training is given in a mechanical way,
> students may progress like well-trained parrots-able to
> repeat whole utternces perfectly when given a certain
> stimulus, but uncertain of the meaning of what they are
> saying and unable to use memorized materials in contexts
> other than those in which they have learned them. Students

must be trained from the first lesson to apply what they have momorized or practised in drills in communication situations contrived within the classroom group (.p 47)

The audio-lingual method appears to be appropriate for younger children who are good at mimicry and acting out roles through activity rather than explanations of rules.

*       The less talented students get on well with this method which does require abstraction and the inductive use of grammar. They are involved within the group in a process of mimicry repetition of utterances, and manipulation of structures

*       On the contrary, gifted students become bored before the class has had enough practice. These students should be encouraged to use the language for personal expression beyond the confines of pattern practice. Thus, Rivers (1981) states:

> Techniques of memorization and drilling can become tedious and boring, causing fatigue and distaste on the part of the student. A successful application of the audio-lingual method requires inventiveness and resourcefulness on the part of the teacher, who must be continually alert to opportunities to vary the presentation of material and to force the students into interesting situations where they will fell a spontaneous desire to express themselves through what they have learned (p. 47)

*       The audio-lingual method lays great demands on the teacher who must have near-native articulation and intonation in modelling utterances for

classroom practice. Recorded models should be used when the teacher lacks this ability

*   The teacher is supposed to be resourceful and energetic to keep oral practice moving smartly and to set up situations for practice in the classroom. The teacher will find it difficult to give a number of parallel classes during the same day without being exhausted. In this sort of situation, the teacher is advised to introduce reading and writing activities to maintain the same level of energy over a number of hours in the day

It should be noted that there are some similarities between Situational Language Teaching and the Audio-lingual Method. They are similar in the order in which language skills are introduced, in their focus on accuracy through drills, and in their focus on practice patterns. These similarities reflect similar views about the nature of language and of language learning However, they are derived from different traditions. Indeed, the situational language teaching developed out of the direct method, and did not have strong ties to linguistics and behavioural psychology on which the audio-lingual method is based.

The audio-lingual method was widely used during the 1960s in the teaching of foreign languages in the United States. In the mid-sixties, it was then criticised on two accounts:

First, its theoretical foundations were found to be unsound both in terms of language theory and learning theory, and second it fell short of providing the learners with the skills necessary for real communication outside the classroom.

The decline of the audio-lingual method started with the changes in American Linguistic theory in the sixties. Chomsky (1966) rejected the sturcturalist approach to language description as well as the behaviourist theory of language learning that underlie the audio-lingual method. According to Chomsky, "language is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistic behaviour characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy". (P. 153)

Chomsky proposed a theory of transformational grammar which sees the properties of language derive from innate aspects of the mind and how human beings process experience through language. Thus, the mental properties of people bear on language use and language learning.

Chomsky also rejected the behaviourist approach to language learning. He believes that most language use is not immitated but created from underlying rules and generated from the learners' underlying competence. Such a critical view led him to question pattern practice, drilling and memorization, as these led to language-like behaviours but not to language competence. Thus, abstract mental processes in learning became the focus of a cognitive language learning theory.

The decline of Audiolingualism in language teaching in the United States has resulted in a period of innovation and confusion. New methods developed independently of current linguistic and second language learning theories (e.g. Total Physical Response, Silent way, Counseling-Learning). Also competing approaches derived from contemporary theories of language and second language acquisition have resulted in the Natural Approach and Communicative Language Teaching.

Finally it should be mentioned that "the cognitive method has not yet been critically examined" (Stern, 1983, P. 469). It has been overshadowed by the increasing interest in communicative approaches in the 1980s to which we now turn.

# Supplementary No. 8: The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach has its origin in the changes which occurred in the British language teaching tradition in the late 1960s. It was believed that the structural theory of language was incapable of capturing the creativity and the uniqueness of individual sentences, and the functional and communicative potential of a language. There was a need therefore to focus on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structure. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) compare the audio-lingual method and the communicative approach (they call it functional – notional approach) as follows:

| Audio-Lingual Method | Functional-Notional Methodology |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Attends to Structure and form more than meaning. | Meaning is paramount. |
| 2. Demands memorization of structure – based dialogues. | Dialogues, if used, center around communicative functions and are not normally memorized. |
| 3. Language items are not necessarily contextualised. | Contextualization is a basic premise. |
| 4. Language learning is learning structures, sound or words. | Language learning is learning to communicate. |
| 5. Mastery, or "over-learning" is sought. | Effective communication is sought. |
| 6. Drilling is a central technique | Drilling may occur, but peripherally. |

| Audio-Lingual Method | Functional-Notional Methodology |
|---|---|
| 7. Native-speaker like pronunciation is sought. | Comprehensible pronunciation is sought. |
| 8. Grammatical explanation is avoided. | Any device which helps the learner is accepted — varying according to their age, interest, etc. |
| 9. Communicative activities only come after a long process of rigid drills and exercises. | Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning. |
| 10. The use of the student's native language is forbidden. | Judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible. |
| 11. Translation is forbidden at early levels. | Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it. |
| 12. Reading and writing are deferred till speech is mastered. | Reading and writing can start from the first day, if desired. |
| 13. The target linguistic system will be learned through the overt teaching of the patterns of the system. | The target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate. |
| 14. Lingustic competence is the desired goal. | Communicative competence is the desired goal (i.e., the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately). |
| 15. Varieties of language are recognized but not emphasised. | Linguistic variation is a central concept in materials and |

| Audio-Lingual Method | Functional-Notional Methodology |
|---|---|
| | methodology. |
| 16. The sequence of units is determined solely by principles of linguistic complexity. | Sequencing is determined by any consideration of content, function, or meaning which maintains interest. |
| 17. The teacher controls the learners and prevents them from doing anything that conflicts with the theory. | Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language. |
| 18. Language is habit "so errors must be prevented at all costs". | Language is created by the individual often through trial and error. |
| 19. Accuracy, in terms of formal correctness, is the primary goal. | Fluent and acceptable language is the primary goal: accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context. |
| 20. Students are expected to interact with the language system, embodied in machines or controlled materials. | Students are expected to interact with people, either in the flesh, through pair ad group work, or in their writings. |
| 21. The teacher is expected to specify the language that students are to use. | The teacher cannot know exactly what language students will use. |
| 22. Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in the structure of the language. | Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated by the language. |

It appears then that the communicative approach does not claim to overturn all the traditional procedures, but it puts more emphasis on certain techniques which develop the fluency and communicative ability of the learners. The points listed above (nos – 7,9,13,14,18,19,20,21) encourage fluency work. It is this aspect of fluent oral communication that the communicative approach is primarily concerned with. Encouraging students to talk is therefore a major goal of the communicative approach. Students are also encouraged to concentrate on the message rather than the linguistic items of the language.

Students are allowed to make mistakes and use the language in meaningful situations as people do in informal environments. Errors should be tolerated as far as they do not interfere with the interpretation of the message. It is believed that teacher's emphasis on accurate responses can impede fluency work.

The teacher might however provide special sessions for correction of widely used errors. The teacher should ensure that correct models of language are presented for fluency practice. Without such models and opportunity for correction, fluency work might be at risk of becoming a pidgin language, and learners run the risk of learning weak-English forms.

In short, the most distinguished features of the communicative approach are its emphasis on communication and contextual factors in language use and learner –centred and experience-based view of ($L_2$) teaching.

**Theoretical Basis.**

The theoretical foundation for the communicative approach lies partly in the linguistic philosophy of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) who formulated the Speech Act theory which relates language use to intentions of the interlocutors. It also lies partly in the sociosemantic view of language which regards meanings as the main principle of language design.

The communicative approach in language teaching derives from a theory of language as communication. Its major aim is to develop "communicative competence" rather than the abstract grammatical knowledge of the language. It is through the study of language in use that the functions of language are brought into focus. The communicative approach rests on the belief that language is learned when the learner becomes involved in real communication where he uses the language rather than analyses it for later use. However, the approach assumes that the learner knows something about the language and should acquire a reasonable basic knowledge of the phonological, grammatical, and lexical systems of the language and the ability to use these in communication. Learning activities are designed to help the learners encode ore decode the message in a communication act either in listening, speaking, reading or writing

The communicative approach takes the sociolinguistic factors into consideration. It recognises the fact that the social roles and the psychological attitudes of the learners towards each other (teacher – pupil, doctor–patient, etc) and the topic of conversation determine the appropriateness of the oral message.

In addition, the communicative approach makes use of the basic principles of the psychological sciences as factors in learning the target language. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) list the following psychological principles:

*   Learning generally results when unit and program content and activities are related to the needs and experiences of the learners.

*   Student motivation is of primary importance in acquisition of knowledge and skills.

*   Learning is enhanced when presentation and practice of language items are made meaningful through their use in real life (or even simulated) situations.

*   Students should be heleped to perceive the relationships among the elements in language, situation, and culture through simple diagrams, graphics, and visuals of all kinds.

\*      Activities in the classroom should take into consideration the fact that all individuals have different learning styles (listening, listening and reading, writing, etc) and different rates of learning.

More recently, theories of language learning underlying the communicative approach have been derived from second language acquisition research. These theories consider the roles of linguistic, social, cognitive, and individual variables are basic in language acquisition. Krashen's distinction between acquisition and learning is a major theoretical foundation. Acquisition which takes place at the subconscious level is a basic process for developing language proficiency and is distinguished from learning which takes place at the conscious level. Language learning results from using language communicatively at the subconscious level