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## **TRADITIONAL AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS**

There are several ways of reaching the goal of foreign language competence and teachers need to be aware of a range of methods in order to find the one most appropriate to the learner's needs and circumstances, and to the objectives of the course. Each method is based on a particular view of language learning, and usually recommends the use of a specific set of techniques and materials, which may have to be implemented in a fixed sequence.

Several classifications of teaching methods have been made and certain traditional methods are widely recognized because of their influential role in the history of ideas surrounding this subject.

One of the traditional methods is the grammar translation method. It derives from the traditional approach to the teaching of Latin and Greek, which was particularly influential in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is based on the meticulous analysis of the written language, in which translation exercises, reading comprehension and the written imitation of texts play a primary role. Learning mainly involves the mastery of grammatical rules and memorization of long lists of literary vocabulary, related to texts which are chosen more for their prestigious content than for their interest or level of linguistic difficulty. There is little emphasis laid on the activities of listening or speaking.

This method dominated early work in modern language teaching. A minority still find its intellectual discipline appealing; but the vast majority of teachers now recognize that the method does little to meet the spoken language needs and interests of today's language students.

The direct method, also known as the oral or natural method, is based on the active involvement of the learner in speaking and listening to the foreign language in

realistic everyday situations. No use is made of the learner's mother tongue; learners are encouraged to think in the foreign language and not to translate into or out of it. A great deal of emphasis is placed on good pronunciation, often introducing students to phonetic transcription before they see the standard orthography. Formal grammatical rules and terminology are avoided.

The direct method continues to attract interest and enthusiasm, but it is not an easy approach to use in school. In the artificial environment of the classroom it is difficult to generate natural learning situations and to provide everyone with sufficient practice. Several variants of the method have thus evolved. In particular, teachers often permit some degree of mother-tongue explanation and grammatical statement to avoid learners developing inaccurate fluency.

The audio-lingual or aural-oral method derives from the intensive training in spoken languages given to American military personnel during the Second World War, which resulted in a high degree of listening and speaking skill being achieved in a relatively short time-span. The emphasis is on everyday spoken conversation, with particular attention being paid to natural pronunciation: structural patterns in dialogue about everyday situations are imitated and drilled (first in choral speech, then individually) until the learner's responses become automatic. There is a special focus on areas of structural contrast between the first and the second languages. There is little discussion of grammatical rules. Language work is first heard, then practiced orally, before being seen and used in written form.

The method can instill considerable conversational fluency in a learner and was widely used, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. Its reliance on drills and habit-formation makes it less popular today, especially with learners who wish for a wider range of linguistic experience, and who feel the need for more creative work in speech production [4].

During the 1970s there was a widespread reaction against methods that stressed the teaching of grammatical forms and paid little or no attention to the way language is used in everyday situations. A concern developed to make foreign language teaching "communicative", by focusing on learners' knowledge of the

functions of language, and on their ability to select appropriate kinds of language for use in specific situations.

Increased interest was shown in the situations themselves and in the kind of language the learner would be likely to meet. "Situational syllabuses" aimed to recreate these situations and to teach the various linguistic activities involved, such as requesting, thanking, complaining and instructing.

"Notional" (or "functional") syllabuses provided a major alternative to the emphases of formal language teaching. Here, the content of a course is organized in terms of the meanings ("notions") learner require in order to communicate in particular functional contexts. Major communicative notions include the linguistic expression of time, duration, frequency, sequence, quantity, location and motion. Major communicative functions include evaluation, persuasion, emotional expression and the making of social relations.

Communicative methods have attracted universal interest, and much influenced the practice of modern foreign language teaching. But there has also been a critical reaction, as linguists and teachers encounter problems in providing a principle basis for interrelating the proposed notions and functions. Of particular importance is the need to provide learners with principles that will enable them to make a "bridge" between functional aspects of language and the correct use of formal structures. Proponents of the approach have recognized these problems, and there has been considerable discussion of the way communicative teaching might develop in the future.

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Since the 1960s several fresh approaches to foreign language learning have been devised, aiming to provide a radical alternative to traditional methods, which their proponents believe have failed. They draw attention to the success with which

people acquire more than one language all over the world, and contrast this with the limited achievements of the classroom situation, and the partial accounts of learning presented by various theories. If foreign language learning can be made more natural, and the learner made more receptive to the task, it is argued, more efficient learning will result.

One of the modern foreign language teaching methods – the silent way – was presented by Caleb Gattegno. This approach aims to provide an environment which keeps the amount of teaching to a minimum and encourages learners to develop their own way of using the language elements introduced. In the first lesson the teacher introduces a small second language vocabulary to talk about a set of colored rods, using a few verbs, adjectives, pronouns, etc., and gradually extending the length of the sentence. The aim is to help the learners to become self-reliant – to select their own sentences and be in control of them, with good intonation and rhythm. The teacher does not repeat the material or provide sentences for students to imitate; and no use is made for the learners first language. Charts containing vocabulary and color-coded guides to pronunciation are made available to enable the teacher to guide the student's learning while saying as little as possible. As students say more to each other, so the teacher says less – hence the “silent” way [2].

Another approach, community language learning (Charles A. Curran), builds on the kind of “whole person” relationship found in counseling therapy. The main aim is to foster strong personal links between the teacher / counselor and the learners, and thus to eliminate whatever is found threatening in the foreign language learning situation. There is no prepared material. The learners talk naturally in their first language, and seek from the teacher foreign language equivalents for what they want to say. The teacher provides the translation, and the students repeat it. Each session is tape recorded and is followed by a discussion with the teacher of what went on [1].

Natural approach (Tracy D. Terrell) emphasizes the role of “natural” language acquisition, and underscores the parallels between the second and the first languages. It stressed the importance of emotional rather than cognitive factors in learning and of mastering vocabulary rather than grammatical rules. There is no formal correction.

The aim is to establish an ability to understand the basic content of a communication in informal settings. Learners use their first language while their second language comprehension is developing [5].

Such method as total physical response was suggested by James J. Asher. It stressed the importance of aural comprehension as an exclusive aim in the early months of learning. The name derives from the emphasis on the actions that learners have to make, as they are given simple commands. More advanced language is introduced by building up chains of actions, using either spoken or written commands.

As a conclusion we may say that the effectiveness of the different methods remains to be thoroughly evaluated; but each has its reported success, and some have come to be widely practiced.

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