

Approach, Method, Procedure, and Techniques In Language Learning

In language teaching, in the general area of teaching methodology, people talk about approaches, methods, procedures, and techniques. The following will help to clarify the meaning of these interrelated terms and provide examples of each.

Approaches

An approach is a theory about language learning or even a philosophy of how people learn in general. They can be psychologically focused such as behaviorism or cognitivism. They can also be based on older philosophies such as idealism or realism.

Approaches are fuzzy and hard to define because they are broad in nature. An example of an approach that leads to a method would be the philosophies of scholasticism, faculty of psychology, or even perennialism. Each of these philosophies encouraged the development of the mind in the way of a muscle. Train the brain and a person would be able to do many different things. These philosophies have impacted some methods of language teaching as we will see below.

Method

A method is an application of an approach in the context of language teaching. An example of a method is the grammar-translation method. This method employs the memorization of various grammar rules and the translation of second language material to the student's native language. Students were able to develop the intellectual capacity to understand the new language through a deductive process of acquiring the rules of the language. The purpose is not to critique this method but to show how it was derived from the approach that the mind needs to be trained through intellectual exercises to be able to accomplish something.

Procedures

Procedures are the step-by-step measures to execute a method. These step-by-step measures are called techniques and will be discussed next. Common procedures for the grammar-translation method includes the following...

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1. The class reads a text written in the second language.
2. Student translates the passage from the second language to their mother tongue.
3. Student translates new words from the second language to their mother tongue.
4. Student is given a grammar rule and derived from the example they apply the rule by using the new words.
5. Student memorizes the vocabulary of the second language.
6. Student memorizes grammar rules.
7. Errors made by the student are corrected by providing the right answers.
8. This is the process (with variation) that is used when employing the grammar-translation method.

Techniques

A technique is a single activity that comes from a procedure. Anyone of the steps of the procedure list above qualifies as a technique. Naturally, various methods employ various techniques.

Conclusion

Language teaching involves approaches that lead to methods, methods that are broken down into procedures, and procedures that are a collection of techniques. Understanding how these concepts interrelate can help a teacher know the reasons behind their choices in how they choose to teach.

Approach, method and strategy

There are, and have been, many **approaches, methods, and strategies** in English teaching.

Approaches deal with general philosophies of teaching.

Methods deal with more practical nuts and bolts.

Strategies deal with specific actions.

Over the years, the objective of many teachers has changed from trying to find an ultimate "best method" to identifying compatible approaches and then deciding on strategies for actually doing what needs to be done in the classroom.

The teacher has a spectrum of roles in these methodologies ranging from language model and commander of classroom activities in systems like Grammar Translation and Total Physical Response to background facilitator and classroom colleague in Communicative Language Teaching and Dogme all the way to minimally present in the Silent Way. In a similar manner the role of the student may vary from that of passive recipient in Grammar Translation, childlike follower in Total Physical Response to active driver and decider in Dogme.

An examination of some of these methodologies may bring the reader to the conclusion that some appear counter-intuitive - not to say downright weird. While teachers should obviously view things with an open mind, a certain level of scepticism is sometimes appropriate.

It is likely that, over time, experienced teachers select whatever elements of these methodologies work for them and adapt them to their particular teaching style or students' learning style. It also seems highly probable that something which works well for one teacher (or with one student) will not work for another.

Approaches

- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
- Competency-based Language Teaching
- Content-based Instruction
- Cooperative (Collaborative) Learning
- Dogme
- Lexical Approach
- Multiple Intelligences
- Natural Approach
- Neurolinguistic programming
- Task-based language teaching
- Whole Language Approach
- Input Processing
- Methods
 - Audiolingual
 - Counseling Learning
 - Direct Method

- Grammar Translation
- Silent Way
- Situational Language Teaching
- Suggestopedia
- Total Physical Response (TPR)
- Strategies
 - Blackboard
 - Debate
 - Dialog journal
 - Field experience
 - Flowchart
 - Free writing
 - Graphic organizer
 - Group read
 - Interactive language task
 - Interview
 - Jigsaw
 - Know - want to know - learned (K-W-L)
 - Laboratory investigation
 - Language experience approach
 - Learning cycle
 - Learning log
 - Literature, history and storytelling
 - Mini-museum
 - Modeling
 - Numbered heads together
 - Predict, observe, explain
 - Problem solving
 - Reflective thinking
 - Role-play and simulation
 - Think, pair and share
 - Venn diagram
 - Webbing

Approaches

Approaches are general in nature. They involve the belief and principle underlying our methods, but are less about prescribing the specific methods. #Methods are the way we teach, approaches explain why we teach that way.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Replaced the *Situational Approach*. It was originally promoted by Howatt, et al., and more fully developed in the 1980s. CLT comes in both "strong" and "weak" forms. The intent is to capitalize on the collective intelligence of the group and give everyone a chance to grow in appreciation of diversity.

- Teacher's role: needs analyst and task designer.
- Student role: improviser and negotiator.

CLT advocates avoided prescribing a set of practices through which these principles could best be realized, thus putting CLT clearly on the approach rather than the method end of the spectrum. The assumptions are that (a) learners learn a language through using it to communicate, (b) authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities, (c) fluency is an important dimension of communication, (d) communication involves the integration of different language skills, and (e) learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. Spin-offs from Communicative language teaching include the Natural Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content-based Teaching, and Task-based Teaching.

Competency-based Language Teaching

Competency-based Language Teaching is still a very popular outcome-based approach. The focus is on measurable and usable knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). It was promoted in the 1970s by Scheck.

Content-based Instruction

Promoted originally by Krashen (1980s) but embraced by almost everybody who teaches language through content and meaning. (S. Krashen, 1982, & D. Nunan, 1989). The research on this is quite firm: teaching language for the sake of the language is not nearly as effective (when it comes to using it) as when taught as a means to an end. Its focus is on integrated skills, cooperative learning, and grouping strategies. The stress is on meaning rather than form. Its aim is to use authentic language and facilitate experiential learning. Using graphic organizers is a typical trademark of the process.

Cooperative (Collaborative) Learning

An approach credited to Olsen and Kagan. It is a part of the collaborative approach. Competition is replaced with team-based learning.

Dogme

First described by Scott Thornbury. The teacher doesn't prepare classes; merely uses whatever happens to be in the room.

Lexical Approach

In 1997, Lewis stated, "the building blocks are not grammar, functions, notions, or some other unit of planning and teaching, but lexis, that is, words and word combinations." It may have influenced Chomsky in his "lexicon-is-prime" position in his minimalist linguistic theory (using collocations/chunks).

Multiple Intelligences

This learner-based approach was brought to popularity by Gardner (1993). It stresses that all dimensions of intelligence should be developed and not just those measured by IQ tests, i.e., language and logic. Gardner states that pedagogy is most successful when learner differences are acknowledged and factored into the process.

Natural Approach

Brought to us first by Terrell (1977) and then jointly by Krashen and Terrell (1983). Their book (with classroom procedures) titled *Natural Approach* should not be confused with the older Natural Method also called the #Direct Method. The focus is on "input" rather than practice. Language is its lexicon, not its grammar. Teacher role: actor and props user. Student role: guesser and immerser.

Neurolinguistic programming

Invented in the 1970s by Grindler and Bandler it was intended to be a generalised self-help system. Subsequently widely regarded as a pseudoscience it found a home in English language teaching.

Task-based language teaching

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) was said to be a logical development of communicative language teaching (Willis, 1996). It uses real communication activities to carry out meaningful tasks, and stresses the importance of targeting these tasks to the individual student as much as possible.

Whole Language Approach

This term was coined in the 1980s by a group of U.S. educators but it wasn't until 1991 that Rigg made a firm stand against all approaches which he considered "fragmented". He said, "If language isn't kept whole, it isn't language anymore." The suggested focus is on using a tailored combination of the four modes of language (speaking, listening, writing and reading) as often as possible. Its intent is to be functional and topical.

Methods

Methods are the way we teach. #Approaches are the why we teach that way.

The 1950s through 1980s were considered the "methods" period.

Audiolingual

Dominant since the 1950s. Developed in the USA. This method is skills-based, allows no use of L1, and stresses memorization, repetition, tapes, and structure. Teacher role: language modeler & drill leader. Student role: pattern practicer and accuracy enthusiast.

Counseling Learning

From Rogerian Counseling (1951). Later by C. Curran (1970s). This method is part of the Humanistic Technique. The teacher is the coach; the students are clients.

Direct Method

Made popular by Berlitz in the 1950s, it allows only the second language, uses everyday vocabulary, and stresses pronunciation. It is used in Community Language Learning. teacher role: counselor and paraphraser; student role: collaborator and whole person.

Grammar Translation

Most popular before the 1940s. It started to be slowly replaced by the Direct Method from the early 1900s. It is still popular, however, in countries where reading is more important than communicating.

Silent Way

From Bruner (1966) to Gattegno (1990s) and referring to the teacher. Students are encouraged to produce as much as possible, to get the spirit of the language by exploring and practising it.

Situational Language Teaching

A classical oral method that gave birth to many of today's structuralist approaches. (Firth, Halliday, etc.) Language is a purposeful activity toward a goal. Stress is on meaning, content, and situations. First used in the 1930s and further developed in England in the 1950s, it is an oral approach that views language as a purposeful activity toward goals. Teacher role: context setter and error corrector. Student role: memorizer and imitator.

Suggestopedia

Started in the 1970s by Lozanov, it takes an authoritative holistic but lexical approach and uses music and ambiance. It purports to be 25 times faster than other methods. Teacher role: auto-hypnotist and authority figure. Student role: relaxer and true-believer.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

Coordinates speech and action and draws on other sciences but its speech theorems are Palmers' (1925). The idea is to repeat during the L2 learning process what was used to learn L1. It is structure-based. Teacher role: commander and action monitor. Student role: order taker and performer.

Strategies

These individual strategies might be used within any other method or approach they are frequently intended to help foster maintain creativity.

Blackboard

Blackboard (or chalkboard, whiteboard, poster board, projector etc.) is a strategy to provide visual structure during a lecture or discussion.

Debate

Debate is a cooperative learning strategy in which students organize planned presentations for various viewpoints.

Dialog journal

Dialog journal is a strategy that uses journals as a way for students and their teachers to communicate regularly and carry on a private conversation.

Field experience

Field experience is a planned learning experience in the community for students to observe, study, and participate in a real-life setting; FE uses the community as a laboratory.

Flowchart

Flowchart is a graphic organizer strategy in which students depict positioning and role relationships.

Free writing

Free writing is a strategy for encouraging students to express ideas in writing.

Graphic organizer

Graphic organizer is a visual representation of abstract concepts and processes; students transfer abstract information into a more concrete form.

Group read

Group read is sharing a reading to promote better understanding.

Interactive language task

Interactive language task is a strategy in which at least two students work together to accomplish a meaningful activity.

Interview

Interview is for honing organizational and planning skills.

Jigsaw

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy in which everyone becomes an expert and shares learning so that eventually all group members know the content. »Jigsaw

Know - want to know - learned (K-W-L)

K-W-L is an introductory strategy that provided structure for recalling what the student knows regarding a topic, noting what the student wants to know, and finally listing what has been learned and is yet to be learned. »

Laboratory investigation

Laboratory investigation is a strategy that involve students with their environment. The students propose a question, develop a hypothesis, explore methods for investigating the question, choose one of the methods, then conduct research and draw conclusions based on the information gathered.

Language experience approach

Language experience approach is a strategy in which students, as a group, describe an experience in their own words orally (using a first or second language) as the teacher records their history. The story serves as the basis for follow-up activities.

Learning cycle

Learning cycle is a sequence of lessons designed to have students engage in exploratory investigations, construct meaning out of their findings, propose tentative explanations and solutions, and relate concepts to their own understanding.

Learning log

Learning log is a strategy to develop structured writing.

Literature, history and storytelling

Literature, history and storytelling is a process for using scientists' autobiographies and biographies to connect social context to their data. History comes alive through the eyes of a scientist.

Mini-museum

Mini-museum is a strategy for creating a focused exhibit.

Modeling

Modeling is a representation of a concept: may be concrete, such as a ball-and-stick model of an atom, or abstract like a model of weather systems.

Numbered heads together

Numbered heads together is a cooperative strategy in which students work in small groups to review information.

Predict, observe, explain

Predict, observe, explain is a strategy in which the teacher shows the class a situation and asks them to predict what will happen when a change is made.

Problem solving

Problem solving is a strategy in which students apply knowledge to solve problems. This approach facilitates scientific thinking.

Reflective thinking

Reflective thinking deals with reflecting or thinking about what was learned after a specific lesson . . . an activity usually finished by writing about it.

Role-play and simulation

Role-play and simulation allow students to assume the identity of another person. Simulations further use role-playing to involve students in situations that require a group of people with two or more points of view to formulate a common decision.

Think, pair and share

Think, pair and share is a cooperative strategy to help students develop their own ideas and build on the ideas of others.

Venn diagram

Venn diagram is a graphic organizer strategy for creating a visual analysis of information representing similarities and differences between concepts, objects, etc.

Webbing

Webbing is a graphic organizer strategy that provides a visual of how words or phrases connect to a topic.