

LATEST DEVELOPMENT IN APPROACHES AND METHODS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to explore approaches and methods, both traditional and modern of language teaching and the latest development in the approaches and methods of teaching language have also been focussed. Many approaches have so far been designed in order to increase learners' ability and enhance communicative competence in English. While it is true that all these methods are being practised today, it is also true that they are not equally distributed in the classrooms. Most of the methods of teaching English have failed in achieving even minimum desirable results. There is a need to improve the methodologies of teaching English language in the present scenario. The world has moved from traditional teacher-centric instructional methodology to learner-centric interactive classroom culture. The advancement of knowledge has influenced teaching language. Due to tremendous progress in information and communication technology, the scenario of contemporary teaching techniques is entirely changed. To solve the problems of learners, a systematic approach should be followed. Teachers should adopt some innovative and effective techniques and methods to enhance their abilities.

Key words: *Method, approach, design, procedure, technique.*

Introduction

Language teaching came into its own as a profession in the twentieth century. The whole foundation of contemporary language teaching was developed during the early part of the twentieth century. Language teaching in the twentieth century was characterised by frequent change and innovation and by the development of sometimes competing language teaching ideologies. Much of the impetus for change in approaches to language teaching came about from changes in teaching methods.

As the study of teaching methods and procedures in language teaching assumed a more central role from the 1940s on, various attempts have been made to conceptualize the nature of methods and to explore more systematically the relationship between the theory and practice within a method. In describing methods, the difference between a philosophy of language teaching at the level of theory and principles, and a set of derived procedures for teaching a language, is central. In an attempt to clarify this difference, a scheme was proposed by Edward Anthony in 1963. Anthony identified three levels of conceptualization and organization, which he termed approach, method and technique. He says, "The arrangement is hierarchical. The organisational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach..."

... An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught...

...Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural. Within one approach, there can be many methods...

...A technique is implementation that which actually takes place in a classroom. It a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective.

Techniques must be consistent with the method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well" (Anthony 1963:63-67).

According to Anthony's model, approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described.

Although Anthony's original proposal has the advantage of simplicity and comprehensiveness but it fails to give sufficient attention to the nature of method itself. Richards and Rodgers have revised the original Anthony model for the discussion and analysis of approaches and methods. They modified method and technique, the primary areas of it. They consider approach and method treated at the level of design, that level in which objectives, syllabus and the content are determined and in which the roles of teachers, learners and the instructional materials are specified. The level of technique in Anthony's model is referred to by the term 'procedure'. Thus, according to them, "a method is theoretically related to an approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realized in procedure" (20). They further elaborated on the relationship between approach, design, and procedure using this framework to compare particular methods and approaches in language teaching.

In this way, approach refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serves as the source of practices and principles in language teaching. For an approach to lead to a method, a design is developed for an instructional system. Design is the level of method analysis in which Richards and Rodgers consider, (a) what the objectives of a method are; (b) how language content is selected and organised within the method; (c) the types of learning tasks and teaching activities the method advocates; (d) the roles of learners; (e) the roles of teachers; and (f) the role of instructional materials. The last level of conceptualization and organization within a method is procedure. This encompasses the actual moment to moment techniques, practices, and behaviours that operate in teaching a language according to a particular method. It is the level at which they describe how a method realizes its approach and design in classroom behaviour. Essentially, procedure focuses on the way a method handles the presentation, practice, and feedback phases of teaching.

In this way, the model demonstrates that any language teaching method can be described in terms of the issues identified at the levels of approach, design, and procedure. Very few methods are explicit with respect to all of these dimensions; however, they have attempted to make each of these features of approach, design, and procedure explicit with reference to the major language teaching approaches and methods in use today.

From the survey of approaches and methods, the history of language teaching in the last one hundred years has been characterised by a search for more effective ways of teaching second or foreign language. The commonest solution to the language teaching problem was seen to lie in the adoption of a new teaching approach or method. The Direct Method was enthusiastically accepted in the early part of the twentieth century as an improvement over Grammar Translation. In the 1950s the Audio-lingual Method was thought to provide a way forward. As the Audio-lingual Method began to fade in the 1970s, a variety of methods emerged to fill the vacuum created by the discrediting of Audiolingualism, such as the Silent Way, Total Physical Response, and Suggestopedia. While these had declined substantially by the 1990s, new methods continues to be announced from time to time, such as Task-Based Instruction, Neurolinguistic Programming and Multiple Intelligence, and these attract varying levels of support. Mainstream language teaching opted for Communicative Language Teaching as the recommended basis for language teaching methodology in 1980s and it continues to be considered the most plausible basis for language teaching today.

A method refers to specific instructional design or system based on a particular theory of language and of language learning. It contains detailed specifications of content, roles of teachers and learners, and

teaching procedures and techniques. It is relatively fixed in time and there is generally little scope for individual interpretation. Methods are learned through training. The teacher's role is to follow the method and apply it precisely according to the rules. The following are examples of methods in this sense: Audio-lingualism, Counselling-Learning, Situational Language Teaching, The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response, etc. Compared to approaches, methods tend to have a relatively short shelf life because they are often linked to very specific claims and to prescribe practices. However, methods offer some advantages over approaches. Because of the general nature of approaches, there is often no clear application of their assumptions and principles in the classroom. Much is left to the individual teacher's interpretation, skill, and expertise. There is often no clear right or wrong way of teaching according to an approach. Methods solve many of the problems beginning teachers have to struggle with because many of the decisions about what to teach and how to teach it have already been made for them. Methods can also be seen as a rich resource activity, one can be adapted one's ideology.

The latest approaches have been described in this paper. They are Communicative Language Teaching, The Natural Approach, Cooperative Learning, Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Language teaching. Each of these approaches has in common a core set of theories and beliefs about the nature of language learning, and a derived set of principles for teaching a language. They are characterized by a variety of interpretations as to how the principles can be applied. Because of this level of flexibility and the possibility of varying interpretations and application, approaches tend to have a long shelf life. They can be revised and updated over time as new practices emerge.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The origins of Communicative Teaching are to be found in the change in the British language teaching tradition from the late 1960s. Since the mid-1970s the scope of Communicative Language Teaching has expanded. Both American and British proponents see it as an approach that aims to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. For some, CLT means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional. Littlewood (1981: 1) states, "One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language." For others, it means using procedures where learners work in pairs or groups employing available language resources in problem-solving tasks. Communicative Language Teaching is a theory of language teaching that starts from a communicative model of language and language use, and that seeks to translate this into a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviours, and for classroom activities and techniques. The Communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence." Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence.

Communicative Language Teaching has a rich theoretical base. It has some of the characteristics of this communicative view of language like: (1) Language is a system for the expression of meaning. (2) The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication. (3) The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses. (4) The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. It refers to a diverse set of principles that reflects a communicative view of language and language learning and that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures. These principles include: Learners learn a language through using it to communicate, authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities, fluency is an important dimension of communication, communication involves the

integration of different language skills and learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. Today, Communicative Language Teaching thus continues in its 'classic' form, as is seen in the huge range of course books and other teaching resources based on the principles of CLT. In addition, it has influenced many other language teaching approaches and methods that subscribe to a similar philosophy of language teaching.

The Natural Approach

In 1977, Tracy Terrell outlined “a proposal for a new philosophy of language teaching which he called the Natural Approach” (Terrell 1977, 1982: 121). The Natural Method is another term for what by 1900 had become known as the Direct Method. Krashen and Terrell see communication as the primary function of language, and since their approach focuses on teaching communicative abilities, they refer to the Natural Approach “is similar to other communicative approaches being developed today” (Krashen and Terrell 1983:17). Language is viewed as a vehicle for communicating meanings and messages. Hence, Krashen and Terrell stated that “acquisition can take place only when people understand messages in the target language” (Krashen and Terrell 1983: 19).

The Natural Approach belongs to a tradition of language teaching methods based on observation and interpretation of how learners acquire both first and second languages in non-formal settings. Such methods reject the grammatical organization of language as a prerequisite to teaching. In the Natural Approach, the focus on comprehension and meaningful communication as well as the provision of the right kinds of comprehensible input provide necessary and sufficient conditions for successful classroom second and foreign language acquisition. Like Communicative Language Teaching, the Natural Approach is hence evolutionary rather than revolutionary in its procedures. Its greatest claim to originality lies not in the techniques it employs but in their use in a method that emphasizes comprehensible and meaningful practice activities, rather than production of grammatically perfect utterances and sentences.

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)

Cooperative Language Learning is part of a more general instructional approach also known as Collaborative Learning (CL). Cooperative Learning is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom. It has been defined as follows: “Cooperative learning is a group learning activity organised so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others (Olsen and Kagan 1992: 8). Some educators believed that minority students might fall behind higher-achieving students in this kind of learning environment. According to Johnson and Holubec, Cooperative Learning sought to “raise the achievement of all students, including those who are gifted or academically handicapped, help the teacher build positive relationships among students, give students the experiences they need for healthy social, psychological and cognitive development and replace the competitive organizational structure of most classrooms and schools with a team-based, high-performance organizational structure” (192).

In Cooperative Learning, group activities are the major mode of learning and are part of a comprehensive theory and system for the use of group work in teaching. Group activities are carefully planned to maximize students' interaction and to facilitate students' contributions to teach other's learning. Cooperative Language Learning activities can also be used in collaboration with other teaching methods and approaches. Proponents of CLL stress that it enhances both learning and learners' interaction skills.

Content-Based Instruction (CBI)

Content-Based Instruction refers to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus. Krahneke offers the following definition: “It is the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language itself separately

from the content being taught” (Krahnke, 1987:65).

Although content is used with a variety of different meanings in language teaching, it is most frequently refers to the substance or subject matter that we learn or communicate through language rather than the language used to convey it. Brinton, Snow and Wesche in 1989 propose that Saint Augustine was an early proponent of Content-Based Language Teaching and quote his recommendations regarding focus on meaningful content in language teaching. CBI is grounded on the following two central principles: (1) People learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a means of acquiring information, rather than as an end in itself. This principle reflects one of the motivations for CBI noted earlier that it leads to more effective language learning. (2) CBI better reflects learners' needs for learning a second language. This principle reflects the fact that many content-based programs serve to prepare ESL students for academic studies or for mainstreaming; therefore, the need to be able to access the content of academic learning through which such learning and teaching are realised, are a central priority.

Content-based approaches in language teaching have been widely used in a variety of different settings since the 1980s. It advocates claim that it leads to more successful program outcomes than alternative language teaching approaches. Because it offers unlimited opportunities for teachers to match students' interests and needs with interesting and meaningful content, it offers many practical advantages for teachers and course designers.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching refers to an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. Some of its proponents present it as a logical development of Communicative Language Teaching since it draws on several principles that formed part of the communicative language teaching movements from the 1980s. Engaging learners in task work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focussed activities, and hence ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place. Language learning is believed to depend on immersing students not merely in 'comprehensible input' but in tasks that require them to negotiate meaningful and engage in naturalistic and meaningful communication.

Task-Based Language Teaching proposes the notion of 'tasks' as a central unit of planning and teaching. “Tasks are activities which have meaning as their primary focus. Success in tasks is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome, and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real life language use. So task based instruction takes a fairly strong view of communication language teaching (Skehan 1996: 20). Task-Based Language Teaching is motivated primarily by a theory of learning rather than a theory of language. However, several assumptions about the nature of language can be said to underlie current approaches to Task-Based Language Teaching. The basic assumption of Task-Based Language Teaching - that it provides for a more effective basis for teaching than other language teaching approaches- remains in the domain of ideology rather than fact.

Conclusion

Approaches and methods have played a central role in the development of our profession, it will continue to be useful for teachers and students to become familiar with the major teaching approaches and methods proposed for second and foreign language teaching. Mainstream approaches and methods draw on a large amount of collective experience and practice from which much can be learned. Approaches and methods can therefore be usefully studied and selectively mastered. However, teachers need to be able to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgement and experience. As the teacher gains experience and knowledge, he or she will begin to develop an individual approach or personal method of teaching. Therefore, there is much more to teacher development than learning how to use different approaches or methods of teaching. Experience with different approaches and methods can provide teachers with an initial practical knowledge base in teaching and can be used to explore and develop teachers own beliefs, principles, and practices.

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