

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SPEAKING

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In this article, we look at some different approaches that have been used over the years to teach the English language. Although there are many different methods of language teaching, three methods have dominated language teaching in the past sixty years. We briefly review each method, focusing specifically on how speaking is taught.

Key words: the Grammar-translation Method; communicative competence; oral fluency; the Direct Method; the Audiolingual Method; Communicative Language Teaching, input-based activities.

РАЗЛИЧНЫЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ОБУЧЕНИЮ ГОВОРЕНИЮ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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В данной статье рассматриваются различные подходы, которые использовались и продолжают использоваться на протяжении многих лет для обучения английскому языку. И хотя существует множество различных методов обучения, три метода доминировали в обучении иностранному языку за последние шестьдесят лет. Мы кратко рассмотрим каждый метод, уделив особое внимание тому, как обучают говорению.

Ключевые слова: грамматико-переводной метод; коммуникативная компетенция; беглость речи; прямой метод; аудиолингвистический метод; коммуникативное обучение языку; виды деятельности; основанные на наличии исходных данных.

The Grammar - translation Method

In the Grammar-translation Method, students are taught to analyze grammar and to translate (usually in writing) from one language to another. Historically, the main goal of this method has been for students to read the literature of a particular culture. According to Richards and Rodgers, the characteristics of the Grammar-translation Method are that (1) it focuses on reading and writing; (2) the vocabulary studied is determined by the reading texts; (3) “the sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice”; (4) the primary emphasis is on accuracy; (5) teaching is deductive (i.e., grammar

rules are presented and then practiced through translating); and (6) the medium of instruction is typically the students' native language.

The Grammar-translation Method does not really prepare students to speak English, so it is not entirely appropriate for students who want to improve their speaking skills. In fact, in the Grammar - translation Method, students “developed an intellectual understanding of language structure and maybe the ability to read, but instead of gaining oral fluency they suffered from what could be described as second language mutism” [4]. The method is not consistent with the goals of increasing English learners' fluency, oral production, or communicative competence. In grammar-translation lessons, speaking consists largely of reading translations aloud or doing grammar exercises orally. There are few opportunities for expressing original thoughts or personal needs and feelings in English.

The Direct Method and Audiolingualism

Unlike the Grammar-translation Method's emphasis on written text, the Direct Method focused on “everyday vocabulary and sentences” [7], and lessons were conducted entirely in the target language - the language the students are trying to learn. The Direct Method dominated English language instruction in the United States for many years.

The Direct Method emphasized speaking in that “new teaching points were introduced orally” [7], rather than in writing. Also, lessons emphasized speaking and listening, which were practiced “in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students” [7]. Many people became familiar with this approach since it was used by the Berlitz language schools.

The Direct Method strongly influenced the development of the Audiolingual Method. In audiolingualism, speaking is taught by having students repeat sentences and recite memorized dialogues from the textbook. Repetition drills - a hallmark of the Audiolingual Method - are designed to familiarize students with the sounds and structural patterns of the language. Lessons followed the sequence of presentation, practice, and production [6]. The assumption underpinning the Audiolingual Method is that students learn to speak by practicing grammatical structures until producing those structures has become automatic. When this happens, it is hoped that the learners will be able to carry on conversations. As a result, “teaching oral language was thought to require no more than engineering the repeated oral production of structures concentrating on the development of grammatical and phonological accuracy combined with fluency” [2].

The behaviorist notion of good habit formation is the theory behind the Audiolingual Method. This theory suggests that for learners to form good habits, language lessons must involve frequent repetition and correction.

Teachers treat spoken errors quickly, in hopes of preventing students from forming bad habits. If errors are left untreated, it is thought, both the speaker and the other students in class might internalize those erroneous forms. In audiolingual lessons, intense repetition and practice are used to establish good speaking habits to the point that they are fluent and automatic, so the learners don't have to stop and think about how to form an utterance while they are speaking.

The language laboratory is the main technological component of the Audiolingual Method. Students are expected to spend time in the lab, listening to audiotapes of native speakers talking in scripted, rehearsed dialogues, which embody the structures and vocabulary items the learners are studying in class. The taped speech samples students hear in the lab are carefully articulated and highly sanitized. They are not usually realistic samples of the English learners would hear on the street. Nor are they necessarily good models of how learners themselves should try to speak to sound natural.

In addition, when learners do speak in the lab, it is often to repeat after the tape-recorded voice, with little or no opportunity for constructing their ideas in English or expressing their own intended meaning. The Audiolingual Method stressed oral skills but "speech production was tightly controlled in order to reinforce correct habit formation of linguistic rules" [5]. This sort of rigidly controlled practice does not necessarily prepare learners for the spontaneous, fluid interaction that occurs outside the English classroom.

Audiolingualism eventually decreased in popularity because "the results obtained from classroom practice were disappointing" in several ways [3]. Many learners thought the pattern practice and audiolingual drills were boring and lost interest in language learning. Students, perhaps especially adult learners, often felt hampered because the method down-played the explicit teaching of grammar rules. In addition, memorizing patterns "did not lead to fluent and effective communication in real-life situations".

Communicative Language Teaching

During the 1970s and 1980s, language acquisition research (and dissatisfaction with the Audiolingual Method) made teachers, materials developers, and curriculum designers reconsider some long-standing beliefs about how people learn languages. Apparently people don't learn the pieces of the language and then put them together to make conversations. Instead, infants acquiring their first language and people acquiring second languages seem to learn the components of language through interaction with other people. This realization has several interesting implications for us as teachers, the most important being that if people learn languages by interacting, then students should interact during English lessons. As a result, Communicative Language Teaching arose.

In some language teaching methods, such as Total Physical Response [1], beginning learners undergo a period of listening to English before they begin to speak it. In such methods, the focus is on input-based activities. For instance, in Total Physical Response, learners initially respond physically to spoken commands from the teacher, rather than speaking themselves.

In contrast, Communicative Language Teaching, particularly from the high beginning to more advanced levels, features more interaction-based activities, such as role-plays and information gap tasks (activities in which learners must use English to convey information known to them but not to their speaking partners). Pair work and group work are typical organizational features of interaction-based lessons in Communicative Language Teaching.

When we speak, and especially perhaps when we speak in a foreign language, there are times when we wish to say something, but we don't have the words or the grammatical structures to say it. Under these circumstances, people often use communication strategies - verbal and/or nonverbal procedures for compensating for gaps in speaking competence.

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