

Unit One

Language Teaching and Learning

Language Teaching and Learning

Key Issues to Remember

1. **Learning a language** and **teaching a language** are very different things; both teachers and students should reflect on this fact and be aware of the responsibilities that they bring to the process.
2. **Teaching methods** and **teaching techniques** differ in that methods describe a teacher's broad philosophy of teaching and overall approach to their work whereas techniques refer to the things that teachers do on a day to day basis to introduce and work with new material in the classroom.
3. Learning a language is a **student centered activity** and it requires both motivation from the student and comprehensible language input from an outside source. A **good learner** is an **active and self-aware learner** and one who considers often their own responsibilities and roles in the process of learning.
4. Teaching a language is a **scientific process** that has been studied and researched a great deal over the last 50 years. There are good ways and bad ways to teach a language and part of the **responsibility of the instructor** is to update their skills as often as possible to reflect current ways of teaching and to have the most positive impact possible on the students.
5. It is essential that teachers always remember **why the class is taking place**: to allow students the opportunity to learn language. It is the students who need the opportunity to speak and practice and it is student learning that is the ultimate goal. The students, and not the teacher, should be at the center of any quality language learning experience.
6. Learning a language is a **life-long process** and all aspects of language use need constant **revision and recycling**. You are never "finished!" This is true of both native and non-native speakers as we constantly confront new vocabulary items and new contexts for words throughout our life.
7. Individual students **have individual learning styles** and these are not going to change. It is the responsibility of the instructor to be as well informed as possible and to find a variety of teaching methods and techniques for different students and their different styles of learning.
8. Aside from varying learning styles, students also have different needs depending on where they are in **the learning process**. This is clear from low-level students who generally benefit more from structured courses and external motivation. We often see more advanced level students benefiting from less structured learning experiences where they are able to take a more active role.

Language Teaching and Learning: Activities and Approaches in the Classroom

1. Understanding a variety of teaching methods and how those methods have changed through history can help teachers tailor their lessons to the needs of the class.

When talking about the study of teaching methods, teachers often ask some important questions and why they are important to understand. Here are some examples:

- **Why do I need to know about different teaching methods?** Learning about a variety of teaching methods helps teachers to reflect on their own way of teaching and to assess its strengths and weaknesses. Teachers with a good knowledge of various teaching methods will undoubtedly become more effective teachers.
- **How can learning about different methods help me in the classroom?** By understanding and being able to use various teaching methods, teachers will enable themselves to adapt to the varying needs of their students and to the different classroom situations that they may encounter in their teaching.
- **What is wrong with the traditional methods that were used by my teachers when I was learning English?** Language teaching is a science and new research is constantly being developed that can expand and improve our ability to teach effectively. It is the responsibility of the teachers to learn about and make use of the most current methods in their classroom so as to give their students the most benefit.

In reality, the method that the teacher chooses should reflect their own beliefs about how language is learned, their own background and experience, and, of course, the needs of the students in the classroom. What follows is a brief list of 5 of the most commonly discussed language teaching methods. Teachers should not feel however that any one of these methods is necessarily the right or wrong way to teach. Choose the elements of each that make the most sense in your own language teaching situation.

Overview of Methods

Grammar Translation Method

The Grammar Translation Method originated with the study of classic languages like Greek and Latin and it has been in use for hundreds of years. By using this method, teachers assume that students will probably never need to use the language but that just studying a language will be good for them. The Grammar Translation Method puts a high priority on the ability to read literature in a foreign language and translate that literature accurately into the first language.

Features

- The focus of the class is on the explanation of grammar rules

- Teaching is done in the students' first language, not the target language
- Vocabulary is presented in bi-lingual lists
- Class exercises are usually grammatical and focus on control of form
- Reading and writing are emphasized and little time is spent of speaking or listening

Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method developed in the 1940's in America. The idea behind this method is that students learn best through repetition and drill work. Much attention is paid to listening, and memorization and repetition are very important. This method does not emphasize translation because it assumes that the native language and the target language have different grammar systems and translation only confuses the student.

Features

- Dialogues are a main feature of the class
- Dialogues are studied, memorized and repeated
- The teacher speaks only the target language and models dialogues repeatedly
- Errors are corrected immediately by the teacher
- Substitution in dialogues is controlled by the teacher

Total Physical Response (TPR)

This method was developed in the 1960's and 1970's and it is called TPR because one of the principles is that students learn more and faster when they involve their entire body. A TPR class is based on a series of commands given by the teacher. For example, the teacher will say, "Stand up" and the students will follow the command. This method emphasizes listening and comprehension and allows students as much time as they need to begin speaking.

Features

- In TPR classes students are generally quite active and involved in following commands
- The teacher speaks relatively little and only in the target language
- The attitude is relaxed and comfortable and errors are acceptable
- Students spend a great deal of time listening before they begin speaking

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching is a fairly recent method and was developed around 1990. The theory behind this method is that often students do well in the classroom but then struggle to communicate in the real world. Thus the goal is to make the language classroom as much like the real world as possible. CLT also emphasizes the use of appropriate language. That means teaching not just "how to speak" but also "what to say" and "when to say it."

Features

- Teachers and students use only the target language
- The target language is a tool for classroom communication about real issues
- Variety is emphasized when studying language functions
- Games and role plays are common because they are similar to the real world – the language use has a purpose
- Emphasis is placed on discussing situations where certain types of language is appropriate
- Errors are considered natural and acceptable

The Silent Way

This method was developed principally by Caleb Gettegno in the late 1970's. There are two key components to understand about this teaching method. The first is that Gattegno believed that the most important part of what happens in the classroom is in the learning NOT in the teaching; he felt that the students can and should be largely responsible for their own learning. Second, as the name implies, the Silent Way is a method that emphasizes teacher silence under the principle that silence from the teacher encourages student's independence and self-reliance.

Features

- The teacher very seldom speaks
- Color charts and rods are often employed to practice pronunciation
- Gestures are used by the teacher to show new sounds
- The teacher does not praise or criticize students because it discourages self-reliance
- Students are forced to learn to rely on one-another for feedback
- The students native language may be used for a feedback session at the end of each lesson

2. Using different techniques in the class can make your classes more interesting, help to motivate students, and accommodate different learning styles.

Techniques are different from methods because techniques deal with the day-to-day issues of how teachers choose to present and work with material. To keep classes interesting, teachers need to use a range of methods in their classes. Some students will respond well to small group discussions where others will be quiet during these activities. It is important for teachers to make variety a key component of their teaching.

Below you can find five common techniques for working with and presenting material in the classroom. Remember that although only five activities are listed here, many more are possible and teachers are encouraged to experiment and adapt.

Technique #1: Lecture

A lecture is a form of presentation usually used to present new information. A lecture is generally a monologue from the lecturer but it may include opportunities for brief

questions and discussions. Lectures depend completely on the teacher or lecturer for the content and information and they are largely teacher centered activities. They work well when teachers have information to present to students that is entirely new or unfamiliar to them.

Process

1. Introduce the topic – tell the learners what they will hear and activate their interest
2. Present the material
3. Summarize your main points
4. Give an opportunity for questions (optional)

Technique #2: Dialogue

A dialogue is a conversation between two or more participants. These participants may be either teachers or students. Generally dialogues are practiced and repeated to help students remember structures or vocabulary they have already learned.

Dialogues may be read from texts or materials provided by the teacher or they be generated by the students themselves.

Process

1. Participants read the dialogue silently
2. Groups of participants practice the dialogue together, repeating often
3. Dialogue is continued from memory without reading
4. Participants expand on the dialogue or change it to fit their personal situation

Technique #3: Role Play

A role-play is an activity where participants assume roles other than themselves.

They are then asked to think and speak through the character they have become.

Role-plays are often used to help participants think about multiple sides of an issue or to decrease anxiety in speaking. This technique works well as a follow-up to a dialogue, where students assume the roles of the people from the dialogue and create conversations of their own.

Process

1. Leader sets a context for the role-play
2. Participants are given a role and time to think about the role
3. Some type of interaction (a debate, conversation, etc.) takes place between different participants acting in their roles
4. Participants come out of roles and discuss the process

Technique #4: Survey or Questionnaire

This technique is used to allow participants to form their own questions and gather their own information. This is a technique that requires little guidance and is mostly directed by participants. This technique is good to promote student interaction and creativity.

Process

1. Leader explains information to be collected
2. Groups or individuals develop survey or questionnaire to collect information
3. Survey or questionnaire is completed in class
4. Results are shared and discussed

Technique #5: Small Group Discussion

A small group discussion is used when a teacher would like to encourage participants' interaction and language use. It is also helpful to collect opinions and ideas of students and to lessen the anxiety of speaking in front of large groups. In a large classroom, having multiple groups talking at once may create a lot of noise but in a language classroom, noise is good!

Process

1. A topic is presented by the instructor
2. Groups are formed and questions are given
3. Groups are allowed sufficient time to debate and discuss questions
4. Class works together to share opinions and answers

3. The needs of learners vary according to their familiarity with the topic and their personality.

As mentioned before, all learners are different and, because of this, all have slightly different needs in the classroom. Teachers need to consider both the material/topic of the class and the personality of the students as they design their courses. The table below shows some of the needs associated with three different types of learners.

NEEDS OF LEARNERS		
Dependent Learners	Team Learners	Independent Learners
Prepared materials	Outside support	Less structure
Clear instructions	Sharing	Low supervision
Structured activities	Communication	Freedom to choose tasks
Theoretical explanations	Compromise	Respect from others
Teacher feedback	Involvement	Control
Security	Flexible activities	Challenge teachers
Sense of purpose/direction	Flexible requirements	Take Risks

It is easy to see from the table that student needs can vary significantly depending on the type of learner they are. As teachers think about the best methods and techniques to use in class it is essential that they keep student needs in mind.

Further Resources

1. Division of Learning Styles

A student's learning style is a compound of different elements. Students' learning styles differ greatly. There are two factors, however, that appear to be universal: ***Students learn when 1) they are motivated and 2) their anxiety is diminished.***

Research has also suggested that students evenly divided into four learning styles.

<p>4. Dynamic Learners are primarily interested in self-discovery. They like variety in instructional methods. They learn best by trial and error.</p>	<p>1. Imaginative Learners are primarily interested in personal meaning. They like discussions, group work and realistic feedback about feelings. They learn best by listening and sharing ideas.</p>
<p>3. Common Sense Learners are primarily interested in how things work. They like technical things and hands-on activities. They learn best by testing theories and applying common sense.</p>	<p>2. Analytic Learners are primarily interested in facts. They like details and organized sequential thinking. They learn best by thinking through ideas.</p>

- ❖ By dividing learners into the above 4 categories, teachers can then choose different types of activities to fit each style. On the following page you will find a list of in-class activities for each of the above 4 learning styles.

2. Activities for Different Learners

Each of the types of learner prefers different activities. The following list was compiled for the Peace Corps by Mary Jo Larson. You can use these when you plan your lessons with your tutor.

<p style="text-align: center;">Type four</p> <p>Writing letters Organizing theme programs Making posters and displays Organizing games Sharing original poems, songs, stories, reports Giving speeches Participating in scenarios, skits, or plays Participating in debates Publishing student work Organizing field trips Conducting and reporting on interviews Conducting and reporting on surveys</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Type one</p> <p>Discussing personal experiences Discussing an item Looking at pictures, drawings, posters, videos Brainstorming Listening to a tape Singing a song Interviewing a guest Watching a role play or skit Reading: a short magazine article a short story/poem Sharing a model or sample assignment Interview/survey (link from previous lesson)</p>
<p>Formulating questions for others to answer Exercises requiring critical thinking skills (comparing, contrasting, generalizing, prioritizing) Writing, revising, editing Multiple choice/matching Pair or group discussions Project planning Case studies Fill in the blank exercises Completing and practicing role plays Completing comics or cartoons Making diagrams, tables, and charts</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Type Three</p>	<p>Deductive analyses Lectures Note taking Controlled Drills (Audio-Lingual Method) Cultural Notes Silent Reading Controlled exercises (Audio-Lingual Method) Grammar/Translation Dictations Analyses of diagrams, tables, and charts</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Type Two</p>

3. Learning Styles and Lessons

The ideal lesson (curriculum) should address all learning styles to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to learn. To combine all learning styles the following four stages should be present in the process of instruction.

	Active Experimentation	Reflective Observation
Concrete Experience (Intuitive/Inductive)	<p>Production (Dynamic Learners)</p> <p><i>kinesthetic/audial</i></p>	<p>Presentation (Experience) (Imaginative Learners)</p> <p><i>visual/audial</i></p>
Abstract Conceptualization (Rational/Deductive)	<p>Practice (Common Sense Learners)</p> <p><i>kinesthetic/visual</i></p>	<p>Presentation (Analysis) (Analytic Learners)</p> <p><i>visual/audial</i></p>

For Teachers

1. ESL Flow

<http://www.eslflow.com/communicativelanguageteaching.html>

This is a simple and clear list of teaching methods with brief explanations of each included.

2. University of Idaho

<http://ivc.uidaho.edu/flbrain/learning.htm>

This site outlines a variety of teaching methods and explains the connection between methods and learning in the classroom.

3. English Raven

<http://www.englishraven.com/methodology.html>

This site provides a wonderful online overview of a wide range of teaching methods and includes links to other sites for more information.

4. Learning Styles On-line

<http://www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/default.asp>

Here you can take free online tests to determine your own learning style and analyze what it means by looking at activities which would suit your learning style.

5. Learning Style Links

http://www.emtech.net/learning_styles.html

This site provides links to many other sites on learning styles and to texts of academic articles on the subject.