

## THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS TO L2 METHODS & APPROACHES

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**Annotation** *There are four general orientations among modern second-language methods and approaches: Classes are taught in the students' mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. Elaborate explanations of grammar are always provided. Grammar instruction provides the rules for putting words together; instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words. Reading of difficult texts is begun early in the course of study.*

**Key words:** *content, compatible, performance, enhance, affective, strategies, inhibit*

1. **STRUCTURAL/LINGUISTIC:** Based on beliefs about the structure of language and descriptive or contrastive linguistics. Involves isolation of grammatical and syntactic elements of L2 taught either deductively or inductively in a predetermined sequence. Often involves much meta-linguistic content or “learning about the language” in order to learn the language.

2. **COGNITIVE:** Based 1

on theories of learning applied specifically to second language learning. Focus is on the learning strategies that are compatible with the learners own style. L2 content is selected according to concepts and techniques that facilitate generalizations about the language, memorization and “competence” leading to “performance”.

3. **AFFECTIVE/INTERPERSONAL:** Focuses on the psychological and affective pre-dispositions of the learner that enhance or inhibit learning. Emphasizes interaction among and between teacher and students and the atmosphere of the learning situation as well as students' motivation for learning. Based on concepts adapted from counseling and social psychology.

4. **FUNCTIONAL/COMMUNICATIVE:** Based on theories of language acquisition, often referred to as the “natural” approach, and on the use of language for communication. Encompasses multiple aspects of the communicative act, with language structures selected according to their utility in achieving a communicative purpose. Instruction is concerned with the input students receive, comprehension of the “message” of language and student involvement at the students' level of competence.

### **The Grammar-Translation Approach**

*This approach was historically used in teaching Greek and Latin. The approach was generalized to teaching modern languages.*

Classes are taught in the students' mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. Elaborate explanations of grammar are always provided. Grammar instruction provides the rules for putting words together; instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words. Reading of difficult texts is begun early in the course of study. Little attention is paid to the content of texts,

which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue, and vice versa. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation

### **The Direct Approach**

*This approach was developed initially as a reaction to the grammar-translation approach in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language in instruction.*

Lessons begin with a dialogue using a modern conversational style in the target language. Material is first presented orally with actions or pictures. The mother tongue is NEVER, NEVER used. There is no translation. The preferred type of exercise is a series of questions in the target language based on the dialogue or an anecdotal narrative. Questions are answered in the target language. Grammar is taught inductively—rules are generalized from the practice and experience with the target language. Verbs are used first and systematically conjugated only much later after some oral mastery of the target language. Advanced students read literature for comprehension and pleasure. Literary texts are not analyzed grammatically. The culture associated with the target language is also taught inductively. Culture is considered an important aspect of learning the language.

### **Reading Approach**

*This approach is selected for practical and academic reasons. For specific uses of the language in graduate or scientific studies. The approach is for people who do not travel abroad for whom reading is the one usable skill in a foreign language.*

The priority in studying the target language is first, reading ability and second, current and/or historical knowledge of the country where the target language is spoken. Only the grammar necessary for reading comprehension and fluency is taught. Minimal attention is paid to pronunciation or gaining conversational skills in the target language. From the beginning, a great amount of reading is done in L2, both in and out of class. The vocabulary of the early reading passages and texts is strictly controlled for difficulty. Vocabulary is expanded as quickly as possible, since the acquisition of vocabulary is considered more important than grammatical skill. Translation reappears in this approach as a respectable classroom procedure related to comprehension of the written text.

### **The Audiolingual Method**

*This method is based on the principles of behavior psychology. It adapted many of the principles and procedures of the Direct Method, in part as a reaction to the lack of speaking skills of the Reading Approach.*

New material is presented in the form of a dialogue. Based on the principle that language learning is habit formation, the method fosters dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases and over-learning. Structures are sequenced and taught one at a time. Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills. Little or no grammatical explanations are provided; grammar is taught inductively. Skills are sequenced: Listening, speaking, reading and writing are developed in order. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context. Teaching points are determined by contrastive analysis between L1 and L2. There is abundant use of language laboratories, tapes and visual aids. There is an extended pre-reading period at the beginning of the course. Great importance is given to

precise native-like pronunciation. Use of the mother tongue by the teacher is permitted, but discouraged among and by the students. Successful responses are reinforced; great care is taken to prevent learner errors. There is a tendency to focus on manipulation of the target language and to disregard content and meaning.

### **Hints for Using Audio-lingual Drills in L2 Teaching**

1. The teacher must be careful to insure that all of the utterances which students will make are actually within the practiced pattern. For example, the use of the AUX verb have should not suddenly switch to have as a main verb.

2. Drills should be conducted as rapidly as possibly so as to insure automaticity and to establish a system.

3. Ignore all but gross errors of pronunciation when drilling for grammar practice.

4. Use of shortcuts to keep the pace o drills at a maximum. Use hand motions, signal cards, notes, etc. to cue response. You are a choir director.

5. Use normal English stress, intonation, and juncture patterns conscientiously.

6. Drill material should always be meaningful. If the content words are not known, teach their meanings.

7. Intersperse short periods of drill (about 10 minutes) with very brief alternative activities to avoid fatigue and boredom.

8. Introduce the drill in this way:

a. Focus (by writing on the board, for example)

b. Exemplify (by speaking model sentences)

c. Explain (if a simple grammatical explanation is needed)

d. Drill

9. Don't stand in one place; move about the room standing next to as many different students as possible to spot check their production. Thus you will know who to give more practice to during individual drilling.

10. Use the "backward buildup" technique for long and/or difficult patterns.

–tomorrow

–in the cafeteria tomorrow

–will be eating in the cafeteria tomorrow

–Those boys will be eating in the cafeteria tomorrow.

11. Arrange to present drills in the order of increasing complexity of student response. The question is: How much internal organization or decision making must the student do in order to make a response in this drill. Thus: imitation first, single-slot substitution next, then free response last.

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