

Theoretical Orientations to L2 Methods & Approaches

There are four general orientations among modern second-language methods and approaches:

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 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.

The 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 of 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.

Community Language Learning

Curran, C.A. (1976). *Counseling-Learning in Second Languages*. Apple River, Illinois: Apple River Press, 1976.

This methodology, created by Charles Curran, is not based on the usual methods by which languages are taught. Rather the approach is patterned upon counseling techniques and adapted to the peculiar anxiety and threat as well as the personal and language problems a person encounters in the learning of foreign languages. Consequently, the learner is not thought of as a student but as a client. The native instructors of the language are not considered teachers but, rather are trained in counseling skills adapted to their roles as language counselors.

The language-counseling relationship begins with the client's linguistic confusion and conflict. The aim of the language counselor's skill is first to communicate an empathy for the client's threatened inadequate state and to aid him linguistically. Then slowly the teacher-counselor strives to enable him to arrive at his own increasingly independent language adequacy. This process is furthered by the language counselor's ability to establish a warm, understanding, and accepting relationship, thus becoming an "other-language self" for the client. The process involves five stages of adaptation:

STAGE 1

The client is completely dependent on the language counselor.

1. First, he expresses only to the counselor and in English what he wishes to say to the group. Each group member overhears this English exchange but no other members of the group are involved in the interaction.
2. The counselor then reflects these ideas back to the client in the foreign language in a warm, accepting tone, in simple language in phrases of five or six words.
3. The client turns to the group and presents his ideas in the foreign language. He has the counselor's aid if he mispronounces or hesitates on a word or phrase. This is the client's maximum security stage.

STAGE 2

1. Same as above.
2. The client turns and begins to speak the foreign language directly to the group.
3. The counselor aids only as the client hesitates or turns for help. These small independent steps are signs of positive confidence and hope.

STAGE 3

1. The client speaks directly to the group in the foreign language. This presumes that the group has now acquired the ability to understand his simple phrases.
2. Same as 3 above. This presumes the client's greater confidence, independence, and proportionate insight into the relationship of phrases, grammar, and ideas. Translation is given only when a group member desires it.

STAGE 4

1. The client is now speaking freely and complexly in the foreign language. Presumes group's understanding.
2. The counselor directly intervenes in grammatical error, mispronunciation, or where aid in complex expression is needed. The client is sufficiently secure to take correction.

STAGE 5

1. Same as stage 4.
2. The counselor intervenes not only to offer correction but to add idioms and more elegant constructions.
3. At this stage the client can become counselor to the group in stages 1, 2, and 3.

The Silent Way

Gattegno, C. (1972). *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way*. New York City: Educational Solutions.

Procedures

This method created by Caleb Gattegno begins by using a set of colored rods and verbal commands in order to achieve the following:

To avoid the use of the vernacular. To create simple linguistic situations that remain under the complete control of the teacher To pass on to the learners the responsibility for the utterances of the descriptions of the objects shown or the actions performed. To let the teacher concentrate on what the students say and how they are saying it, drawing their attention to the differences in pronunciation and the flow of words. To generate a serious game-like situation in which the rules are implicitly agreed upon by giving meaning to the gestures of the teacher and his mime. To permit almost from the start a switch from the lone voice of the teacher using the foreign language to a number of voices using it. This introduces components of pitch, timbre and intensity that will constantly reduce the impact of one voice and hence reduce imitation and encourage personal production of one's own brand of the sounds.

To provide the support of perception and action to the intellectual guess of what the noises mean, thus bring in the arsenal of the usual criteria of experience already developed and automatic in one's use of the mother tongue. To provide a duration of spontaneous speech upon which the teacher and the students can work to obtain a similarity of melody to the one heard, thus providing melodic integrative schemata from the start.

Materials

The complete set of materials utilized as the language learning progresses include:

A set of colored wooden rods A set of wall charts containing words of a "functional" vocabulary and some additional ones; a pointer for use with the charts in Visual Dictation A color coded phonic

chart(s) Tapes or discs, as required; films Drawings and pictures, and a set of accompanying worksheets Transparencies, three texts, a Book of Stories, worksheets.

The Communicative Approach

What is communicative competence?

- Communicative competence is the progressive acquisition of the ability to use a language to achieve one's communicative purpose.
- Communicative competence involves the negotiation of meaning between meaning between two or more persons sharing the same symbolic system.
- Communicative competence applies to both spoken and written language.
- Communicative competence is **context specific** based on the situation, the role of the participants and the appropriate choices of register and style. For example: The variation of language used by persons in different jobs or professions can be either formal or informal. The use of jargon or slang may or may not be appropriate.
- Communicative competence represents a shift in focus from the grammatical to the communicative properties of the language; i.e. the functions of language and the process of discourse.
- Communicative competence requires the mastery of the production and comprehension of communicative acts or speech acts that are relevant to the needs of the L2 learner.

Characteristics of the Communicative Classroom

- The classroom is devoted primarily to activities that foster acquisition of L2. Learning activities involving practice and drill are assigned as homework.
- The instructor does not correct speech errors directly.
- Students are allowed to respond in the target language, their native language, or a mixture of the two.
- The focus of all learning and speaking activities is on the interchange of a message that the acquirer understands and wishes to transmit, i.e. meaningful communication.
- The students receive comprehensible input in a low-anxiety environment and are personally involved in class activities. Comprehensible input has the following major components:
 - a. a context
 - b. gestures and other body language cues
 - c. a message to be comprehended
 - d. a knowledge of the meaning of key lexical items in the utterance

Stages of language acquisition in the communicative approach

1. Comprehension or pre-production
 - a. Total physical response
 - b. Answer with names--objects, students, pictures
2. Early speech production
 - a. Yes-no questions
 - b. Either-or questions
 - c. Single/two-word answers
 - d. Open-ended questions
 - e. Open dialogs
 - f. Interviews
3. Speech emerges
 - a. Games and recreational activities
 - b. Content activities
 - c. Humanistic-affective activities
 - d. Information-problem-solving activities

Functional-Notional Approach

Finocchiaro, M. & Brumfit, C. (1983). *The Functional-Notional Approach*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

This method of language teaching is categorized along with others under the rubric of a communicative approach. The method stresses a means of organizing a language syllabus. The emphasis is on breaking down the global concept of language into units of analysis in terms of communicative situations in which they are used.

Notions are meaning elements that may be expressed through nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives or adverbs. The use of particular notions depends on three major factors: **a.** the functions **b.** the elements in the situation, and **c.** the topic being discussed.

A situation may affect variations of language such as the use of dialects, the formality or informality of the language and the mode of expression. Situation includes the following elements:

- A. The persons taking part in the speech act
- B. The place where the conversation occurs
- C. The time the speech act is taking place
- D. The topic or activity that is being discussed

Exponents are the language utterances or statements that stem from the function, the situation and the topic.

Code is the shared language of a community of speakers.

Code-switching is a change or switch in code during the speech act, which many theorists believe is purposeful behavior to convey bonding, language prestige or other elements of interpersonal relations between the speakers.

Functional Categories of Language

Mary Finocchiaro (1983, p. 65-66) has placed the functional categories under five headings as noted below: *personal*, *interpersonal*, *directive*, *referential*, and *imaginative*.

Personal = Clarifying or arranging one's ideas; expressing one's thoughts or feelings: love, joy, pleasure, happiness, surprise, likes, satisfaction, dislikes, disappointment, distress, pain, anger, anguish, fear, anxiety, sorrow, frustration, annoyance at missed opportunities, moral, intellectual and social concerns; and the everyday feelings of hunger, thirst, fatigue, sleepiness, cold, or warmth

Interpersonal = Enabling us to establish and maintain desirable social and working relationships:
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- greetings and leave takings
- introducing people to others
- identifying oneself to others
- expressing joy at another's success
- expressing concern for other people's welfare
- extending and accepting invitations
- refusing invitations politely or making alternative arrangements
- making appointments for meetings
- breaking appointments politely and arranging another mutually convenient time
- apologizing
- excusing oneself and accepting excuses for not meeting commitments
- indicating agreement or disagreement
- interrupting another speaker politely
- changing an embarrassing subject
- receiving visitors and paying visits to others
- offering food or drinks and accepting or declining politely
- sharing wishes, hopes, desires, problems
- making promises and committing oneself to some action
- complimenting someone

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- making excuses
- expressing and acknowledging gratitude

Directive = Attempting to influence the actions of others; accepting or refusing direction:

- making suggestions in which the speaker is included
- making requests; making suggestions
- refusing to accept a suggestion or a request but offering an alternative
- persuading someone to change his point of view
- requesting and granting permission
- asking for help and responding to a plea for help
- forbidding someone to do something; issuing a command
- giving and responding to instructions
- warning someone
- discouraging someone from pursuing a course of action
- establishing guidelines and deadlines for the completion of actions
- asking for directions or instructions

Referential = talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future; talking about language (what is termed the metalinguistic function: = talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future; talking about language (what is termed the metalinguistic function:

- identifying items or people in the classroom, the school the home, the community
- asking for a description of someone or something
- defining something or a language item or asking for a definition
- paraphrasing, summarizing, or translating (L1 to L2 or vice versa)
- explaining or asking for explanations of how something works
- comparing or contrasting things
- discussing possibilities, probabilities, or capabilities of doing something
- requesting or reporting facts about events or actions
- evaluating the results of an action or event

Imaginative = Discussions involving elements of creativity and artistic expression

- discussing a poem, a story, a piece of music, a play, a painting, a film, a TV program, etc.
- expanding ideas suggested by other or by a piece of literature or reading material

- creating rhymes, poetry, stories or plays
- recombining familiar dialogs or passages creatively
- suggesting original beginnings or endings to dialogs or stories
- solving problems or mysteries

Total Physical Response

Asher, J.C. (1979). *Learning Another Language Through Actions*. San Jose, California: AccuPrint.

James J. Asher defines the Total Physical Response (TPR) method as one that combines information and skills through the use of the kinesthetic sensory system. This combination of skills allows the student to assimilate information and skills at a rapid rate. As a result, this success leads to a high degree of motivation. The basic tenets are:

Understanding the spoken language before developing the skills of speaking. Imperatives are the main structures to transfer or communicate information. The student is not forced to speak, but is allowed an individual readiness period and allowed to spontaneously begin to speak when the student feels comfortable and confident in understanding and producing the utterances.

TECHNIQUE

- Step 1** The teacher says the commands as he himself performs the action.
- Step 2** The teacher says the command as both the teacher and the students then perform the action.
- Step 3** The teacher says the command but only students perform the action
- Step 4** The teacher tells one student at a time to do commands
- Step 5** The roles of teacher and student are reversed. Students give commands to teacher and to other students.
- Step 6** The teacher and student allow for command expansion or produces new sentences.

The Natural Approach

The Natural Approach and the Communicative Approach share a common theoretical and philosophical base. The Natural Approach to L2 teaching is based on the following hypotheses:

1. The *acquisition-learning* distinction hypothesis
Adults can "get" a second language much as they learn their first language, through informal, implicit, subconscious learning. The conscious, explicit, formal linguistic knowledge of a language is a different, and often non-essential process.
2. The *natural order of acquisition* hypothesis
L2 learners acquire forms in a predictable order. This order very closely parallels the acquisition of grammatical and syntactic structures in the first language.

3. The *monitor* hypothesis

Fluency in L2 comes from the acquisition process. Learning produces a "monitoring" or editor of performance. The application of the monitor function requires time, focus on form and knowledge of the rule.

4. The *input* hypothesis

Language is acquired through comprehensible input. If an L2 learner is at a certain stage in language acquisition and he/she understands something that includes a structure at the next stage, this helps him/her to acquire that structure. Thus, the $i+1$ concept, where i = the stage of acquisition.

5. The *affective* hypothesis

People with certain personalities and certain motivations perform better in L2 acquisition. Learners with high self-esteem and high levels of self-confidence acquire L2 faster. Also, certain low-anxiety pleasant situations are more conducive to L2 acquisition.

6. The *filter* hypothesis

There exists an affective filter or "mental block" that can prevent input from "getting in." Pedagogically, the more that is done to lower the filter, the more acquisition can take place. A low filter is achieved through low-anxiety, relaxation, non-defensiveness.

7. The *aptitude* hypothesis

There is such a thing as a language learning aptitude. This aptitude can be measured and is highly correlated with general learning aptitude. However, aptitude relates more to learning while attitude relates more to acquisition.

8. The *first language* hypothesis

The L2 learner will naturally substitute competence in L1 for competence in L2. Learners should not be forced to use the L1 to generate L2 performance. A silent period and insertion of L1 into L2 utterances should be expected and tolerated.

9. The *textuality* hypothesis

The event-structures of experience are textual in nature and will be easier to produce, understand, and recall to the extent that discourse or text is motivated and structured episodically. Consequently, L2 teaching materials are more successful when they incorporate principles of good story writing along with sound linguistic analysis.

10. The *expectancy* hypothesis

Discourse has a type of "cognitive momentum." The activation of correct expectancies will enhance the processing of textual structures. Consequently, L2 learners must be guided to develop the sort of native-speaker "intuitions" that make discourse predictable.

Source: Krashen, S.D. , & Terrell, T.D. (1983). **The Natural Approach**. Hayward, CA: The Alemany Press.

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Mora, Jill Kerper. "Second and Foreign Language Teaching Methods." *Mora Modules*. <http://moramodules.com/ALMMethods.htm>.