FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS: SOME ISSUES AND NEW MOVES

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Abstract

In this article, we would like to discuss the role of English as the global language and its impacts on our profession as English teachers. Foreign languages open doors to development and give access to international education. English has roles as both an international and a global language. As an international language, English has played a role as the tool of communication among people from different countries, in other words, English is used to bridge linguistic odd among people in international communities. This article deals with the differences between approaches, methods and techniques, as well as the three major issues which are recurrent in FLT. Then, the main characteristics, the psychological bases and the pedagogical features of the principal FLT methods are considered chronologically. Finally, as a conclusion, a connection is established between FLT methods, innovation and classroom research, as a way of teacher development and of learning improvement.

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It is well known that our new life is highly affected by the era of information technology, and technology plays an important role in today's human society development. Based on this fact, it is indispensable to take advantage of the modern technological facilities in aiding the task of English language education. Students trying to learn English as a second language need further language support. They need to practice in hearing the language, reading language, speaking language, and writing the language in order to develop their experience and skills. For doing such tasks, they are in need of using various tools which can help them learn the language easily and effectively.

The term New Technology includes communication techniques for language teaching in which the personal computer plays a central role. There are, however, other technological tools that can be utilized in language learning besides computers. Each technological tool has its specific benefits and application with one of the four language parts (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). However, in order to use these techniques successfully, the ELL student should be familiar with using computers and the internet, and capable of interacting with these techniques. The effect of technology has become huge in teaching and learning the language in addition to the instructor's role. In other words, the role of the instructor together with the role of the technology can lead to advanced learning results.

Learning a new language is a challenging task. It demands hundreds of hours of study and dedicated, regular practice. It is also an immensely rewarding experience; learning a new language opens doors to

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new cultures and even new ways of thinking. Learning English can be a challenging and daunting task. Fortunately, technological advancements have now made learning the English language much more easy, fun, and convenient. One technologically advanced method that has improved the way people learn English is the Internet. This modern form of communication has opened the world to a whole new way of learning the English language. The vast resources on the Web make learning English a less intimidating undertaking.

The Internet offers a wealth of information and unlimited resources that teachers can use in order to expose students to authentic language use. Exposure, however, is not enough to trigger language acquisition. Students need to be involved in tasks that integrate the use of computers and enhance language acquisition.

When one embarks on the process of learning English, they require a number of learning materials such as textbooks, videos, and audio tapes. Traditionally, it was difficult to locate all of the appropriate educational materials. It took a lot of time an effort to find the most appropriate learning tools. Now, with a simple click of the mouse, one has a world full of materials that they can access. For instance, sites such as YouTube contain many video lessons on learning to speak English.

In recent years, integrating computers and Internet technology in the teaching and learning process changed the way in which instruction was delivered to students. The Internet plays a great role in foreign language teaching and learning. Learners have access to many English language resources if they use computers and the Internet in language classes. They can improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through a real-world situation. Because of the widespread use of computers and the Internet in educational settings, language teachers are motivated to implement this technology in their classes in order to facilitate language teaching and learning process. Educators are the real representatives of utilizing technologies in language learning [5].

One important factor which influences the use of educational technology in classes is the attitudes of teachers toward integrating the Internet in their language classes. Teachers' attitudes toward technology use can be concerned as a facilitating or hindering factor, which gives them more comfort or obstacle to utilizing technology in their educational environments. Computers and Internet technology are the most effective tools among various existing technological aids in teaching and learning languages. Integrating and applying computers and the Internet in a learning environment can strengthen the way that students acquire a foreign language effectively. Hence, teachers' attitudes play a fundamental role in the real utilization of technologies in classrooms.

Using the Internet can facilitate the development of language skills, employability skills, and critical literacy.

Language skills:

➢ Skimming and scanning;

➢ Reading narratives, charts, and graphs;

➢ Accessing ESOL and life skills content sites;

➢ Writing: completing forms, emailing requesting information.

Employability skills:

➢ Analyzing and evaluating information;

➢ Decision making;

➢ Problem-solving;

➢ Technology skills [6].

THE CONCEPTS OF APPROACH, METHOD AND TECHNIQUE AND THE THREE MAJOR GENERAL PROBLEMS IN MODERN FLT

Its seems worthwhile, first of all, to clarify briefly the concepts of approach or principles, method and technique, which are mutually and hierarchically related. They represent, in fact, three level is of analysis and teacher's decision making for teaching and learning English in the classroom. An approach or strategy is the most abstract of all three concepts and refers to the linguistic, psycho- and sociolinguistic principles underlying methods and techniques. Actually, every teacher has some kind of theoretical principles which function as a frame for their ideas of methods and techniques. A technique is, on the other hand, the narrowest of all three; it is just one single procedure to use in the classroom. Methods are between approaches and techniques, just the mediator between theory (the approach) and classroom practice. Some methods can share a number of techniques and, though some techniques have developed autonomously, the most important ones start from the main methods (Hubbard et al. 1983: 31).

Now it seems appropriate to mention the three major language learning issues that language pedagogy and ELT have deal it with through this century and that always concern researchers and the teaching profession. Stern (1983: 401-5) labels them as follows:

1. The L1-L2 connection, that is, the disparity in the learner's mind between the inevitable dominance of the mother tongue and the weaknesses of the second language knowledge.

2. The explicit-implicit option, that is, the chose between more conscious ways of learning a foreign language and more subconscious or automatic ways of learning it. This issue remains to a great extent unresolved and has very often posed a dilemma to the FLT profession and research, as, for example, during the debate between cognitivism and audio lingual approaches in the 60s, and later on with Krashen's Monitor Theory, which makes a distinction between language learning (explicit and conscious) and language acquisition (implicit and subconscious).

3. The code-communication dilemma has become a major issue recently. It refers to the problems that learners have to cope with when learning a new language, as they have to pay attention on the one hand to linguistic forms (the code) and on the other to real communication.

The main techniques used by the Grammar-Translation Method.

The Grammar-Translation Method focuses on the teaching of the foreign language grammar through the presentation of rules together with some exceptions and lists of vocabulary translated into the mother tongue. Translation is considered its most important classroom activity. The main procedure of an ordinary lesson followed this plan: a presentation of a grammatical rule, followed by a list of vocabulary and, finally, translation exercises from selected texts (Stern 1983: 453).

The structuralist methods

The different methods analyzed in this section share a common conception of how to learn a foreign language as a process of acquiring the structures or patterns of it through habit formation. We will examine the approach as well as the origins and the subsequent development of these methods: the Oral or Situational Approach and the Audio lingual Method. a)

Approach: theory of language and learning

The theory of language underlying these methods is structural linguistics, and though there are some differences between British and American structuralism, both movements saw language as "a system of structurally related elements for the encoding of meaning, the elements being phonemes.

The Audio lingual Method The Audio lingual Method corresponds with the USA structuralist tradition of FLT, which became the dominant orthodoxy after World War II. Its origin can go back to the

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seminal work of Bloomfield, who set up the bases of structural linguistics segmenting and classifying utterances into their phonological and grammatical constituents. Fries, Brooks, Rivers, and Lado went on applying these principles up to the 1970s with a cióse relationship with behaviorism. Bloomfield (1942) became a basic source for the Army Method, which was a response to the need of army personnel after the USA entry into the Second World War. Its main procedure was imitation and repetition. The most important assumptions about FLT in the Audio lingual Method are the following (see Ellis 1990: 21-25):

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