**Didactics LMD3 Prof. Semmoud.A**

**Lecture 4 Situational Language Teaching**

The *Oral Approach* or *Situational Language Teaching* is an approach developed by British applied linguists between the 1930s and the 1960s. While it is unknown for many teachers, it had a big influence on language courses till the 1980s. Textbooks such as *Streamline English* (Hartley and Viney 1979) was designed following the SLT approach principles.

The Oral Approach or Situational Language Teaching is based on a structural view of language. Speech, structures and a focus on a set of basic vocabulary items are seen as the basis of language teaching. This was a view similar to that held by American structuralists, such as Fries.  However, what distinguishes the  Situational Language Teaching approach is its emphasis on the presentation of structures in situations.

**Vocabulary and grammar control**

Situational Language Teaching is characterized by two major features:

1. Focus on both vocabulary and reading is the most salient trait of SLT.  In fact, mastery of a set of high-frequency vocabulary items is believed to lead to good reading skills.
2. An analysis of English and a classification of its prominent grammatical structures into sentence patterns (also called situational tables) is believed to help learners internalize grammatical rules.

**Behavioristic background**

The behavioristic view of language learning constitutes the cornerstone of Situation Language Teaching. The approach gives primacy to the processes over the conditions of learning. The following processes are noted in this approach:

1. The act of receiving  knowledge or material
2. Repetition to fix that knowledge or material in memory.
3. The use of the knowledge or material in actual practice until it becomes a personal skill.

The behaviorist theory of learning is based on the principle of habit formation. Mistakes are banned so as to avoid bad habit formation. Following the premises of behaviorism, a teacher presents language orally, then in written form.

**SLT objectives**

The objectives of  Situational Language Teaching involve accurate use of vocabulary items and grammar rules in order to achieve a practical mastery of the four basic skills. Learners must be able to produce accurate pronunciation and use of grammar. The ultimate aim is to be able to respond quickly and accurately in speech situations with an automatic control of basic structures and sentence patterns.

**The syllabus, techniques, and activities**

Situational Language Teaching syllabus is designed upon a word list and structural activities. Grammar teaching involves a situational presentation of new sentence patterns and drills to practice these patterns. The teacher moves from controlled to freer practice of structures and from oral use of sentence patterns to their automatic use in speech, reading, and writing.

**Typical lesson**

According to Situational Language Teaching, a lesson starts with stress and intonation practice followed by a revision and a presentation of new materials (mainly structures or vocabulary). The teacher then proceeds to oral practice and drilling of the elements presented. Finally, the lesson ends with reading activity or written exercises.

**Advantages**

Situational Language Teaching is still attractive to many teachers who still believe in the structural practice of language. Its practicality in the teaching of grammar patterns has contributed to the survival of the approach until recently. Besides, its emphasis on oral practice still attracts support among language teachers.

**Disadvantages**

Many premises underlying the approach have been criticized. For example, Chomsky (1957) showed that the structural and the behavioristic approaches to language are simply unfounded as they do not explain the fundamental feature of language learning: the ability to create novel and unique sentences. Children do not acquire their mother tongue through repetition and habit formation. There must be, however, an innate predisposition that leads them to a certain kind of linguistic competence.

Read more on Situational Language Teaching:

* Check Richards & Rogers’ book: [Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching (Cambridge Language Teaching Library)](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1107675960/ref%3Das_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1107675960&linkCode=as2&tag=myenglishpa0e-20&linkId=GWZLXGY3DZR3W3VM)
* Brown’s book: [Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (6th Edition)](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0133041948/ref%3Das_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0133041948&linkCode=as2&tag=myenglishpa0e-20&linkId=YDZZPMCDFEIDFCYU)

**References:**

To read more on Situational Language Teaching and other methods:

* Richards, J. C. & Rogers, T. S. (1986). Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
* Brown, H. D. (2000). Principles of language learning and teaching (4th ed.). New York: Longman
* Chomsky, N. (1957) Syntactic Structures, The Hague: Mouton
* Hartley, B., & Viney, P. 1978. *Streamline English: Departures.* Oxford University Press.