Survey of Language Teaching/Learning Approaches and Methods 1

A brief account of the different approaches and methods adopted to teach EFL is presented with reference to the definition of the approach/method, its main principles and more importantly its application in real classroom context.

1. Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

It was first used in Germany (1840-1960), known by 'The Classical Method'.

1.1. Definition and Principles

Richards and Schmidt (2002: 231) have defined the grammar-translation method as "a method of foreign or second language teaching which makes use of translation and grammar study as the main teaching and learning activities." This is a method of teaching foreign languages that derives from: "traditional approaches to the teaching of Latin and Greek in the nineteenth century. It was also used to teach modern languages such as French and German and is still influential in the teaching of languages in many countries, particularly at university level (Carter, 1992:37). Moreover, he claims that the approach is favoured because of the intellectual disciplines it imposes.

1.2. Pedagogical Implications

Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is characterizes by: "a meticulous analysis of the target written language, especially its grammar; grammar taught deductively through the presentation and study of explicit rules; vocabulary learned from long bilingual word lists; and the paramount use of translation exercises" (Carter, 1992:37). GTM is typically teacher-centered and the students: "have to work hard at what they consider laborious and monotonous chores-vocabulary learning, translation, and endless written exercises-without much feeling of progress in the mastery of the language and with very little opportunity to express themselves through it...their role in the classroom is, for the greater part of time, a passive one-they absorb and then reconstitute what they have absorbed to satisfy the teacher during a test or an exam". (Rivers, 1981:31).

The main goals of the Grammar Translation Method are to develop an ability to read literary texts, and to learn the disciplines of reading and writing the language accurately. The medium of instruction is the student's own native language. There is little or no systematic attention to the skills of speaking and listening (opcit). Since GTM was not effective mainly "in preparing students to use the target language communicatively, the Direct Method became popular" (Freeman, 2008:23). The definition, principles and main implications of the Direct Method are presented in the subsequent part.

2.Direct Method

Known as 'Natural Method', 'Reform Method', 'Phonetical/Phonetic Method' and 'Oral Method'. It developed in the late nineteenth century as a reaction against the Grammar Translation Method.

2.1.Definition and Principles

A simple definition of the natural method is the following: "Students learn to understand a language by listening to a great deal of it and that they learn to speak it by speaking it-associating speech with appropriate actions. This……….was the way children learned their native language, and this was the way children who had been transferred to a different linguistic environment acquired a second language, apparently without great difficulty" (Rivers, 1981:31).

2.2.Pedagogical Implications

As an approach to the teaching of foreign languages, in the direct method:

Only the target language should be used in the class and the learner should be at all times actively involved in using the language in realistic everyday situations. Students are encouraged to think in the foreign language and not translate in and out of it. Reading and writing are only taught after extensive speaking skills have been developed. Meanings are taught 'directly' through concrete vocabulary, and demonstration by the teacher using gestures, mimes, direct actions, and pictures. Communication skills are developed in small classes with the teacher organizing activities in a graded, progressive way and making much use of question-answer exchanges. In the Direct Method,

grammar is normally only taught inductively. There is little emphasis on deductive teaching of the rues of language structure. There is more emphasis on fluency than on accuracy. (Carter, 1992:22)

The one very basic rule of the direct method is that *'no translation is allowed'*. In fact, the Direct Method receives its name from the fact the meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids, with no resource to the student's native language (Diller, 1978). In addition, the principles of the direct method have been widely accepted and "enthusiastically supported in many parts of the world even though it is accepted that they are not easy to follow to the letter in the artificial environment of the school language classroom" (opcit). Because only brilliant students benefited from the method and because it puts too much pressure on the teacher: "it makes great demands on the gifts, energy and spontaneity of the teacher……..it is time-consuming and proves to be disappointing in examinations" (Rivers, 1981:33), the audio-lingual method came to existence.

3.Audio Lingual Method

Known also as 'Aural-Oral Method', 'Military Method'. Brooks (1964:263) suggested the term 'audio-lingual' for the method as 'aural-oral' was found to be confusing and difficult to pronounce. It was very trendy in 1915's and 1916's.

3.1.Definition and Principles

The method as its name implies is based on aural-oral understanding of the language by aiming at: "developing listening and speaking skills first, as a foundation on which to build the skills of reading and writing" (ibid).

3.2. Pedagogical Implications

The aural-oral method derives from:

> The techniques of intensive foreign language instruction developed for teaching American military personnel during the Second World War. The method is said to result in rapid acquisition of speaking and listening skills. It has some similarities to the direct method of language teaching and is based on the following main principles: speaking and listening competence precedes

competence in reading and writing: use of the mother-tongue is discouraged in the classroom: language skills are a matter of habit formulation, and great emphasis is therefore placed on practice of particular patterns of language through structured dialogues and drills until the use of language is sufficiently rehearsed for responses to be automatic. (Carter, 1992:04).

Though it is criticized a lot, the audio-lingual Approach still "enjoys popularity. Critics say that learners become restricted in expression and can lack the confidence to create new expressions for themselves" (ibid). Due to its numerous shortcomings mainly in the adoption of memorization techniques and drilling that were very tedious, and the considerable physical and emotional demands the method makes upon the teacher (Rivers, 1981), the communicative approach was implemented in order to enable the foreign language learner to communicate using the foreign language.

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