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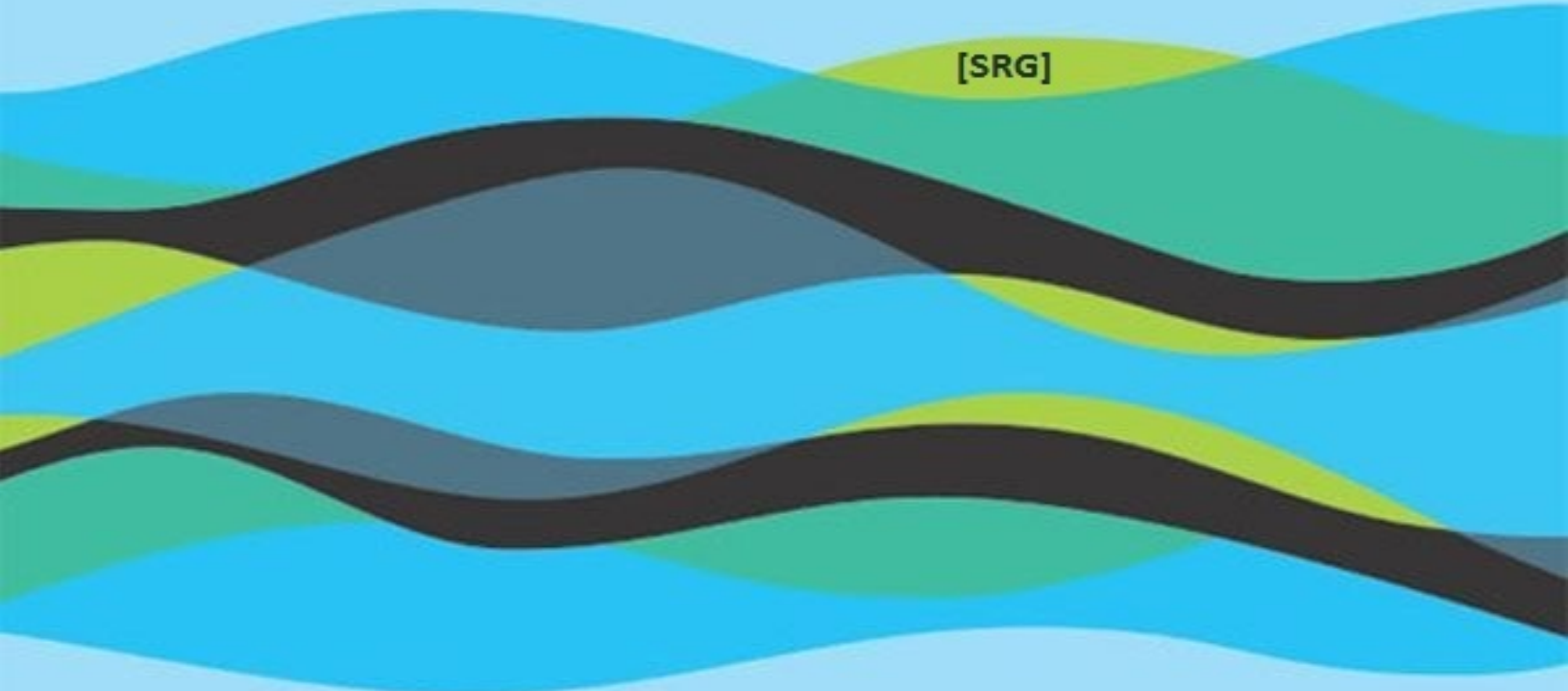
Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching

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OXFORD

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Contents

less isolated in their practice.

4 Conversely, by being members of a professional discourse community, teachers may find their own conceptions of how teaching leads to learning challenged. Interacting with others' conceptions of practice helps to keep teachers' teaching alive and to prevent it from becoming stale and overly routinized (Prabhu 1990).

5 A knowledge of methods helps to expand a teacher's repertoire of techniques. This in itself provides a further avenue for professional growth, since some teachers find their way to new pedagogical positions by first trying out new techniques rather than by entertaining new principles. Moreover, effective teachers who are more experienced and expert have a large, diverse repertoire of best practices (Arends 2004), which presumably helps them deal more effectively with the unique qualities and idiosyncrasies of their students.

Criticisms of Methods

Despite these potential gains from a study of methods, it is important to acknowledge that a number of writers in our field have criticized the concept of language teaching methods. Some say that methods are prescriptions for classroom behavior, and that teachers are encouraged by textbook publishers and academics to implement them whether or not the methods are appropriate for a particular context (Pennycook 1989). Others have noted that the search for the best method is ill-advised (Prabhu 1990; Bartolome 1994); that teachers do not think about methods when planning their lessons (Long 1991); that methodological labels tell us little about what really goes on in classrooms (Katz 1996); and that teachers experience a certain fatigue concerning the constant coming and going of fashions in methods (Rajagopalan 2007). Hinkel (2006) also notes that the need for situationally relevant language pedagogy has brought about the decline of methods.

These criticisms deserve consideration. It is possible that a particular method may be imposed on teachers by others. However, these others are likely to be disappointed if they hope that mandating a particular method will lead to standardization. For we know that teaching is more than following a recipe. Any method is going to be shaped by a teacher's own understanding, beliefs, style, and level of experience. Teachers are not mere conveyor belts delivering language through inflexible prescribed and proscribed behaviors (Larsen-Freeman 1991); they are professionals who can, in the best of all worlds, make their own decisions—informed by their own experience, the findings from research, and the wisdom of practice accumulated by the profession (see, for example, Kumaravadivelu 1994).

Furthermore, a method is decontextualized. How a method is implemented in the classroom is not only going to be affected by who the teacher is, but also by who the students are, what they and the teacher expect as appropriate social roles, the

Thinking about the Experience

Let us make some observations about our experience. These will be in the column on the left. The principles of the Direct Method that can be inferred from our observations will be listed in the column on the right.

Observations	Principles
1 The students read aloud a passage about the geography of the United States of America.	Reading in the target language should be taught from the beginning of language instruction; however, the reading skill will be developed through practice with speaking. Language is primarily speech. Culture consists of more than the fine arts (e.g. in this lesson we observed the students studying geography and cultural attitudes).
2 The teacher points to a part of the map after each sentence is read.	Objects (e.g. realia or pictures) present in the immediate classroom environment should be used to help students understand the meaning.
3 The teacher uses the target language to ask the students if they have a question. The students use the target language to ask their questions.	The native language should not be used in the classroom.
4 The teacher answers the students' questions by drawing on the whiteboard or giving examples.	The teacher should demonstrate, not explain or translate. It is desirable that students make a direct association between the target language form and meaning.
5 The teacher asks questions about the map in the target language, to which the students reply in a complete sentence in the target language.	Students should learn to think in the target language as soon as possible. Vocabulary is acquired more naturally if students use it in full sentences, rather than memorizing word lists.
6 Students ask questions about the map.	The purpose of language learning is communication (therefore students need to learn how to ask questions as well as answer them).

Reviewing the Principles

At this point we should turn to the 10 questions we have answered for each method we have considered so far.

1 What are the goals of teachers who use the Audio-Lingual Method?

Teachers want their students to be able to use the target language communicatively. In order to do this, they believe students need to overlearn the target language, to learn to use it automatically without stopping to think. Their students achieve this by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming the old habits of their native language.

2 What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?

The teacher is like an orchestra leader, directing and controlling the language behavior of her students. She is also responsible for providing her students with a good model for imitation.

Students are imitators of the teacher's model or the tapes she supplies of model speakers. They follow the teacher's directions and respond as accurately and as rapidly as possible.

3 What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?

New vocabulary and structural patterns are presented through dialogues. The dialogues are learned through imitation and repetition. Drills (such as repetition, backward build-up, chain, substitution, transformation, and question-and-answer) are conducted based upon the patterns present in the dialogue. Students' successful responses are positively reinforced. Grammar is induced from the examples given; explicit grammar rules are not provided. Cultural information is contextualized in the dialogues or presented by the teacher. Students' reading and written work is based upon the oral work they did earlier.

4 What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?

There is student-to-student interaction in chain drills or when students take different roles in dialogues, but this interaction is teacher-directed. Most of the interaction is between teacher and students and is initiated by the teacher.

5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

There are no principles of the method that relate to this area.

16 The teacher mouths the correct sound, but does not vocalize it.	Students need to learn to listen to themselves.
17 The student's pronunciation is improved but is still not as close to the target language sounds as some of the students are able to come. The teacher works with her a bit longer before the lesson proceeds.	At the beginning, the teacher needs to look for progress, not perfection. Learning takes place in time. Students learn at different rates.
18 The teacher listens attentively.	A teacher's silence frees the teacher to closely observe the students' behavior.
19 The teacher says, 'Take the green rod,' only once.	Students learn they must give the teacher their attention in order not to miss what he says. Student attention is a key to learning.
20 The students take turns issuing and complying with commands to take a rod of a certain color.	Students should engage in a great deal of meaningful practice without repetition.
21 The students practice commands with compound objects.	The elements of the language are introduced logically, expanding upon what students already know.
22 The students take turns tapping out the sentences of their choice on the word charts.	Students gain autonomy in the language by exploring it and by making choices.
23 Some students choose to tap out simple commands; others tap out more complex ones.	Language is for self-expression.
24 The teacher asks the students for their reactions to the lesson.	The teacher can gain valuable information from student feedback; for example, he can learn what to work on next. Students learn how to accept responsibility for their own learning.
25 There is no homework assigned.	Some learning takes place naturally as we sleep. Students will naturally work on the day's lesson then.

Reviewing the Principles

We will now follow our customary procedure and review the answers to our 10 questions.

1 What are the goals of teachers who use TBLT?

The goal of teachers is to facilitate students' language learning by engaging them in a variety of tasks that have a clear outcome.

2 What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?

The teacher's role is to choose tasks, based on an analysis of students' needs, that are appropriate to the level of the students and to create pre-task and task follow-up phases that are in line with the abilities and needs of the students. The teacher also monitors the students' performance, and intervenes as necessary. The role of the students is to communicate with their peers to complete a task.

3 What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?

A pre-task phase typically begins a task sequence. During this phase, a teacher can introduce the students to the language they will need to complete the task. The tasks are meaningful and relevant so that the students see the reason for doing the task and can see how the task relates to possible situations in their lives outside the classroom. Students are actively engaged with the task, with the teacher monitoring their performance and intervening when necessary. The task has clear outcomes so that both students and teachers can tell if the task has been successfully completed. A post-task phase takes place to reinforce students' learning or to address any problems that may have arisen.

4 What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?

The teacher is the input provider during the initial phase of the lesson. He also sets the task for students to perform. The teacher pays attention during the task, making note of language that should be focused on. He provides feedback such as recasts. Students often work closely together to help each other accomplish the task and to problem-solve.

5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

Students are motivated by doing tasks that prepare them for the real world.

Emerging Uses of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning

Introduction

There are two main ways to think about technology for language learning: technology as providing teaching resources and technology as providing enhanced learning experiences. On the one hand, if we think of technology as providing resources, then it is clear that technology has long been associated with language teaching. For years, the technology may have only been chalk and a blackboard. Later, film strips, audio, and video recording and playback equipment were additions to the technological tools available to many teachers. These days, of course, there are digital technological resources that teachers can draw on. The Internet, which connects millions of computers around the world, makes it possible to communicate from one computer to another. As a result, the **world wide web** (www or 'the web'), a way of accessing information over the Internet, has enabled teachers to find authentic written, audio, and visual texts on most any topic imaginable. There is a breadth and depth of material available for those who know how to surf the web, i.e. use online research tools known as 'search engines' to find it.[1]

Computers also provide the means to access online dictionaries, grammar and style checkers, and **concordances** (which we will discuss later in this chapter). On the other hand, if we think of technology as providing enhanced learning experiences, then the implications are even greater: Technology is no longer simply contributing machinery or making authentic material or more resources available that teachers can use; it also provides learners with greater access to the target language. As a result, it has the potential to change where and when learning takes place. Furthermore, it can even shape how we view the nature of what it is that we teach.

At first glance, neither definition of technology—providing teaching resources and providing enhanced learning experiences—would appear to constitute a method. However, the use of technology for the latter is at least a significant methodological innovation and deserves a place in this book. As Kern has put it:

> Rapid evolution of communication technologies has changed language pedagogy and language use, enabling new forms of discourse, new forms of authorship, and