

WHICH LANGUAGE SKILLS (LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING, WRITING) ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOUR STUDENTS AND WHAT TECHNIQUES ARE MOST EFFECTIVE IN TEACHING THEM THESE SKILLS? WHY ARE THESE TECHNIQUES SUCCESSFUL?

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ÖZET

Her ülkede olduğu gibi, Türkiye'de de yabancı dil öğretim ve öğreniminde güçlükler vardır. İkinci bir dili öğretmek ve öğrenmek, birçok özellik ve olanaklara sahip olmayı gerektirmektedir.

Bu yazımızda, karşılaşılan güçlükleri yenebilmek ve başarılı olmak için nelerin gerekli olduğunu; hangi öğretim yöntemlerinin izlenmesinin daha verimli olacağı ele alınmaktadır.

Türkiye'de bu konudaki bilinçlenme, çok olumludur. İyimser olmamız için hiçbir neden yoktur. Ancak, Galileo'nin, "İnsanlara hiçbir şey öğretemezsiniz. Onların bunu başarmalarına yalnızca yardımcı olabilirsiniz." sözünü de unutmamak gerekir.

As in every country, we have also some problems with foreign language teaching and learning in Turkey. The last two decades have seen a mushrooming of our knowledge about second language learning and teaching. Almost anywhere we turn, we can find text book, articles, lectures, workshops, and courses on the art and science of teaching and/ or learning a second language. Never before have we had such a variety of resources available to us. At the same time, we are a long, long way from finding ultimate answers to the many difficult questions we have been asking. We have grown accustomed the absence of final solutions as we discover an overwhelming multiplicity of variables at play in the process of second language learning.

Second language acquisition is no simple, uni-dimensional reality. It is "slippery" in every way (Brown: 1987). A glance at these two decades or so of research and practice in language teaching yields a clear picture: slowly but surely we are learning to ask better and better questions about how people learn foreign languages. Through many small, determined steps toward our goal of defining a theory of second language acquisition.

The key to the continued success of the quest lies in our ability to be cautiously eclectic in our search for truth. No single discipline or theory or model or factor will ever provide a magic formula for solving the

mystery of second language acquisition that will help us to make informed choices of a particular method or technique for our language classrooms.

While these thoughts and ideas are being discussed in the world, we can not say that this skill or that skill is more important for our students and this / that technique is more effective

But according to our aim(s) and conditions we have to determine our teaching policy and guess (with a great institution) that under these conditions this method and / that technique is more practical and useful.

Before I give some knowledge, I would like to write about the important points which play an important role in learning and teaching.

Gagne (1965: 58-59) identified eight types of learning:

1-Signal learning. 2-Stimulus-response learning. 3-Chaining. 4-Verbal association. 5-Multiple discrimination. 6-Concept learning. 7-Principle learning. Problem solving. We can see that some types are in the behaviouristic framework, and some are in Ausabel's or Rogers' theories of learning (Brown: 80).

Teachers and researchers have all too often dismissed certain theories of learning irrelevant or useless because of the misperception that language learning consist of only one type of learning. "Language is concept learning" say some; "Language is a conditioning process" say others. Both are correct in that part of language learning consist of each of the above. Methods of teaching, in recognizing different levels of learning, need to be consonant with whichever aspect of language is being taught at a particular time while also recognizing the interrelatedness of all levels of language learning.

When we have look at the teaching methods it can be seen that each of them has some advantages and disadvantages. For example. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979:3) list the major characteristic of grammar Translation:

- 1-Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
- 2-Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
- 3-Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
- 4-Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
- 5-Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
- 6-Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
- 7-Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
- 8-Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

It is remarkable that this method has been so popular among many competing models. It does nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language. But, one can understand why this method is

used widely. It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. And it is sometimes successful in leading a student toward a reading knowledge of a second language (Brown:75). But, as Richards and Rodgers (1986:6) point out, "it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. And a recent research (Songün:1990) has shown that most of the English teachers in İzmir prefer to use the Grammar Translation method in their classes.

When we see the characteristics of the audiolingual method, some people may use it or try to do. Prator and Celce-Murcia give its important parts as:

- 1-New material is presented in a dialogue form.
- 2-There is dependence on mimicry, memorisation of set phrases and overlearning.
- 3-Structures are sequenced by means of contrastive analysis and taught one at a time.
- 4-Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills.
- 5-There is little or no grammatical explanation: Grammar is taught by inductive analogy rather than deductive explanation.
- 6-Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context.
- 7-There is much use of tapes, language labs, and visual aids.
- 8-Great importance is attached to pronunciation.
- 9-Very little use of the mother tongue by teachers is permitted.
- 10-Successful responses are immediately reinforced.
- 11-There is great effort to get students to produce error-free utterances.
- 12-There is a tendency to manipulate language and disregard content.

For a number of reasons the audiolingual method enjoyed many years of popularity. But the popularity was not to last forever. Led by Wilga Rivers' (1964) eloquent criticism of the misconceptions of the ALM, and by its ultimate failure to teach long-term communicative proficiency, its popularity waned. But teachers and linguistics learned something from the very failure of the ALM to do everything it had promised, and they moved forward.

Besides methods, there are some other factors which influence our learning and teaching. Kenneth Pike (1967:26) said that language is behaviour, that is, a phase of human activity which must not be treated in essence a structurely divorced from the structure of non-verbal human activity. The activity of man constitutes a structural whole in such a way "compartments" with language in a behavioural compartment insulated in character, content, and organization from other behaviour.

Understanding how human beings feel and respond and believe and value is an exceedingly important aspect of a theory of second language acquisition.

It must not be forgotten that motivation is a term used for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task. It is easy to figure that success in a task is due to the fact that someone is motivated. It is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation. Such claims are of course not erroneous, for countless studies and experiments in human learning have shown that motivation is key to learning. (Brown: 114)

The age of audiolingualism began to wane when the Chomskyan revolution in linguistics turned linguists and language teachers toward the "deep structure" of language and when psychologists began to recognize the fundamentally affective and interpersonal nature of all learning.

Curran's Counseling-learning model of education has been extended to language learning contexts in the form of Community Language, Learning (CLL). There are advantages and disadvantages to a method like CLL. The affective advantages are evident. CLL is an attempt to put Carl Rogers' philosophy factors in second language learning. The student-centered nature of the method can provide extrinsic motivation and capitalize on intrinsic motivation.

There are some practical and theoretical problems with CLL. The counselor-teacher can become too nondirective. The student often needs direction, especially in the first stage, in which there is such seemingly endless struggle within the foreign language. Another problem with CLL is its reliance upon an inductive strategy of learning.

Despite its weaknesses CLL is a potentially useful method for the foreign language classroom as long as teachers are willing to adopt it to their own curricular constraints. That adaptation requires a relaxing of certain aspects of the method (Brown: 119).

It seems intuitively clear that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation and in all likelihood, because of decreased input and interaction, to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency. Yet the teachers must be aware of the fact that everyone has both positive and negative attitudes. If these are not taken into consideration, the results will certainly be influenced and the teachers will be constantly unsuccessful (Songün: 1977).

Other new methods of the decade were not quite as strictly affective. Suggestopedia is a method that was derived from Bulgarian psychologist Georgi Lozanov's (1979) contention material if simply given the right conditions for learning, among which are a state of relaxation and giving over of control to the teacher. In the Silent Way. Caleb Gattegno (1972, 1976) contends that the teacher should provide only minimal input to the student, putting the burden on the student, rather than the teacher, for learning. These two methods represented another step toward innovation in language teaching methodology in the 1970s, but, like CLL, they were as widely criticized as they were accepted (Brown: 140-141).

There are insights to be derived from both methods. Through Suggestopedia we learn to believe in the power of the human brain. Similarly, the principles of the silent way are valid. They expose us to new thoughts that we can -through our developing theoretical rationale for language teaching- sift through, weigh, and adapt to multiple contexts.

The 1960s were a period of intense research into the nature of the legitimate interlanguage systems of learners, with a focus on errors as important keys to understanding makeup of those systems. Both of these

are still important. But a new wave of interest characterizes the 1980s, and 1990, a focus on communicative language teaching -teaching second language for ultimate goal of communication with native speakers of the second language (to understand the speakers and to be able to express themselves). Such a focus has entered on speaking and listening skills, on writing for specific communicative purposes, and on "authentic" reading texts (Brown:198).

The term "communicative competence" was first used by Dell Hymes (1967,1972). Savignon notes that "communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the cooperation of all the participants involved" (1983:9). It is different from Chomsky's "rule-governed creativity". It has important implications for understanding a communicative approach to language teaching.

An important forerunner of the communicative language teaching was the notional-functional syllabus. The distinguishing characteristic of the notional-functional syllabus is its attention to functions as the organizing elements of a foreign language curriculum (Wilkins 1976). An appropriate example is given by Coffey (1983): 1-Introductions 2-Greetings 3-Invitations 4-Apologies, condolences 5-Gratitude, compliments, congratulations 6-Requests, commands, warnings, directions 7-Advice, intentions 8-Offers, seeking permission 9-Pleasure, displeasure 10-Expressing your opinion, asking people to repeat themselves, interrupting someone, changing the topic of conversation.

A weakness of the structural syllabus, in its focus on grammar, is its tendency to highlight a grammatical feature to the exclusion of practical application in real situations. Notional syllabuses seek to overcome that weakness in their attention to the ultimate purpose of language: functional, pragmatic communication between and among human beings.

After having seen the important characteristics of the well-known methods, we can say that it is probably impossible in the near future to describe the whole of human course in such a way that language teachers (both in Turkey and in the world) are provided with ready solutions to the teaching of a foreign language. We must be creative. The language teacher and researcher can be a part of that creative event by fashioning and integrated and cohesive understanding of how learners acquire the ability to communicate clearly and effectively in a second language. So we urgently need the teachers who can manage this.

Before talking about the techniques, we would like to give Rivers' and Temperley's ideas on the problem of teaching and learning (Rivers and Temperley, 1978):

Teaching is an interesting and exciting occupation. As language teachers, we have an open field. We are free to experiment and innovate. We can appropriate what has proved successful in other times and other places. We can repeat and refine what we have found to be effective in our own circumstances with our students.

Learning to use a language freely and fully is a lengthy and effortful process. Teachers cannot learn the language for their students. They can set their students on the road, helping them to develop confidence in their own learning powers. Then they must wait on the sidelines, ready to encourage and assist, while each student struggles and perseveres with autonomous activity. Some students learn the language well, even while the teacher observes. For those who find the task more difficult, we should at least make every effort to ensure that their language-learning is an enjoyable and educational experience.

As teachers of English to students who are already accustomed to using a different language, we must not become discouraged. Our task is not certainly an easy one. The teacher of English as a second or foreign language is a professional who must diagnose and select according to the particular situation of a specific class of students and adapt materials and techniques accordingly.

After having determined the method(s) to be carried out in our classes, it will be useful to write about the techniques. But, we can say that a method comprises both "principles" and "techniques". The principles involve five aspects of second- or foreign language teaching: the teacher, the learner, the teaching process, and the target language/culture. Taken together, the principles represent the theoretical framework of the method. The techniques are the behavioural manifestation of the principles- in other words, the classroom activities and procedures derived from an application of the principles (Freeman:1986).

A given technique may well be associated with more than one method, and this should not really come as much of a surprise. If two methods share certain principles, then the techniques that the application of these principles could well be appropriate for methods. Even where there are no shared principles, a particular technique may be compatible with more than one method, depending on the way in which the technique is used. There is thus no necessary one-to-one correspondence between technique and method. Yet it is also true that certain techniques are frequently associated with a particular method.

If the English teachers in Turkey would like to follow or apply what we have explained above, they should pay an attention to the outline of the techniques given by Mackey (Mackey: 1978):

The Techniques

Introduction

Use of the plan

Equipment and layout

Type of room

Equipment

Furniture

Teaching Equipment

Layout

Layout of Equipment

Seating Arrangement

Techniques of Presentation

Expression Techniques

Spoken Models

Written Models

Content Techniques

Differential

Ostensive

Pictorial

Contextual

Techniques of Repetition

Speech

Amount

Accuracy

Types of Responses

Contexts of Speech Drills

Variety of Speech Drills

Techniques of Questioning

Techniques of Correcting

Reading

Writing

We have a difficulty with using these techniques because of the English teachers' weaknesses. When we talk about the problem of teaching and learning it is impossible not to ask the following questions:

We must ask whether the teacher is qualified to use it. Are the activities called for within his linguistic and professional competence? Is he capable of pronouncing the language properly? Is the teacher sufficiently familiar with the plan? Does he know it well enough to be able to give his whole attention to the class instead of to his teaching notes? Does he have to hesitate every few minutes to find out what he is going to do next? If he does, he may not only lose valuable classroom time; he may also lose the attention of the class.

Thinking that most of the English teachers in Turkey can apply the language drills, Mackey's types of drills (Mackey:419) may be given as a good model:

Listening Drills

Perception Drills

Auditory Comprehension Drills

Listen and Point

Listen and Do

Recording with Film-Strips

Motion-picture Films

Speaking Drills

Pronunciation Drills

Phonetic Exercises

Group Singing

Reading Aloud

Expression Drills

Speech through actions

Speech through pictures

Speech through speech

Reading Drills

Recognition Drills

Making Flash Cards

Using Flash Cards

Making Sentences with Flash Cards

Comprehension Drills

Find the Object

Find the Picture

Find the Missing Half

Multiple Choice Drills

Scrambled Sentences

True-or-False Drills

Read-and-Answer Drills

Reading and Oral Work

As a teacher of teachers, I know the problems we have with teaching and learning English in Turkey. The teachers who have spent a long time to teach English must read a lot and learn what is going on in the world. If they are stuck in their small world of teaching and do not want to improve, everything we have written and told so far will be in vain. But it is not good to be pessimist about this problem, because the new technology and the new mentality in our universities, and the new generation of English teachers promise us a bright future.

To conclude, we always remember Galileo's famous sentence "You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him discover it within himself".

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