

Foreign Language Teaching Methods

Teaching English

to

Iranian Students (Intermediate Level)

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of

Education

National University of Iran

In Partial Fulfilment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

February, 1978



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Preface

Throughout centuries, students of foreign languages have learned their second language by various methods and procedures.

The aim of this dissertation is to study old and current theories of language teaching and the movements which have determined the features of the theories. This study is considered necessary, because an acquaintance with various methods and approaches employed in the past provides a key to the understanding of the nature of language teaching and causes a broad insight to the matter, i.e. the teacher will adapt techniques to his purposes, to his own personality, and to what he feels to be appropriate for the particular class he is teaching, having regard to their age level, their situation, and their educational needs.

Chapter one of the dissertation deals with the development of foreign language teaching; chapter two

covers teacher's roles and responsibilities;chapter three deals with a survey of the various methods of teaching foreign languages;chapter four analyses a syllabus;and chapter five gives the practical approach to the teaching of English to Iranian students.

I am deeply grateful to Dr.F.Seyhun who taught me the first rudiments of bibliographic style;gave ready answers to many a thorny question that plagued me from time to time;reviewed the manuscript;and offered constructive criticism.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	1
VALUES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY.....	3
1-DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE TEACHING.....	5
1.1 ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES.....	5
1.2 THE RENAISSANCE.....	6
1.3 THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES....	7
1.4 THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.....	7
1.5 THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.....	10
11- TEACHER'S ROLF AND RESPONSIBILITY.....	13
2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNER.....	14
2.2 THE LEARNING PROCESS.....	19
2.3 BASIC CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS.....	21
2.4 PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING.....	23
2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIVE SENSES IN LEARNING.....	25
2.6 BASIC INSTRUCTIONAL CRITERIA.....	28

111-A STUDY OF THE VARIOUS METHODS OF TEACHING	
FOREIGN LANGUAGES.....	30
3.1 THE GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD.....	30
3.2 THE DIRECT METHOD.....	33
3.3 THE ECLECTIC METHOD.....	38
3.4 THE BASIC ENGLISH.....	39
3.5 THE AUDIO LINGUAL METHOD.....	40
3.6 THE COGNITIVE METHOD.....	46
3.7 COGNITIVE HABIT FORMATION.....	50
3.8 THE READING METHOD.....	50
3.9 THE NATURAL METHOD.....	52
3.10 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL METHOD.....	53
IV-SYLLABUSES55
4.1 STRUCTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL SYLLABUSES.....	55
4.2 LESSON PLANNING.....	57
4.3 A POSSIBLE LESSON SCHEDULE.....	61
V-TEACHING THE ENGLISH ITEMS AND DEVELOPING THE	
LANGUAGE SKILLS.....	63

5.1 THE FUNCTIONS OF SELECTED ITEMS.....	63
5.2 HOW CAN DIALOGUES BE TAUGHT MOST EFFECTIVELY?.....	64
5.3 THE TEACHING OF STRUCTURE.....	67
5.4 THE TEACHING OF VOCABULARY.....	71
5.5 THE TEACHING OF READING PASSAGE.....	73
5.6 WRITING.....	75
5.7 DICTATION.....	76
5.8 HOMEWORK.....	77
5.9 COMPOSITION AND ESSAYS.....	78
5.10 THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION....	80
CONCLUSION.....	95
APPENDIX: TECHNIQUES AND AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS.....	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	99

INTRODUCTION

The basis of a sound approach to language teaching is to know what the objectives of teaching are. Objectives are set in relation to the particular teaching situation with which the teacher is faced. That is to say, as far as circumstances allow, it is necessary to predict what kinds of language skill will be of greatest value to the learners.

When objectives have been defined, the teacher should provide a learning experience for his pupils that reflects the proportions of the objectives that he has already established.

It is nive to believe it being possible to decide what is the best method of foreign-language teaching. In any group of learners we will find differences of intelligence, of degree and type of previous educational experience, of degree and type of language-learning experience, of phonetic ability, of attitude, of social background,

motivation and, sometimes, of age.

We must adopt an approach to language teaching that is sufficiently rich in the variety of devices that it exploits for the learner to have the freedom to adopt whatever learning strategy suits him best.

VALUES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY

The study of a foreign language, skilfully taught under proper conditions, provides a new experience, progressively enlarging the student's horizon through the introduction to a new medium of science, communication, culture, etc.

In the field of science, students obviously cannot go far unless they are able to read the works of foreign scientists. A chemist, an engineer, a biologist, a surgeon, a doctor, a lawyer and a linguist will all find the knowledge of foreign language of immense service.

There, through knowing a foreign language, one derives far greater pleasure from travelling all over the world. He will feel at home everywhere, and is able to enter into the life of the country he visits and learns thousands of things that he could not possibly learn if he did not know the language.

There are whole worlds still waiting to be explored

The worlds of foreign literature, drama, culture. No translation can ever do more than hold a tarnished mirror to the art of Schiller, Dante, Manzoni, Chekhov, Pushkin, etc. To derive genuine pleasure from the reading of the works of these masters, they must be read in the original.

The development of international organizations, together with radio, television, and many other factors have brought the peoples of the whole world extremely close to one another so that they not only see each other, but also constantly hear each other. How can we live peacefully without understanding each other?

People who are seeking higher employment have to know a foreign language if they are to satisfy the admission requirements.

Considering the mentioned factors and so many other elements every educated person is really obliged to have mastered some foreign language.

CHAPTER 1**DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE TEACHING**

Certain methods, procedures, and techniques of instruction obviously have been utilized throughout the long evolution of education. Many modern methods of teaching are, in fact, adaptations of instructional procedures that were probably used in the past. Some of the major historical influences and important personalities who contributed to educational methodology include:

ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

Before the beginning of the Roman Empire the Romans studied Greek as a second language. As the Empire expanded however, other peoples began to learn Latin until that language became the international language of the Western World.

The first concern with language-teaching method in Europe, therefore had to do with the teaching of Latin.

Methods were mostly limited to Latin grammars designed to enable clerics to speak, read and write in their second language. ¹

THE RENAISSANCE

The first complaints about bad methods of teaching latin appear after the invention of printing. Many opposed to too much formal grammar and to the teaching of rules. Instructional materials were reorganized and general methodology changed. The father of secondary education, Vittorino De Feltre, placed great attention on individual differences and practical education, seeking the all-round development of student personality. The famous Czech educator, Jan Comenius used imitation, repetition and plenty of practice in both reading and speaking instead of rules. The grammar was acquired indirectly by induction. And in one of his works, the Orbis Pictus (1658), he was the first to teach language through pictures. ²

¹ W.F. Mackey, LANGUAGE TEACHING ANALYSIS (Cambridge Mass.: M.I.T. 1962), p. 141

² Ibid., pp. 141-42

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

The ideas of Comenius were followed by persons interested in language teaching, especially Basedow who later, in 1763, also came under the influence of the nature education ideas of Rousseau.

Up to the last quarter of the eighteenth century the usual practice in schools was to translate from the second language into the first.

By the end of the century, the teaching of Latin grammar had become an end in itself.³

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Throughout the nineteenth century, language teaching in schools followed Karl Plotz's techniques. Plotz's method was divided into two parts: (1) rules and paradigms, and (2) sentences for translation into and out of the second language. It was a matter of using the first language to acquire the second, this included rote learning of grammar rules, learning to put grammatical labels on words, and

³ Ibid., pp. 142-43