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Beyond Methods: Alternative Approaches to Instructional Design in Language Teaching*

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In this paper I will compare the assumptions and consequences implicit in two different approaches to language teaching. The first is the view of teaching which underlies the use of methods to determine the instructional design of a language programme. This happens when a specific method or approach such as Total Physical Response, The Natural Approach, The Silent Way or Communicative Language Teaching is selected as the basis for instruction in a language programme. I will compare this approach to one which focuses on the nature of effective classroom teaching and learning and derives instructional principles from the study of how effective teachers and learners achieve their goals. I will call the first approach the Follow the Method' philosophy. The second can be referred to as 'Develop a Methodology'.

Follow the Method

The goal of many language teachers is to 'find the right method'. The history of our profession in the last hundred years has done much to support the impression that improvements in language teaching will come about as a result of improvements in the quality of methods, and that ultimately an effective language teaching method will be developed. Some breakthrough in linguistic or psycholinguistic theory, it is assumed, will eventually unlock the secrets of second and foreign language learning and these can then be incorporated into a new super-method that will solve the language teaching problem once and for all. Some believe that the super-method has already been found, and that the adoption of a method such as The Silent Way, Suggestopedia or the Natural Approach would bring about dramatic improvements in language learning.

Common to all methods is a set of specifications for how teaching should be accomplished, derived from a particular theory of the nature of language and second language learning. Differences in the instructional specifications reflect differences in the theory underlying the method. Some methods advocate an early emphasis on speaking as a basis for establishing basic language patterns. Others recommend that speaking be delayed until the learner has built up a receptive competence in the language. Some make use of memorized dialogues and tests: others require that learners attempt to communicate with each other as soon as possible using their own language resources. As we spell

out the details of particular methods and approaches, we see that common to all of them is a set of prescriptions as to what teachers and learners should do in the language classroom. There are prescriptions for the teacher as to what material should be presented, when it should be taught and how, and prescriptions for learners as to what approach they should take towards the teaching materials and classroom activities. Specific roles for teachers, learners and instructional materials are hence established (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). The teacher's job is to match his or her teaching style as well as the learners' learning styles, to the method. Special training packages and programmes are available for some methods to ensure that teachers do what they are supposed to do and teach according to the method.

Despite the appeal of methods, their past history is somewhat of an embarrassment. (If you practise the Direct Method, the Oral Aural Approach, or the Situational Method, you should always do it with a consenting adult and in the privacy of your own home.) Studies of the effectiveness of specific methods have had a hard time demonstrating that the method itself, rather than some other set of factors, was the crucial variable. Likewise, observations of teachers using specific methods have reported that teachers seldom conform to the methods they are supposed to be following. Swaffar, Arens, and Morgan (1982), for example, investigated differences between what they termed rationalist and empiricist approaches to foreign language instruction. By a rationalist approach they refer to process-oriented approaches in which language learning is seen as an interrelated whole, where language learning is a function of comprehension preceding production, and where it involves critical thinking and the desire to communicate. Empiricist approaches focus on the four discrete language skills. Would such differences be found in differences in classroom practices? Swaffar highlights the problem: One consistent problem is whether or not teachers involved in presenting materials created for a particular method are actually reflecting the underlying philosophies of these methods in their classroom practices' (Swaffar et. aL 1982:25)

Swaffar et. a!. found that many of the distinctions used to contrast methods, particularly those based on classroom activities, did not exist in actual practice. 'Methodological labels assigned to teaching activities are, in themselves, not informative, because they refer to a pool of classroom practices which are used uniformally. The differences among major methodologies are to be found in the ordered hierarchy, the priorities assigned to tasks' (Swaffar et.aI., 1982:31).

Methods hence make assumptions about the nature of teaching which are not based on 'the study of the process of teaching. The findings of Swaffar et. al. account for the difficulty teacher supervisors often have of recognizing which method a teacher is following. I have often been in the awkward situation, after observing a class taught by a teacher following, say, Communicative Language Teaching principles, and one taught by a teacher using an Audiolingual approach, of not being able to remember which was which. Nevertheless, the future for methods continues to look good. Several quite new ones have appeared in recent years and at conferences where salespersons for the new methods are present, teachers flock to hear presentations on the current super-methods. So what is the problem?

The basic problem is that the typical method presents a predetermined packaged deal for teachers which incorporates a static 'top-down' view of teaching. By this I mean one in which teacher roles, learner roles, and teaching/learning activities and processes are superimposed on teachers and learners. Studies of classroom events, however, have demonstrated that teaching is a dynamic interact ional process in which the teacher's 'method' is the cumulative result of activities and processes that evolve over a long period of time (Chall, 1967; Dunkin and Biddle, 1974; Swaffar et. a!., 1982). It results from the process of interaction between the teacher, the learners, and the instructional process over time. Attempts to find general methods that are suitable for all teachers

and all teaching situations reflect an essentially negative view of teachers. The assumption is that since the quality of teachers cannot be guaranteed, the contribution of the individual teacher should be minimized by designing teacher-proof methods. The assumption which underlies general all-purpose methods such as The Silent Way, The Natural Approach and so on, is hence essentially this. Teachers cannot be trusted to teach well. Left to his or her own devices, the teacher will invariably make a mess of things. A method, on the other hand, because it imposes a uniform set of teaching roles, teaching styles, teaching strategies and teaching techniques on the teacher, will not be affected by the variations we find in individual teaching skill and teaching styles in the real world.

Researchers who have investigated the nature of teaching have recently begun to explore the implications of a different view of teaching (Good, 1979; Elliot, 1980; Tikunott, 1985). They begin with the assumption that teachers (rather than methods) do make a difference, that teachers work in ways which are to an extent, independent of methods, and that the characteristics of effective teaching can be determined. Other researchers have turned their attention to learners and sought to determine what characterizes effective learning. I see the field of instructional design and methodology in language teaching as drawing on the study of both teaching and learning processes. It encompasses the study of the nature of effective teaching and learning in second and foreign language settings in order to determine principles which can be used as the basis for developing instructional designs. It is this approach to the design of instruction in language teaching which I will label 'Develop a Methodology'. Let us consider the contribution to methodology of the study of effective teaching and learning.

Develop a Methodology

1. *The nature of effective teaching: teacher strategies*

Every teacher aims to be an effective teacher. The concept of effective teaching is a somewhat elusive one however. Is it something we observe in the teacher's behaviour, in the learner's behaviour, in classroom interaction, or in the results of learning? Researchers have attempted to operationalize the notion of effective teaching by describing it as teaching which produces higher than predicted gains on standardized achievement tests (Good, 1979). Studies of teacher effectiveness have dealt mainly with first language classrooms and with the teaching of reading and maths. One major study has dealt with effective teachers in bilingual programmes (Tikunoff et. a!., 1980). These studies are characterized by detailed observation of teachers performing instructional activities in the classroom in an attempt to isolate the qualities and skills of effective teachers. Despite the fact that most of the studies have not dealt with ESL teachers, the research to date does, I believe, permit cautious generalizations.

The first finding, and one which should not be all that surprising, is that effective teachers have superior classroom management skills (Good, 1979). Classroom management skills are reflected in the degree to which teachers can successfully structure, maintain, and monitor learning activities. A well-managed class is one in which there is a minimum of disruption and a maximum degree of student involvement in learning activities. Good classroom management presumably leads to higher levels of learning because it promotes higher levels of involvement in learning activities by learners. Studies suggest that classroom management skills are more crucial than the particular method the teacher is using. Stalling and Hentzell (cited in Good, 1979) found that no one curriculum or programme was best for all schools. Rather they found that how teachers manage classes was fundamentally related to students' progress in the acquisition of basic skills.

A second important finding from studies of teacher effectiveness concerns an overall approach to teaching which has been labelled 'active teaching' by some researchers and 'direct instruction' by others. Active teaching generally refers to teaching which has the following characteristics:

a. the teacher places a clear focus on academic goals:
b. the teacher promotes extensive content coverage and high levels of student involvement in classroom tasks;
c. the teacher selects instructional goals and materials and actively monitors student progress towards those goals:
d. the teacher structures learning activities and feedback is immediate and academically oriented;
e. the teacher creates an environment that is task oriented but relaxed (Good, 1979:55).

Some researchers have suggested that an important component of active teaching is the amount of time teachers allocate to learning tasks and the degree to which learners are actively engaged in the tasks they are assigned (Cohen et. aL, 1978). Tikunoff (1983) has investigated the concept of active teaching as it applies to teachers in bilingual programmes. Fifty-eight teachers who were nominated by their colleagues as being the best bilingual teachers in their schools, were interviewed in order to determine their approach to teaching, their philosophy of instruction, the goals they set for lessons and the demands they structure into class tasks. They were then observed during actual instruction and at the same time observations were made of students in their classes. In order to be able to participate successfully in instruction, Tikunoff argues that learners in bilingual education programmes must be able to:

a. decode and understand both task expectations and new information;
b. engage appropriately in completing tasks, completing them with high accuracy;
c. obtain accurate feedback with relation to completing tasks successfully.

Tikunoff (see Table 1) then matches the characteristics of effective learner behaviour with those found to characterize what effective teachers do to foster this behaviour.

TABLE I: Relationship of Learner Requirements with Active Teaching (from Tikunoff 1985:135).

SO THAT STUDENTS CAN:	TEACHER MUST:
1. Decode, understand: • Task expectations (what product should look like: how to complete accurately) • New information	1. Communicate clearly: • Give accurate directions • Specify tasks and measurements • Present new information by explaining, outlining, summarizing, reviewing.
2. Participate productively: • Maintain productive engagement on assigned tasks and complete them • Complete tasks with high accuracy • Know when successful in tasks • Observe norms (meet teacher's expectations)	2. Obtain, maintain engagement: • Maintain task focus • Pace instruction appropriately • Promote involvement • Communicate expectations for successful performance
3. Obtain feedback • Know how to obtain accurate feedback re-task completion, i.e. a. whether achieving accuracy or b. how to achieve accuracy	3. Monitor progress... • review work frequently • adjust instruction to maximum accuracy
	4. ... and provide immediate feedback • Re task completion so students a. know when they are successful or b. are given information about how to achieve success

What distinguishes this approach to teaching is that the methodological principles are derived from the study of teaching itself, rather than from a method or from a theory of language or of second language acquisition. It is a 'bottom-up' approach, in which a theory of teaching - in this case, 'active teaching' - is derived from the study of effective teaching. While the characteristics which Good, Tikunoff and others have found to characterize effective teaching cannot necessarily be generalized to ESL classes, as a general approach this has much to commend it. It suggests that we first need to locate instances of effective teaching and then identify their distinctive features. This approach begins from considering the classroom as an instructional context in which there is an interaction between the teacher's instructional goals, classroom tasks and activities, the teacher's instructional activities and behaviours, student behaviours in completing assigned tasks, and learning outcomes. In the bilingual classrooms observed in Tikunoffs study, effective teaching was found to reflect the

degree to which the teacher is able to successfully communicate his or her intentions, maintain students' engagement in instructional tasks and monitor students' performance on tasks.

In ES/EFL classrooms where different instructional goals are present and different aspects of second language proficiency are being addressed, the characteristics of effective teaching in those settings cannot be inferred merely from reading about the theoretical principles underlying the method or approach the teacher is supposed to be following.

Rather, classroom observation of teachers who are achieving higher than predicted levels of achievement in their learners or who are assessed as performing at high levels of effectiveness according to other criterion, provides the data from which profiles of effective teachers in ESL/EFL listening, reading, writing, speaking and other kinds of classes can be developed.

2. *The nature of effective learning: learner strategies*

In addition to information about how effective teachers deliver instruction, in order to develop methodological principles we also need to know what it is that learners do who achieve higher than predicted levels of second language learning. Prompted by the awareness that learners may succeed despite our methods and techniques rather than because of them, researchers are looking more closely at learners in an attempt to discover how successful learners achieve their results (Willing, 1985; O'Malley et. al., 1 985a, 1985b). Wenden comments: 'From this viewpoint, the learner is seen as an active, self-determining individual who processes information in complex, often idiosyncratic ways that rarely can be predicted entirely in advance... (Weinstein et.al, 1979). The purpose of the research, therefore, is to discover what 'active, self-determining learners do to help themselves learn a second language' (Wenden, 1985:4).

Studies of learner strategies have focused on the variety of operations, processes, procedures and heuristics which learners apply to the task of learning a second language. Given any language learning task such as understanding a lecture, reading a text, writing a composition, understanding the meaning of a new grammatical or lexical item, preparing a written summary of a text, a number of strategies are available to a learner to help carry out the task. Some strategies will be more effective than others and will lead to more efficient or effective learning. Research on learner strategies in second language learning seeks to identify the strategies employed by successful learners, and then to teach those strategies to other learners in order to improve their language learning capacities (Hosenfeld, 1976; Cohen and Aphek, 1980, 1981; Chamot and O'Malley, 1984).

Chamot and O'Malley, following Brown and Palincsar (1982), distinguish between two kinds of learning strategies which are referred to as Metacognitive Strategies and Cognitive Strategies. 'Metacognitive learning strategies involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring production and evaluating oneself after a learning activity. Cognitive learning strategies, in contrast, are more directly related to the task at hand and are applied to new information during the learning process' (Chamot and O'Malley, 1984:1).

Metacognitive strategies characterize a general approach to language learning. Information about these kinds of strategies can be obtained by interviewing successful language learners to determine how they approach and organize their language learning endeavours (Naiman et al., 1978). Cognitive strategies are revealed in studies of learners engaged in particular language learning tasks, such as planning the first draft of a composition or attempting to understand a difficult reading text (Phillips, 1975; Hosenfeld, 1984; Cohen and Aphek, 1981).

Wenden's work on self-directed learning (Wenden, 1983) is in the domain of metacognitive strategies. She interviewed adult language learners about how they organized their language learning experiences and found that they asked themselves eight kinds of questions. O'Malley et. al. (1985b) group the questions into three kinds of metacognitive strategies - knowledge about cognition, planning, and monitoring and self-evaluation (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: Self-directed Learning Strategies (from O'Malley *et. al.*, 1985)

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COGNITION	
Question: How does this language work?	Decision: Learners make judgements about the linguistic and sociolinguistic codes.
Question: What's it like to learn a language?	Decision: Learners make judgements about how to learn a language and about what language learning is like.
PLANNING	
Question: What should I learn and how?	Decision: Learners decide upon linguistic objectives, resources, and use of resources.
Question: What should I emphasize?	Decision: Learners decide to give priority to special linguistic items.
Question: How should I change?	Decision: Learners decide to change their approach to language learning.
MONITORING AND SELF-EVALUATION	
Question: How am I doing?	Decision: Learners determine how well they use the language and diagnose their needs.
Question: What am I getting out of this?	Decision: Learners determine if an activity or strategy is useful.
Question: How am I responsible for learning? How is language learning affecting me?	Decision: Learners make judgements about how to learn a language and about what language learning is like.

O'Malley et. al. have begun to investigate the use of learners strategies by ESL learners both in and out of classrooms (O'Malley et. al., 1984, 1985). ESL students and their teachers were interviewed about the learning strategies they used on specific language learning tasks and also observed in ESL classrooms. They were also asked about their use of English in communicative situations outside the classroom. A total of twenty-six different kinds of learning strategies were identified and classified as Metacognitive, Cognitive or Social Mediation strategies (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. Learner Strategy Definitions (from O'Malley *et.al.*, 1985)

Learning Strategy	Description
Metacognitive Strategies	
Advanced Organizers	Making a general but comprehensive preview of the main organizing concepts of principles in an anticipated learning activity.
Directed Attention	Decoding in advance to attend in general to a learning task and to ignore irrelevant distractors.
Selected Attention	Deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that will cue the retention of language input.
Self-management	Understanding the conditions that help one learn and arrange for the presence of those conditions.
Advance Preparation	Planning for and rehearsing language components necessary to carry out an upcoming language task.
Self-monitoring	Correcting one's speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary; for appropriateness related to the setting or to the people who are present.

Delayed Production	Consciously deciding to postpone speaking to learn, initially, only through listening comprehension.
Self-evaluation	Checking the outcome of one's own language learning against an internal measure of completeness and accuracy.
Self-reinforcement	Arranging rewards for oneself when a language learning activity has been accomplished successfully.
Cognitive Strategies	
Repetition	Imitating a language model, including overt practice and silent rehearsal.
Resourcing	Using target language reference materials.
Directed Physical Response	Relating new information to physical actions, as with directives.
Translation	Using the first language as a basis for understanding and/or producing the second language.
Grouping	Reordering or reclassifying and perhaps labelling the material to be learned based on common attributes.
Notetaking	Writing down the main idea or important points, outlining, or summarizing information presented orally or in writing.
Deduction	Consciously applying rules to produce or understand the second language.
Recombination	Constructing a meaningful sentence or larger language sequence by combining known elements in a new way.
Imagery	Relating new information to visual concepts in memory via familiar, easily retrievable visualizations, phrases, locations or places.
Auditory Representation	Retention of the sound or similar sound for a word, phrase or longer language sequence.
Key Word	Remembering a new word in the second language by identifying a familiar word in the first language that sounds like or otherwise resembles the new word and generating easily recalled images of

	some relationship between the two words that cues the meaning of the new word.
Contextualization	Placing a word or phrase in a meaningful language sequence.
Elaboration	Relating new information to other concepts in memory.
Transfer	Using previously acquired linguistic and/or conceptual knowledge to facilitate a new language learning task.
Inferencing	Using available information to guess meanings of new items, predicted outcomes, or fill in missing information.
Question for Clarification	Asking a teacher or other native speaker for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation, and/or examples.
Social Mediaton Strategies	
Co-operation	Working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, to pool information, or to model a language activity.

In a follow-up study, high school ESL students were given training in the use of particular strategies in order to determine if it would improve their effectiveness as language learners and their performance on vocabulary, listening, and speaking tasks. Strategies were compared across proficiency levels and with learners of different language backgrounds. Students were given training in the use of specific strategies for particular language learning tasks. Results supported the notion that learners can be taught to use more effective learning strategies (O'Malley et. al., 1 985a, b): 'Strategies training was successfully demonstrated in natural teaching environment with second language listening and speaking tasks. This indicates that classroom instruction on learning strategies with integrative language skills can facilitate learning' (O'Malley et. al., 1985a: 577)

Other researchers have focused on identifying cognitive strategies, that is those which 'are more directly related to individual learning tasks and entail direct manipulation or transformation of the learning materials'. (O'Malley et. al, 1985a:561). Studies of how learners approach reading tasks, for example, have provided information on strategies employed by good and poor readers. Phillips (1975) employed a 'think-aloud' procedure to investigate reader's strategies in dealing with unknown vocabulary. From her students' descriptions, Phillips found that strategies used by efficient readers included categorizing words grammatically, interpreting grammatical operations, and recognizing cognates and root words. Hosenfeld (1977, 1984) has used similar techniques in studying processes employed by L2 readers when encountering unfamiliar words. In one study (Hosenfeld, 1977), some of the differences between those with high and low scores on a reading proficiency test were: high scorers tended to keep the meaning of the passage in mind, to read in broad phrases, to skip inessential words, and to guess meanings of unknown words from context; low scorers tended to lose the meaning of sentences as soon as they decoded them, to read word-by-word or in short phrases, to rarely skip words and to turn to the glossary when they encountered new words. In addition, successful readers tended to identify the grammatical categories of words, could detect word order differences in the foreign language, recognized cognates, and used the glossary only as a last resort (Hosenfeld, 1984:233). Hosenfeld found that unsuccessful readers could be taught the lexical

strategies of successful readers, confirming Wenden's observation that '...ineffective learners are inactive learners. Their apparent inability to learn is, in fact, due to their not having an appropriate repertoire of learning strategies' (Wenden, 1985:7).

Studies of how learners approach writing tasks have also focused on the effectiveness of the processes learners employ (Raimes, 1985). Lapp (1984) summarizes (see Table 4) some of the research findings on differences between skilled and unskilled writers with respect to rehearsing and pre-writing behaviours (what a writer does prior to beginning writing), drafting and writing processes (how the writer actually composes his or her piece of writing) and revising behaviours (revisions and corrections the writer makes).

TABLE 4: Differences Between Skilled and Unskilled Writers (from Lapp, 1984)

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1. **Rehearsing and Pre-writing Behaviours**

Skilled writers

Spend time thinking about the task and planning how they will approach it; gather and organize information;
Have a variety of different strategies to help them, e.g. notetaking, reading, making lists.

Unskilled writers

Spend little time on planning.
May start off confused about the task.
Have few planning and organizing strategies available.

2. **Drafting and Writing Behaviours**

Skilled writers

Use information and ideas derived from rehearsing to trigger writing.
Take time to let ideas develop.
Get ideas onto paper quickly and fluently.
Have sufficient language resources available (e.g. grammar, vocabulary) to enable them to concentrate on meaning rather than form.
Spend time reviewing what they write, to allow for what they have written to trigger new ideas.
Do most of their reviewing at the sentence or paragraph level.
Know how to use reviewing to solve composing problems.
Use reviewing to trigger planning.
Refer back to rehearsing data to maintain focus and to trigger further writing.
Are primarily concerned with higher levels of meaning.

Unskilled writers

Begin the task immediately.
Refer to the task or topic to trigger writing.
Have limited language resources available and therefore quickly become concerned with language

matters.
Spend little time reviewing what they have produced.
Review only short segments of text.
Don't use reviewing to solve composing problems.
Do not have access to rehearsing data.
Are concerned primarily with vocabulary choice and sentence formation.

3. **Revising Behaviours**

Skilled writers

Make fewer formal changes at the surface level.
Use revisions successfully to clarify meanings.
Make effective revisions which change the direction and focus of the text.
Revise at all levels (lexical, sentence, discourse).
Add, delete, substitute and reorder when revising.
Review and revise throughout the composing process.
Often pause for reviewing and revising during rewriting the first draft.
Revising does not interfere with the progress, direction and control of the writing process.
Are not bothered by temporary confusions arising during the revising process.
Use revision process to generate new content and trigger need for further revision.

Unskilled writers

Make many formal changes at the surface level.
Revisions do not always clarify meanings.
Do not make major revisions in the direction or focus of the text.
Revise primarily at lexical and sentence level.
Do not make effective use of additions, deletions, substitutions, and reorderings.
Make most revisions only during writing the first draft.
Do not pause for reviewing while copying the first draft.
Revising interferes with the composing process.
Bothered by the confusion associated with revising thus reducing the desire to revise.
Use revision process primarily to correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary.

While many of the studies these findings are based on deal with first language writers, similar findings with respect to L2 writers (e.g. Heuring, 1984) are compelling teachers to evaluate their teaching strategies to determine if they are promoting effective or ineffective learning strategies in learners. Many commonly employed techniques in the teaching of writing, such as outlining or writing from a rhetorical model, might well inhibit rather than encourage the development of effective writing skills, because they direct the learner's attention to the form and mechanics of writing too early in the writing process.

Summary and Conclusions

I have contrasted two approaches to instructional design in language teaching. One, the 'follow the method' approach, reflects a top-down approach to teaching. Both the teacher and the learner are approached on the terms of the educational theorist, applied linguist, or curriculum planner. The assumptions or theory underlying the method provide the starting point for an instructional design which is subsequently imposed on teachers and learners, and an attempt is made to make the teacher's and learner's classroom behaviours match the specifications of the method. This can be contrasted with the 'develop a methodology' approach. This is a 'bottom-up' approach which starts from the observable processes of classroom teaching and learning. From this perspective methodological principles and practices in language teaching are derived from two sources of information:

1. the study of effective teaching provides information about how effective teachers organize and deliver instruction. So far this has been seen to relate to classroom management skills, and to the strategies teachers use to present instructional goals, structure learning tasks and activities, monitor learning and provide feedback on it;

2. the study of effective learning provides information about the learning strategies effective learners apply to the process of using and learning a second and foreign language.

Data of this kind can be used to train teachers in more effective teaching practices, and to help develop more effective learning strategies in learners. Relevant concerns in methodology then focus not on the search for the best method, but rather on the circumstances and conditions under which more effective teaching and learning are accomplished.

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