TECHNIQUES AND PRINCIPLES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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·EDITORS' PREFACE·

It has been apparent for some time that too little attention has been given to the needs of practicing and student teachers of English as a Second Language.* Although numerous inservice and preservice teacher-training programs are offered throughout the world, these often suffer from lack of appropriate instructional materials. Seldom are books written that present practical information that relates directly to daily classroom instruction. What teachers want are useful ideas, suggestions, explanations, demonstrations, and examples of teaching strategies that have been supported by leaders in the field of modern language teaching—strategies that are consistent with established theoretical principles and that others in our profession have found to be expedient, practical, and relevant to real-life circumstances in which most teachers work.

It was in recognition of this need that we began our search for scholars who distinguished themselves as language teaching methodologists, especially those who had been successful in communicating the characteristics of language teaching and testing that have been found appropriate for students from elementary school through college and adult education programs. We also sought in those same scholars evidence of an awareness and understanding of current theories of language learning, together with the ability to translate the essence of a theory into practical applications for the classroom.

Our search has been successful. For this volume, as well as for others in this series, we have chosen a colleague who is extraordinarily com-

petent and exceedingly willing to share with practicing teachers, as well as those just entering the field, the considerable knowledge that she has gained from the abundance of both practical classroom experience and empirical research in which she has been engaged over the past several years.

In a most illuminating and imaginative manner, Professor Diane Larsen-Freeman's book provides an overview and elucidation of those language teaching methods that have achieved international prominence. Each of the chapters of this book is devoted to the explication of a particular methodology, thus providing the reader with the means for inspecting and considering a number of alternative approaches to language teaching as they relate to his own teaching responsibilities. With this volume then, a critical need in the language teaching field has been met.

We are extremely pleased to join with the authors in this series and with Oxford University Press in making these books available to our fellow teachers. We are confident that the books will enable language teachers around the world to increase their effectiveness while at the same time making their task an easier and more enjoyable one.

Russell N. Campbell
William E. Rutherford

*In this volume, and in others in the series, we have chosen to use *English as a Second Language (ESL)* to refer to English teaching in countries where English is the first language, and therefore taught as a second language, *as well as* situations where it is taught as a foreign language (EFL).

·ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS·

·AUTHOR'S PREFACE·

This book presents and discusses eight well-known language-teaching methods that are in use today. Some of these methods have been around for a very long time and most of them have been cited before in one place or another where language-teaching methods have been written about. Since the term "method" is not used the same in all of these citations, it is appropriate here at the outset to call the reader's attention to the particular way the word is used in this volume.

First of all, a method[1] is seen as superordinate, comprising both "principles" and "techniques."[2] The principles involve five aspects of second- or foreign-language teaching: the teacher, the learner, the teaching process, the learning process, and the target language/ culture.[3] Taken together, the principles represent the theoretical framework of the method. The techniques are the behavioral manifestation of the principles—in other words, the classroom activities and procedures derived from an application of the principles.

[1] The term "method" is being used in this book in a way different from that in the familiar ternary distinction of approach, method, and technique to be found in Anthony (1963). His concept of method is too indeterminate for our purposes here. See Clark (1983) for a similar view.

[2] See also Richards and Rodgers (1982).

[3] The methods described in this book are applicable to both second-language and foreign-language teaching. Hence the term "target language" is used here to refer to both the second or foreign language that is being taught.

It will presently be seen that a given technique may well be associated with more than one method. If two methods share certain principles, then the techniques that are the application of these principles could well be appropriate for both 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. For the sake of convenience, therefore, techniques will be introduced in this book within a methodological context.

Second, the inclusion here of any method should not necessarily be taken as advocacy of that method by the author. Not all of the methods to be presented have been adequately tested,[4] though some have obviously stood the test of time. Accordingly, the teachers who use this book will need to evaluate each method in the light of their own beliefs and experience.

The third observation to be made has to do with the fashion in which the various methods are depicted. Each method is introduced in such a way as to afford the reader the opportunity to "observe" a class in which that method is being used. It must be acknowledged, however, that the class is always highly idealized. Anyone who is or has been a language teacher or language student will immediately recognize that language classes seldom go as smoothly as the ones we will see here. (In the real world students don't always catch on as quickly and teachers don't always perform so flawlessly.) Nevertheless, it is assumed that observing a class in this way will give readers a greater understanding of a particular method than if they were to simply read a description of it. Indeed, it is my hope that no matter what their assessment of a particular method, they will not have reached it without first, so to speak, getting inside that method and looking out.[5]

[4] See, for example, Scovel (1979).

[5] Larsen-Freeman (1983).

Finally, although I have made every effort toward a faithful rendering of each method depicted, there will undoubtedly be those who would not totally accept that rendition. This is understandable and probably inevitable. My description is, as it must be, my own interpretation of the contributions of others and the product of my own experience.

It is my sincere hope that this book will both inform and challenge its readers. If it does, then it will have made a contribution to the all-important realm of teacher education.

Brattleboro, Vermont   Diane Larsen-Freeman
1985

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·CONTENTS·

·CHAPTER ONE·
INTRODUCTION

As a language teacher you must make decisions all of the time. Some of your decisions are relatively minor ones—should homework be assigned that particular day, for instance. Other decisions have more profound implications. What should be the goal of language instruction? Which language teaching method will be the most effective in reaching it? What is the best means of evaluation to see if it has been reached? There is no single correct answer to questions like these. Each of you has to answer them for yourself. We believe, however, that a teacher informed about some of the possibilities will make better decisions. Making informed choices is, after all, what teaching is all about (Stevick 1982; Larsen-Freeman 1983a, 1983b).

One purpose of this book, therefore, is to provide information to teachers and teacher trainees about eight methods of foreign language teaching. By reading this book you will gain an understanding of the principles on which these methods are based and of the techniques associated with each method. These eight were chosen because they are all currently practiced today. It is not our purpose to convince you of the superiority of any one of them; indeed, the inclusion of a method in this book should not be construed as an endorsement of that method. What *is* being recommended is that, in the interest of becoming informed about existing choices, you investigate each method.

A second purpose for this book is to encourage you to examine your own beliefs about teaching and learning and about how you put these into practice. Even those of you with a great deal of teaching experience stand to benefit from considering the principles of these methods. Perhaps such consideration will help you to understand better why you do what you do.

We do not expect that you will abandon the way you teach now

in order to wholly adopt one of these methods. We do think, however, that there will be some new techniques here worthy of your attention. Although certain techniques are associated with particular methods and are derivable from particular principles, most techniques can be adapted to any teaching style and situation. It is not so much the technique itself as the way a teacher works with it that makes the difference.

Therefore do not be quick to dismiss a technique because, at first glance, it appears to be at odds with your own beliefs or to be impossible to apply to your own situation. For instance, in one of the methods we will consider, teachers frequently make use of a tape recorder to record students speaking the language they are studying. If you reject this technique as impractical because you do not have a tape recorder, you may be missing out on something valuable. You should first ask what the purpose of the tape recorder is: Is there a principle behind its use in which you believe and which you can provide in another way, say, by writing down the students' sentences on the blackboard rather than recording them? So try, then, as you read this book, to imagine how to adapt these techniques creatively to your own situation. You are limited only by your imagination.

We will learn about these eight methods by entering a classroom where a particular method is being practiced. We will observe the techniques the teacher is using and his or her behavior. In the even-numbered chapters, the teacher is female; in the odd-numbered chapters, the teacher is male. After observing a lesson we will try to infer the principles on which the teacher's behavior and techniques are based. Although we will observe only the one beginning or intermediate-level class for each method, once the principles are clear, they can be applied to any other level class in any other situation.

After we have identified the principles, we will consider the answers to ten questions. The questions are:

1. What are the goals of teachers who use the method?
2. What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?
3. What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?
4. What is the nature of student-teacher interaction? What is the nature of student-student interaction?
5. How are the feelings of the students dealt with?

6. How is language viewed? How is culture viewed?

7. What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

8. What is the role of the students' native language?

9. How is evaluation accomplished?

10. How does the teacher respond to student errors?

The answers to these questions will add to our understanding of each method and allow us to see some salient differences between and among the methods presented here.

Following these questions, techniques we observed in the lesson will be reviewed and in some cases expanded so that you can try to put them into practice if you wish.

At the end of each chapter are two types of exercises. The first type allows you to check your understanding of what you have read. This type relates to the first purpose for this book: to provide information about each method. The second type of exercise asks you to apply what you have learned. It has been designed to help you begin to make the connection between what you understand about a method and your own teaching situation. For this book to fulfill its second purpose, you will be called on to think about how all of this information can be of use to you in your teaching. It is you who have to view these methods through the filter of your own beliefs, needs, and experiences. It is you who have to make the informed choices.

EXTRA READING

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·CHAPTER TWO·
THE GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION METHOD

INTRODUCTION

The Grammar-Translation Method is not new. It has had different names, but it has been used by language teachers for many years. At one time it was called Classical Method since it was first used in the teaching of the classical languages, Latin and Greek. Earlier in this century, this method was used for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature. It was also hoped that, through the study of the grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and write their native language better. Finally, it was thought that foreign language learning would help students grow intellectually; it was recognized that students would probably never use the target language, but the mental exercise of learning it would be beneficial anyway.

Let us try to understand the Grammar-Translation Method by observing a class where the teacher is using it. The class is a high-intermediate level English class at a university in Colombia. There are forty-two students in the class. Two-hour classes are conducted three times a week.

EXPERIENCE

As we enter the classroom, the class is in the middle of reading a passage in their textbook. The passage is an excerpt entitled "The Boys' Ambition" from Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*. Each student is

called on to read a few lines from the passage. After he has finished
reading, he is asked to translate into Spanish the few lines he has just
read. The teacher helps him with new vocabulary items. When the
students have finished reading and translating the passage, the teacher
asks them in Spanish if they have any questions. One girl raises her
hand and says, "What is paddle wheel?" The teacher replies, "*Es una
rueda de paletas.*" Then she continues in Spanish to explain how it
looked and worked on the steamboats which moved up and down the
Mississippi River during Mark Twain's childhood. Another student
says, "No understand 'gorgeous.' " The teacher translates, "*Primoroso.*"

Since the students have no more questions, the teacher asks them
to write the answers to the comprehension questions which appear
at the end of the excerpt. The questions are in English, and the students
are instructed to write the answers to them in English as well. They
do the first one together as an example. A student reads out loud, "When
did Mark Twain live?" Another student replies, "Mark Twain lived
from 1835 to 1910." "Bueno," says the teacher, and the students begin
working quietly by themselves.

In addition to questions that ask for information contained within
the reading passage, the students answer two other types of questions.
For the first type, they have to make inferences based on their under-
standing of the passage. For example, one question is: "Do you think
the boy was ambitious? Why or why not?" The other type of question
requires the students to relate the passage to their own experience. For
example, one of the questions based on this excerpt asks them, "Have
you ever thought about running away from home?"

After one-half hour, the teacher, speaking in Spanish, asks the
students to stop and check their work. One by one each student reads
a question and then reads his response. If he is correct, the teacher
calls on another student to read the next question. If the student is
incorrect, the teacher selects a different student to supply the correct
answer, or the teacher herself gives the right answer.

Announcing the next activity, the teacher asks the students to
turn the page in their text. There is a list of words there. The introduc-
tion to the exercise tells the students that these are words taken from
the passage they have just read. The students see the words "ambi-
tion," "career," "wharf," "tranquil," "gorgeous," "loathe," "envy,"

Exercise 2A

These words are taken from the passage you have
just read. Some of them are review words and others
are new. Give the Spanish translation for each of
them. You may refer back to the reading passage.

ambition   gorgeous
career   loathe
wharf   envy
tranquil   humbly

Exercise 2B

These words all have antonyms in the reading
passage. Find the antonym for each:

love   ugly
noisy   proudly

---

and "humbly." They are told that some of these are review words and
that others are new to them. The students are instructed to give the
Spanish word for each of them. This exercise the class does together.
If no one knows the Spanish equivalent, the teacher gives it. In Part
2 of this exercise, the students are given English words like "love,"
"noisy," "ugly," and "proudly," and are directed to find the opposites
of these words in the passage

When they have finished this exercise, the teacher reminds them
that English words that look like Spanish words are called "cognates."
The English "-ty," she says for example, often corresponds to the
Spanish endings -dad and -tad. She calls the students' attention to the
word "possibility" in the passage and tells them that this word is the
same as the Spanish *posibilidad.* The teacher asks the students to find
other examples in the excerpt. Hands go up; a boy answers, "Obscur-
ity." "Bién," says the teacher. When all of these cognates from the
passage have been identified, the students are told to turn to the next
exercise in the chapter and to answer the question, "What do these
cognates mean?" There is a long list of English words ("curiosity,"
"opportunity," "liberty," etc.), which the students translate into
Spanish.

The next section of the chapter deals with grammar. The students follow in their books as the teacher reads a description of two-word or phrasal verbs. This is a review for them as they have encountered phrasal verbs before. Nevertheless, there are some new two-word verbs in the passage that the students haven't learned yet. These are listed following the description, and the students are asked to translate them into Spanish. Then they are given the rule for use of a direct object with two-word verbs:

If the two-word verb is separable, the direct object may come between the verb and its particle. However, separation is necessary when the direct object is a pronoun. If the verb is inseparable, then there is no separation of the verb and particle by the object. For example:
John put away his book.
or
John put his book away/John put it away.
but not
John put away it.
(because "put away" is a separable two-word verb)

The teacher went over the homework.
but not
The teacher went the homework over.
(because "go over" is an inseparable two-word verb).

After reading over the rule and the examples, the students are asked to tell which of the following two-word verbs, taken from the passage, are separable and which are inseparable. They refer to the passage for clues. If they cannot tell from the passage. they use their dictionaries or ask their teacher.

turn up	wake up	get on	take in
run away	fade out	lay up	
go away	break down	turn back	

Finally, they are asked to put one of these phrasal verbs in the blank of each of the ten sentences they are given. They do the first two together.