

“The Development of Community Language Learning, The Silent Way and Suggestopedia in Comparison with Other Methods”

—Trends in Language Methodology in the United States—

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The Evolution of Foreign-Language Teaching Methods

The Formalist Approach vs. the Activist Approach

Over the past centuries, there have been various approaches in teaching foreign languages, most of which were based upon certain theoretical principles. The rise and fall of these theories led to switches and changes in related teaching methods. Underlying these theories, there are two mainstreams of thought represented by the formalists and the activists. The former, whose form of teaching is deductive, concentrates on the pedantic elaboration of fine details of grammar, while the latter, whose followers have faith in inductive learning, advocates the functional approach to structure. That is, the formalist approach is a passive learning method based on grammar and centered on written language. The activist approach, on the other hand, places emphasis on speech communication aiming at the active use of the language the students are learning. The differentiation in teaching positions between the two result in varied teaching techniques: the formalists value *reading* and *writing* skills, whereas the activists set priority in teaching comprehension, or *hearing*, and *speaking* skills. The following methods described under the titles of the Grammar-Translation Method and the Direct Method are the typical examples of these two approaches, the former being the formalist approach and the latter the activist approach. The subsequent method to the Grammar-Translation Method is the Reading Method and that of the Direct Method is the Audiolingual Method.

The Teacher-Centered Approach vs. the Learner-Centered Approach

The 1960's and 70's introduced new approaches to the teaching of foreign languages. They were characterized by differences in thinking, which contrasted the traditional teach-

er-centered methodologies with the learner-oriented humanistic approach. A group of psychologists and psychotherapists who were working on the problem of speech disorder, looked at the teaching of foreign languages from the viewpoint of counseling of clients, hence developed a new approach called Counseling-Learning. Counseling-Learning is based upon the conviction that eliminating possible barriers, tensions and fears, would produce a better learning environment, and therefore, lead to better results. Although the basic idea of Community Language Learning is the same as Counseling-Learning, Community Language Learning emphasizes the feeling of belonging to a particular learning community, the relationship between the teacher and the learner, and the knowledge acquired from sources other than the teacher. The latest methods, the Silent Way and Suggestopedia, are little-known to ordinary foreign-language teachers and are still in the experimental stage, but the basic idea of the two is quite similar to that of CLL in that they present a distinct humanistic approach to teaching foreign languages.

The Grammar-Translation Method

Throughout the 19th century into the 20th century and even present-day, most of foreign-language classes have been conducted mainly in a way that is traditionally called the Grammar-Translation Method. This prevailing method, though many foreign-language teachers realize that it is not the most effective nor appropriate method, stemmed from the belief that the ultimate goal of learning foreign languages was to accumulate various types of knowledge and information which were found in the written form of foreign languages, and as a consequence, it was considered essential to have the mastery of the rules of the grammar as a tool in approaching great literary works and also in understanding the culture of that country. Another reason for adopting this method in many areas is that in most cases foreign-language teachers find their classrooms filled with a large number of students consisting of 30 or sometimes even more. The most practical way, therefore, is to apply the Grammar-Translation Method in order to keep everyone in the class busy: having the students read a textbook aloud in unison to begin with, then assigning a few individuals to translate a paragraph or two, correcting errors and then having a whole class write the correct translation in their native language. It is natural that foreign-language teachers who were taught by this method would most likely follow the same way in teaching their own students, regardless of the standard or the needs of their students. As is mentioned above, the main purpose of this method is to train the students to learn the grammar rules so as to translate and eventually to be able to appreciate literary works, which are too often archaic and not suited for use in real-life situ-

ations. Moreover, the explanation of grammar rules is usually done in the students' native language, enabling them to understand thoroughly the intricacy and complexity of the rules. This scarcely leaves the students any opportunity to be exposed to the spoken form of the language, much less speak it. Often, the students have to memorize various paradigms and lists of vocabulary in view of successfully passing the exams which are almost always given in written form. Thus, using the language to communicate and interact is ignored. This method, a deductive form of teaching, is rooted in the traditional way of teaching Latin and Greek.

The Direct Method

Around the end of the 19th century, with the dawn of the rapid progress of transportation and the subsequent development of international communication in the fields of diplomacy, trade, tourism, etc., the urge for teaching the spoken form of foreign languages increased and hastened the development of a method fitted for this purpose. Hence, the appearance of the "Direct" or "Oral," and sometimes called "Natural" Method. The word "direct" derived from the belief that the *direct* association of a foreign language presented with actions and objects would enable the students to acquire the ability to converse and think in the foreign language without consciously translating into and from their native tongue. Eventually, the emphasis was laid on the correctness of pronunciation prompted by the development of the International Phonetic Alphabet. The main feature of this method was to use only the target language in classrooms, involving a great deal of gestures and actions and quite often with the aid of pictures and objects of many kinds. The ultimate goal of this method, consequently, was to let the students *think* in the foreign language as they spoke. Even the explanation of some difficult vocabulary items was done in the foreign language and the grammar rules were taught in a later stage in the process of practicing to speak the language. In other words, the students learned the grammar rules not explicitly but inductively. Soon it was discovered that less able students gradually dropped out as the course progressed and the number increased alarmingly. The problem was that when the students reached the point where it was necessary for them to be creative in adopting and applying the knowledge of the structure of the language they were learning, not having a firm knowledge of the structure and syntax of the language, they fell into incorrect and inaccurate speech habits, revealing clear evidence of first language interference. For, the structures being far different from those of the native language and since the students had already been more accustomed to their native-language speech patterns, they expressed themselves in the foreign language

by interpreting mechanically and sometimes literally through their own native language grammar. At a later date, some modifications were made in order to adjust the weaknesses of the method, which came to be called the Eclectic Method.

The Reading Method

In 1929, as a result of the Coleman report¹⁾, in which the survey revealed that the period of foreign-language study done by the average American students was only two years, emphasis was laid on the development of reading ability which was believed to assist the students to continue working independently after they completed the course. The students were first introduced to pronouncing the correct sounds and, by reading textbooks orally, induced to develop direct comprehension, with the aim of forming the auditory images of what they were learning. Since comprehension was considered to be an act of accumulating passive vocabulary, much of the class time was spent reading textbooks, which were graded according to the levels of difficulty, with oral drills related to the contents. When they reached the stage where intensive and extensive reading were possible, they were assigned to read, in the classroom, more analytically with attention centering on the grammar of the language, and also to read on their own, outside the classroom, to broaden their knowledge of the country and the people who speak the language. Exams were given for the purpose of testing the ability to comprehend rather than to translate.

The Audiolingual Method

The Audiolingual Method, considered to be one of the most successful ways of teaching foreign languages, originated from the work of the structural linguists and the cultural anthropologists who were carrying on investigations in the same theoretical framework as the behavioral psychologists. For the detailed accounts of the theoretical positions from which the Audiolingual Approach was derived and also the history of the individuals who contributed to the development, the readers are asked to refer to the present writer's "The Development of the Audiolingual Approach" (1980), the first of the series of "Trends in Language Methodology in the United States." Here, only the related techniques are briefly introduced. The main feature of the Audiolingual Approach is to train the students to be able to communicate by developing listening and speaking skills as the basis on which to build reading and writing skills. This method has been welcomed and put to use with great enthusiasm for the past decades in various areas of teaching foreign languages. The well-balanced teaching techniques, covering all the four skills in

the sequence of hearing, speaking, reading and writing, with the development of the language teaching device called the Language Laboratory at its height, made the progress of foreign-language teaching more efficient and rapid. During the Second world War and immediately after that, with the cooperation of the American Council of Learned Societies²⁾, the American Armed Forces successfully applied the Audiolingual Method to the intensive language-teaching programs for training interpreters. Not only within the United States of America but also in every corner of the world, the Audiolingual Method prevailed and the pattern-drills were heard in most of the classrooms of foreign-language teaching. The 1960's, however, saw the decline of the Audiolingual Method, due to the fact that the mechanical mimicry-memorization failed to teach every student to be automatically fluent in the language. As a reaction, a student- or learner-centered humanistic approach began to be stressed.

Counseling-Learning

As early as 1957, a new approach to speech correction was introduced, which held good for the principles of teaching foreign languages with Counseling-Learning Method. Ollie Backus³⁾, in "Handbook of Speech Pathology", presented her concept in viewing speech disorder under the title of *Group Structure in Speech Therapy*. Her belief was that, in speech therapy, the reduction or removal of possible barriers in terms of interpersonal relationships would benefit clients more than mere acquisition of speaking skills. She sought for situations where clients could speak with ease and where therapists could assist them with warmth and sympathy. As the basic idea of Counseling-Learning is quite similar to this, so is the fundamental psychology of Community Language Learning. Though the procedures may vary between the two, the psychology of Counseling-Learning is embedded in the relationship between the resource person and the learner in Community Language Learning.

Community Language Learning

The important feature of CLL is the non-evaluative or noncritical attitude on the part of the (so-called) resource person (rather than the teacher) which arose from the above-mentioned counseling of those who suffered from speech defects. This nonevaluative attitude eliminates negative factors in the learning community so that the learner may develop the feelings of security and independence.

There are two phases in the CLL procedure called the "investment" and the "reflection", where the learner participates in conversation in the learning community in the

first phase and then withdraw himself from it to reflect on what he has done as he listens to the tape-recorded version of his own utterances in the second phase. In the "investment" phase, the learners, who are seated in a closed circle, are to talk to one another so as to have a feeling of belonging to the community, which is the main purpose of this procedure. All the learners fall into one of five stages of development, varying according to their ability to function independently from the informant (or the resource person.)

In stage one, the learner speaks short sentences in his native tongue, which is immediately translated into the target language by the resource person who stands close behind the learner. In case any correction has to be made, the resource person does so in a non-evaluative, non-critical way. Then the learner records his own utterances onto a tape. In the same way, everyone in this community takes turns to tape-record his own utterances. In stage two, the learner says some sentences first in the target language and then in his native language. In stage three, he uses only the target language to carry on his conversation. In this stage, the learner is expected to make errors, and therefore, the importance of the way errors are corrected — free from any sign of evaluative mood — is again stressed. In stage four, the learner develops the ability to speak the target language more smoothly with less errors. In stage five or the last stage, the learner manipulates the target language in such a way that the resource person only supplies pieces of information on more subtle vocabulary or on structure from time to time.

In the "reflection" phase, there are three steps to follow. First, the learner talks about his experience of what he has just gone through, as he conversed in the target language. Second, the tape-recorded conversations are played back. Third, the conversations which have been played back are put on the board and the learners copy them. The translations are supplied by those who made the original sentences. The resource person assists them by supplying information whenever necessary.

Just where and how CLL differs from the rest of the methods which have been described previously is that, after being more familiarized with the basic procedure and feeling more secure about corrections, the learner no longer feels any fear about making mistakes. On the contrary, he enjoys having been exposed to this type of learning atmosphere, under the control of "emotional adjustment," as Curran⁴⁾ puts it. Earl W. Stevick, in his "Memory, Meaning and Method"⁵⁾ and "A Way and Ways,"⁶⁾ emphasizes the fact that the resource person being just outside the circle, right behind each learner when she supplies information, gives an encouraging feeling to the learner of being cured and supported, as she is within his personal space. For never does she criticize or praise, he feels that she might be a part of him, from which the feeling of security arises. Here is

the importance of the resource person's part being quite similar to that of a counselor, from which the name Counseling-Learning originated. One other important effect which the basic procedure has on the part of the learner is that the learner's tension in speaking the foreign language is greatly reduced when he talks about his experience in the "reflection" phase, as it gives him a healing effect.

To briefly summarize CLL, one of the characteristics is to create an atmosphere of community to which all the learners belong, as they participate in the conversation in the closed circle. Another is the resource person, who is more or less a counselor rather than an almighty godlike teacher, who tries to reduce tension as well as to break the traditional establishment of the teacher-student relationship by not teaching but supporting, not evaluating nor praising. Again in "A Way and Ways," Stevick compares, from the psychodynamic point of view, the relationship between the learner and the resource person as that of a child and a parent. It is not too much to re-emphasize that understanding and acceptance without any evaluation on the part of the resource person is the heart of the success of CLL. This very same attitude is also conspicuous, as the readers will see, in the Silent Way and in Suggestopedia.

It is worth mentioning the fact that there is no test period — not in the regular sense of a test — set in the CLL procedure, but the "reflection" phase can provide the same effect as self-evaluation to the learner's satisfaction.

To conclude, this method works very well specifically for those who have already learned a foreign language in a traditional way, but have difficulty in actually utilizing it.

The Silent Way

There are certain teaching techniques and materials based upon the theory of the Silent Way. There are also concrete procedures to be followed in teaching foreign languages in a classroom with the method. However, the description of these procedures together with an explanation of the theory alone would not lead to a thorough understanding of the Silent Way. There are a great deal more psychological factors involved in it than meet the eye. Caleb Gattegno⁷⁾, the initiator of the method, did not invent it primarily for the purpose of teaching foreign languages. Rather, he did so as a by-product of his professional commitment. For him, teaching foreign languages is a special application of his principles. First, he applied his principles to teaching mathematics and the first language. The significance of the Silent Way is that the learner eventually discovers what ability he has, which he has not yet had an opportunity to discover. For Gattegno, as he sees it, the learning process involves the ability for the learner to use himself better

rather than just to accumulate new information or mere knowledge. The ultimate goal of the Silent Way, to put it briefly, is to awaken the inner self or ego to the "inner criteria." As the name implies, the teacher of the Silent Way remains silent most of the time while teaching, unless she is required to supply correct pronunciation of a word when the learner mispronounces it. Otherwise her silent reaction — or mostly lack of reaction — tends to be interpreted as her approval.

In the learning process, one must deal with "aggression", as he terms, which is a new challenge from the outside. Specifically in language, the "aggression" may present itself, in the sense, in the correction of errors. Errors must be corrected by the learner, using whatever he has inside, i. e., his inner capacity. The only thing the teacher can do is to point out the differences between the right and wrong pronunciation, in the case of learning to speak. Consequently, this information from the outside is the "aggression." In learning, the first step the learner must commit himself to is this mental training to meet an unknown — "Freedom from the Known."⁸⁾

Then "the functioning of intelligence," as he calls it, begins to work. A goal of teaching is to make learning a more conscious activity. Furthermore, retention needs energy, so the learner must "pay an ogden" to retain memory. This is the second step in learning. He says, "No one remembers his native language," in a sense that speaking one's own mother tongue requires no mental energy as compared with speaking a foreign language. The concept of the Silent Way which shapes the fundamental principle is "inner criteria" which is the information retained and available within him. According to Gattegno, meeting new information takes place while awake, but retaining or remembering it takes place while asleep.

In the class, the teacher uses rods which consist of ten brightly colored wooden blocks of different length, a word chart, a phonic chart, drawings, worksheets and books. Colored charts are used in the first phase to practice pronouncing sounds and then the rods are used to practice saying words and numerals in the second phase. In the third phase, the rods are used to practice speaking. The teacher says as few words as possible, but uses more gestures and charts. The constant visual exposure to these rods and charts is the vital part of the technique. The principle of the method is that teaching should be subordinate to learning and the teacher's role is to help the students to acquire the language more than just learning it. As far as the process is concerned, the Silent Way differs very little from that of the traditional methods of the past half a century. With the above-mentioned materials, it begins from the teaching of vocabulary, with emphasis being laid on pronunciation and structural elements. Ninety percent of the class time is

geared to making the students do the speaking, while the teacher remains silent as much as possible. As was mentioned before, the main purpose is to help the student to discover his language *self*-potential. It also stresses the importance of the ego state in the learning process, in which the mind equips itself with its own mechanism.

Suggestopedia

The name Suggestology (or Suggestopedia) is the compound of "suggestion" and "pedagogy", and it is the science of suggestion developed by Bulgarian psychotherapist, Dr. Georgi Lozanov⁹⁾. His research has been directed toward the role and significance of suggestion in the process of teaching and learning. He started it purely as a psychological experiment aimed at increasing memory capacities in the educational process, and gradually developed it into a method for the experimental study of suggestion itself. Suggestopedya, as an experimental method of suggestology, has revealed new laws and patterns of human memory, making it possible to penetrate deeper into the paraconscious psychical activity. It has found application in practice and it has been elaborated into a number of new methods of teaching.

The assimilation of various information is becoming more and more difficult as science, technology and other fields of research advance rapidly. It is assumed that other things being equal, an ordinary man uses only 4% of the brain's capacities and the rest are unactivated potentials.

Psychotherapy put forward the results of hypnotic experiments as a way to the understanding of hypermnesia. When the suggestive setup was introduced in mathematics, it became clear that the reasoning power was considerably improved, and an attentive attitude was created in the students towards the respective lesson. Hypermnesia is considered to be the result of a suggestive or autosuggestive setup directed toward the memory potential. It can be obtained not only in a state of hypnosis but also in a normal waking state, since suggestion is an unceasing universal phenomenon in human psychical activity.

According to Lozanov, we are under the spell of limiting suggestions all our lives, conditioned to believe that we can learn only so much and so fast and that there are limits to what we can achieve. His basic belief is that this conditioning comes about through suggestion and it can be changed by suggestion. He emphasizes putting conscious and unconscious stimuli together to tap the reserves of the whole person and stimulating the left and right brain simultaneously. Music and psychological suggestion are vital elements of this process. The new knowledge, habits and skills must be memorized and automated so that they can be used as a basis for further study. He developed the first

superlearning concepts and taught a group of students up to 3,000 words in a day.

Though limited, judging from the present writer's own experience of actually participating in a workshop given by Justine Moriarty and Sam Antram at the 1982 Annual Convention of the Japan Association of Language Teachers last fall, the characteristics of the method are stated below. The presentation session consisted of an abbreviated version of the first 3 days of typical beginning classes in Japanese and English. The students were seated in the semi-circle of chairs at the center of the room. On the wall, there were a number of brightly colored charts giving the important points of the lesson: a list of names, a list of occupations, a set of simple sentences showing the use of pronouns, a set of sentences showing the use of simple verbs, questions with possible answers, and in the center above the rest the words of a song.

At first, the students were asked (in the target language) to choose a name and an occupation from the list on the wall. The purpose and the principle of this procedure is that under the disguise of a foreign name and behind a mask of a fictitious occupation, the student can conceal his real self and achieve "infantilization," a childlike openness, being able to be free from the anxiety, tension and fear of probable mistakes in speaking the foreign language. Under this low level of tension, the student can willingly participate in the various activities in the target language. Then, there was the second phase called a "concert", which is a dialogue presentation accompanied by music, which is said to be the most important part of the work of a course. The bilingual text was read twice, each time in a different manner — in a different intonation, rhythm and speed. Next, came the elaboration which included games, plays and songs. The teacher behaved in a friendly but distant manner, in the same way that a doctor might be. "Distant/intimacy" is what Lozanov calls it, which is one of the more important factors in the method.

Conclusion

The last three methods, Community Language Learning, the Silent Way and Suggestopedia are quite divergent, as should be obvious to everyone, from the traditional skill-oriented teaching methods in the sense that they are centered around such things as the counseling of learners, the elimination of the tension and the fear of making mistakes in speaking a foreign language. Instead, they stress the importance of establishing the relationship between "teacher-and-student" as similar to that of "parent-and-child" and placing more emphasis on the mutual interdependence among the learners.

And what lies in store for future development in foreign-language teaching? The recent discovery on the functioning of the right and left hemispheres of the brain between

Japanese and Westerners through the use of a color electroencephalograph made by a team of Japanese medical doctors might enlighten the scope of man's acquisition of language, leading to yet another new scientific and psychological teaching method in the 21st century.

Footnotes

- 1) The Coleman report is part of the *Modern Foreign Language Study* in the United States, published in 1929.
- 2) Members of the American Council of Learned Societies were at work analyzing lesser-known languages and developing intensive language-teaching programs in certain universities.
- 3) Backus, Ollie 1957. "Group Structure in Speech Therapy." In L. E. Travis (ed.) *Handbook of Speech Pathology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- 4) Curran, Charles A. 1968. *Counseling and Psychotherapy: The Pursuit of Values*. New York: Sheed and Ward.
Ibid. 1972. *Counseling-Learning: A Whole-Person Approach for Education*. New York: Grune and Stratton.
- 5) Stevick, E. W. 1976. *Memory Meaning & Method: Some Psychological Perspectives on Language Learning*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
- 6) Ibid. 1980. *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
- 7) Gattegno, C. 1972. *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way*. Second edition. New York: Educational Solutions, Inc.
Ibid. 1975. *On Being Free*. New York: Educational Solutions, Inc.
Ibid. 1975. *The Mind Teaches the Brain*. New York: Educational Solutions, Inc.
- 8) Krishnamurti, J. 1969. *Freedom from the Known*. New York: Harper and Row.
- 9) Lozanov, Georgi. 1979. *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedya*. New York: Gordon and Breach.
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