

Approach, Method and Technique

What is a Method?

Edward Anthony provided a definition that withstood the test of time. His concept of method was the second of three hierarchical elements namely approach, method, technique.

Edward Anthony 1963

Approach

A set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, of language learning and teaching

Method

An overall plan for systematic presentation of language based upon a selected approach

Technique

A set of specific activities manifested in the classroom that are consistent with a method and therefore are in harmony with an approach as well

Approach

The ultimate importance of learning in a relaxed state of mental awareness

Method

Suggestopedia

A method that focuses on decoration, furniture, use of music, etc. to offer relaxation to human brain

Techniques

- **Playing baroque music while reading a passage in the foreign language**
- **Get students to sit in the yoga position while listening to a list of words**
- **Having learners adopt a new name in the classroom and role-play that person**

**Jack Richards &
Theodore Rodgers 1986**

Approach, Method and Technique

- Nothing is said about the roles of teachers and learners
- Fails to account for how an approach may be realized in a method, or for how method and techniques are related



Approach, Design and Procedure

Method

Method

An umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice

Approach

Assumption, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and language learning

Design

Specifies the relationship of those theories to classroom materials and activities

Procedures

The techniques and practices that are derived from one's approach and design

Approach

Theory of Language (what language is about?)

- ❖ *Structural View*: language is a system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning. The target of language learning is seen to be the mastery of elements of this system, which are generally defined in terms of *phonological units* (eg, phonemes), *grammatical units* (eg, clauses, phrases, sentences), *grammatical operations* (eg, adding, shifting, joining, or transforming elements), and *lexical items* (eg, function words and structure words).
- ❖ *Functional View*: language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning. It emphasizes the **semantic** and **communicative** dimension rather than merely the grammatical characteristics.
- ❖ *Interactional View*: language is a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals, Language is seen as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations.

Structural, functional or interactional models of language provide a theoretical framework that may motivate a particular method that needs some design (content, objectives, etc.) and procedures (tasks, activities, etc.)

Theory of Language Learning (how language is learned?)

- **What are the psycholinguistic conditions and cognitive processes involved in language learning?**

Habit formation, induction, inferencing, hypothesis testing, generalization, etc.

- **What are the conditions that need to be met in order for these learning processes to be activated?**

The nature of human and physical context in which learning takes place

Krashen's Monitor Model (The Natural Approach)

Process

- Acquisition and learning are different
- Learning takes place through a « monitor »
(conscious grammatical knowledge through formal instruction)

Conditions

Input must be:

- Comprehensible
- Slightly above the learner's level
- Interesting, relevant, sufficient and experienced in low-anxiety contexts

Design

In order for an approach to lead to a method, it is necessary to develop a design for an instructional system. Design is the level of method analysis in which we consider:

1. What are the objectives of a method are
2. How language content is selected and organized within the method
3. The types of learning tasks and teaching activities the method advocates
4. The roles of learners
5. The roles of teachers
6. The role of instructional methods

Objectives

Different theories of language and language learning influence the focus of a method; that is, they determine what a method sets out to achieve. The specification of particular learning objectives, however, is a product of design not approach.

- Some methods focus primarily on oral skills and say that reading and writing skills are secondary.
- Some methods set out to reach general communication skills and give greater priority to the ability to express oneself meaningfully.
- Others place a greater emphasis on accurate grammar and pronunciation.

Content Choice

Subject Matter
What to talk about
(ESP)

Linguistic Matter
How to talk about it

- **Objectives**
- **Students' level** (beginners=linguistic matters / more advanced=subject matter and multidisciplinary approach)
- **Students' needs**
- **Students' social and cultural background**

Types of learning and teaching activities

Depend on differences at the approach level (product vs. process):

- **Activities that focus on grammatical accuracy may be quite different from those that focus on communicative skills.**

Examples:

Audiolingualism: uses dialogue patterns practice extensively

The silent way: problem-solving activities using special charts and coloured rods

CLT: tasks involving information gap activities, language games, etc.

Learner role

The design of an instructional system will be considerably influenced by how learners are regarded. A method reflects explicit or implicit responses to questions concerning the learners' contribution to the learning process. This is seen in:

- The types of activities learners carry out (grammatical, communicative, interactive, etc.)
- The degree of control learners have over the content of learning (can they negotiate content or not?)
- The patterns of learner grouping adopted (how groups are formulated)
- The degree to which learners influence the learning of each other (student-student interaction / peer-feedback, etc.)
- The view of learner as a performer, initiator, problem-solver, etc.

Teacher role

Learner roles in instructional system are closely linked to the teacher's status and function.

- Some methods are totally dependent on the teacher as a source of knowledge and direction
- Others see the teacher as a consultant, guide, and model of learning
- Teachers roles in methods are also related to the following issues:
 - The function
 - The degree of control over how learning takes place
 - The degree to which the teacher is responsible for determining the content
 - The interactional patterns between teachers and learners

H. Douglas Brown 2001

Approach, Design and Procedure



Approach, Method, Curriculum/Syllabus
and Technique

Method

Methodology

Methodology

Pedagogical practices in general (whatever
considerations are involved in « how to teach »)

Approach

Theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, language learning and their applicability to pedagogical settings

Method

Classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic objectives. They are primarily concerned with teacher and students roles and secondarily with linguistic and subject-matter objectives, materials, etc,

Curriculum/syllabus

Designs for carrying out a particular language programme. (objectives, materials, sequencing, students' needs, etc.)

Technique

Any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives

Approach

Method

Techniques

Approach

Method

Design

Procedure

Methodology

Approach

Method

Curriculum

Technique

References

Anthony, E. M. (1963). Approach, method and technique. *English Language Teaching* 17: 63-57.

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New-York: Longman.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.