Module 5: Language Teaching Methodologies

Introduction to the Module

Language teaching methodologies have evolved significantly over time, shaped by extensive debates and experimentation. These methodologies serve as the foundation for contemporary language teaching practices, influencing how educators approach the task of teaching English. In this module, we will explore various teaching models that have left a profound mark on the field of language education. You will also explore other innovative approaches, such as Task-Based Learning, Competency-Based Approach, The Silent Way, Community Language Learning (CLL), and Suggestopedia.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Gain a deep understanding of the key teaching models, their historical context, and their distinguishing features.

- Evaluate the impact of various teaching methodologies on learners, considering their strengths and limitations.

- Explore the practical implications of these methodologies in diverse teaching contexts.

- Develop the ability to adapt and combine different methodologies to suit specific learner needs and goals.

- Enhance your capacity to design and deliver engaging and effective language lessons that align with contemporary teaching practices.

Teaching Models

There has been a long-standing debate on what the best methods are for teaching English. This debate has led to the practices we use today.

Five main teaching models dictate the way we teach English today. These are:
1. Grammar Translation Method (GTM)
2. Audio Lingual Method (ALM)
3. Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP)
4. Task-Based Learning
5. Communicative Language Learning (CLL)

Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

The Grammar Translation Method focuses on the grammatical analysis of language. It helps students understand the language's construction. It was the most common way to teach language up until recently.

Features:

- Literary texts are the primary focus.
- The main focus is reading and writing. There's little focus on speaking and listening.
- This method teaches new vocabulary with memorisation from texts and bilingual sets.
- Includes translation activities.

Impact on Learner:

- It doesn't encourage students to use the language; it teaches them about the language.
- It's an old-fashioned approach. Students aren't encouraged to practise with one another..

Direct Method

This method doesn't allow translation from the native language. The students must only use the target language for communication during class.

Features:

- The main focus is speaking, but it does cover all four practices.

- Typical practices include reading aloud and guided conversation.

- Other exercises include filling-in-the-blanks, dictation and listening comprehension.

- Teachers use mime, demonstration, realia and visual aids to teach grammar and vocabulary.

Impact on Learner:

- The strict no-translation rule can be an issue. It's difficult for teachers to mime every word when a simple translation would be more effective. It's okay to override the rule if you think it necessary.

Audio Lingual Method (ALM)

The Audio Lingual Method draws on methods used during WW2 to teach the US military other languages. It focuses on aural-oral training.

Features:

- This method teaches skills in the order of natural language acquisition. This is listening, speaking, reading, then writing.

- Translation from the learner's mother tongue is not allowed.

- Typical practices include memorisation of dialogue, grammar drills and minimal pair drills.

Impact on Learner:

- These practices can become like a repetitive mantra, which is unengaging for learners.

- It is an old method. We now know language learning is more than the formation of habits.

- It focuses on unrealistic language.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

This method, introduced in the '60s, offered an alternative to older methods. It focuses on the day-to-day use of English, e.g. for shopping or eating out. The main focus is communication and how language changes depending on social contexts.

Features:

- Listening, speaking, reading and writing have equal importance. They are all taught from the beginning.

- Interaction in pairs or groups is key, e.g. role-play, information sharing or problem-solving.

- Exercises use real-life materials like newspapers and the radio.

Impact on Learner:

- Group work can be challenging to organise, and students might resist it.

- Day-to-day English prepares them for daily life.

Total Physical Response (TPR) and the Natural Approach

TPR teaches English through physical activity. Like TPR, the Natural Approach emphasises listening before speaking. Both argue we don't learn a language; we acquire it.

Features:

- Both teach in the order of natural language acquisition.

- Native language should not be used in class.

- It teaches meaning through mime and drawing.

- An example of practice is oral commands, e.g. "Go to the board and point to the drawing of Jame's mother."

Impact on Learner:

- The teacher has to mime and draw, which can be a laborious process. But, it is beneficial to the learners.

- An important focus is making the learner feel confident.

Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP)

Like CLM, PPP focuses on the situational context of language. The teacher explains the meaning and form of the language. It's divided into three phases: Presentation, Practice and Production. In the beginning, teacher support is extensive. But, in the Production phase, learners have more freedom. It's a good method for teaching beginners.

Features:

- **Presentation:** The teacher develops sentences from visual aids, e.g. an image, and writes them on the board.

- **Practice:** Students practise writing and saying sentences right.

- **Production:** The method encourages students to talk about their lives and other people's lives.

Impact on Learner:

- It's less relevant for intermediate and advanced learners.

Task-Based Learning

The emphasis is on language-based tasks. It is based on CLT.

Features:

- Tasks might include problem-solving, listing, comparisons, creative thinking and sharing personal experiences.

- An example could be to book a ticket for something over the phone. It measures success by the learner's ability to book the ticket.

- It encourages group interaction.

- The use of daily English language is important.

Impact on Learner:

- Helps with confidence in their ability.

- Daily English will prepare them for the real world.

Competency-Based Approach

This approach focuses on developing coping skills for life. Thus, it teaches the language required to use these skills. It makes students aware that learning English will improve their lives.

Features:

- The translation is only used if necessary.

- It draws on situational context.

- Real-life materials are used.

- It encourages the learner to perform realistic tasks outside of class, e.g. ordering a takeaway over the phone.

- Interaction-based activities. Examples include filling-in-the-blanks and problem solving.

Impact on Learner:

- It prepares them for using language in the real world.

- Encouraging them to perform tasks outside of the classroom gives them independence.

The Silent Way

In this method, learners are also independent. They must take responsibility for their education. They must figure out the rules of English for themselves.

Features:

- The learners should do most of the talking in the classroom.

- Mistakes are part of the journey. The student should notify the mistakes themselves, not the teacher.

- Students learn the four language skills from the start.

Impact on Learner:

- It is for use in small groups.

- It readies students for the real world and gives them confidence.

Community Language Learning (CLL)

CLL is based on counselling techniques. The teacher acts as the counsellor, and the students are the clients. The teacher gives the learners help and support. But, the students are in charge of their development.

Features:

- The main focus is the teacher-student relationship and easing the student's fears.

- Listening and speaking are the main components.

- Grammar rules and the translation used when needed.

- Prompts students to create their own materials.

Impact on Learner:

- The level of students' stress should lessen.

- It's for use in small groups.

Suggestopedia

Dr Georgi Lozanov, known as 'the father of accelerated learning', founded Suggestopedia. The focus is on bringing down psychological barriers to Learning.

Features:

- The learning environment – lighting, comfort, decorations and colour schemes – is considered.

- The teacher has a calm presence.

- An example activity is a chart with a text in English on one side and in the learner's native language on the other. The teacher reads it in English with background music. The students listen with their eyes closed. They are encouraged to read it before bed and upon waking.

- Other activities include role play and Q&As.

Impact on Learner:

- It makes learning English an enjoyable, stress-free process.

Highlights from This Module

From this module, we have learned the following points:

- The Grammar Translation Method focuses on the grammatical analysis of language.

- The Direct Method doesn't allow translation from the native language. Its main focus is on speaking.

- The Audio Lingual Method focuses on aural-oral training. It is taught in the order of natural language acquisition.

- Communicative Language Teaching offers an alternative to older methods. It teaches language for the daily use of English.

- Total Physical Response teaches English through physical activity.