

Foreign Language Education:
Methods of Effective Instruction in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

This thesis compares the various methods of teaching a foreign language. With the growing diversity of the population of the United States, it is becoming increasingly important for students to expand their knowledge of languages beyond English. Foreign language study has a number of benefits, including the promotion of effective communication and the construction of relationships with those from other countries and cultures. While there are a number of factors that influence effective foreign language acquisition, the factor that will be explored in this thesis is foreign language education methodology. This thesis will present seven methods of teaching foreign language and will analyze those methods using the goal areas and standards developed by the American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages.

Key Words: Communicative Method, TPRS technique, Natural Way, Eclectic Approach, foreign language teaching, ACTFL standards

Foreign Language Education: Methods of Effective Instruction in the Foreign Language Classroom

With the growing diversity of the population in the United States, it is becoming increasingly important for students to develop proficiency in languages outside of their native tongue. There are also many students who are learning English as a second language. Since foreign language acquisition and education is so important, it is necessary for educators in the United States to evaluate how foreign languages are taught and whether or not the educational methods are effective in producing students with proficiency in the language being taught. Ultimately, the goal of teaching a foreign language should not just be for students who have a well-rounded résumé, but to give students the tools they need to become proficient in a language other than their first language. This proficiency helps them in turn to communicate effectively with a greater spread of people and challenge themselves academically. Having a greater number of citizens with multilingual proficiency would in turn help the United States grow in economic competitiveness as doors would be opened in international business communications. Foreign language teachers, as reflective practitioners, should continually be evaluating the tools and methods they use to teach a target language in order to best help their students gain proficiency.

A Variety of Methodologies

There are numerous approaches to teaching foreign languages that have been developed over the years and are used in foreign language education. These methods vary in what aspects of language acquisition they emphasize, the approach to teaching and correcting grammar, and the role of the student and the teacher in the classroom. Since

such a broad variety of methods exist and are used in the classroom, the question, therefore, is whether or not there is evidence to support that some methods are more effective in promoting foreign language acquisition and retention.

ACTFL Standards

The primary tool that will be used to measure the effectiveness of foreign language educational methodologies are the 5 goal areas of national standards for the learning of foreign language published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), first published in 1996 and updated in 2006. According to its home page, ACTFL is "a national organization dedicated to the improvement and expansion of the teaching and learning of all languages at all levels of instruction throughout the U.S." and is made up of "12,500 language educators and administrators from elementary through graduate education, as well as government and industry" (About ACTFL, p. 1). The National Standards for Learning Languages developed by ACTFL are based on Common Core State Standards, college and career readiness, and 21st century skills. Over 40 states have used the five "C" goal areas to create their own state standards (ACTFL World-Readiness Standards, 2006). The five "C" goal areas (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) will be explained in more detail throughout the course of this thesis and will be used as a tool by which to assess the effectiveness of the foreign language teaching methods that will be outlined. The goal of this thesis is to evaluate and analyze historic and recent trends in methods for foreign language education in order to provide a framework for effective foreign language education that adheres to ACTFL's 5 "C's".

Definition of Terms

Some terms that will be used frequently throughout the course of this paper are “native language” and “target language”. “Native language” refers to a student’s first language, while “target language” is the foreign language being learned. Although “foreign language” and “second language” are often used interchangeably, they mean two separate things. According to a journal article published by the Modern Language Association, second language refers to “a situation where [the target language] becomes a language of instruction in the schools, as in the Philippines, or a lingua franca between speakers of widely diverse languages, as in India” (Marckwardt, 2015, p. 25). So, a second language would be one that is taught in the classroom and also used widely outside of the classroom. Foreign language, on the other hand, is a language taught in the classroom that is “taught as school subject or on an adult level solely for the purpose of giving the student a foreign language competence” (p. 25). An example of this would be learning German or Spanish in the United States. Of these two terms, foreign language will be the focus of this thesis.

Another distinction that needs to be made is the difference between methods and techniques of teaching foreign language. American applied linguist Edward Anthony (1963) defines a method as “an overall plan for orderly presentation of language material”, while a technique is “that which actually takes place in the classroom...a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective” (p. 63-67). Essentially, a method is more of an umbrella term that deals with the “why” of approaching language learning, while a technique is the “how” that puts the method into practice in the classroom.

Methods of Foreign Language Education

There are a variety of approaches that have proven effective when it comes to methods of teaching foreign language in a classroom setting. In order to assist educators in the endeavor to best equip foreign language students with the necessary tools for effective language mastery, it is important to analyze and compare the various approaches of foreign language education that have been developed and are being used in today's foreign language classroom. The goal in describing each method and unpacking its respective pros and cons is to discover the best approach or combination of approaches to promote effective learning of foreign languages.

Selection of Specific Teaching Methods

The seven common methods that will be explored in greater detail are the following: The Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Silent Way, the Communicative Approach, the Natural Way, Community Language learning, and the Comprehensible Input method. These seven methods were selected because they are all recognized by language study journals, such as "Per Linguam", "Mora Modules", and the "International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching", as reliable methods of foreign language education that have been used within the past thirty years. Each method selected appeared repeatedly in research articles by various language study journals. There are many other methods that are commonly implemented when teaching a foreign language, but the less common/less widely-recognized methods are not discussed here. Three of the methods (Grammar-translation, Direct, Communicative) are all commonly used and accepted by European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, and have been used globally for the last 40 years since they were developed (Yilmaz,

2017). Because all seven of these methods are approved by language study journals and are commonly used in classrooms in the United States, they will be assessed for effectiveness in an effort to determine which method or combination of methods is most effective for promoting effective language learning.

Grammar-Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation model of foreign language education is based primarily on tradition. The first references to the Grammar-Translation method being used are in the 16th century. The Grammar Translation method is outlined by Richards and Rodgers in their book “Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching”, which is often referenced by foreign language education analysts. They outline the Grammar Translation method as one that focuses primarily on word-to-word translation. Historically, the Grammar Translation method was used to teach Latin and Greek and was adopted in the United States as the “Prussian method” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 5). The focus is on reading and writing (as opposed to listening and speaking). The goal of language study through the lens of the Grammar Translation method is “to learn a language in order to read its literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study” (p. 5). Using the model, a foreign language class is taught almost entirely in one’s native tongue. A teacher may give out word lists of vocabulary in the target language or explain the grammar rules of the target language in the students’ native language. According to Celce-Murcia (2014), in the grammar translation approach the target language is slightly used in communication (p. 5). The majority of the time teaching a language using this model is spent in translating

sentences back and forth between one's native language and the target language, with a focus on maintaining accuracy to ensure a close to exact translation from the original.

Direct Method

The Direct Method was developed after the Grammar Translation method in the later 1800's and provides a very different approach to teaching and learning a foreign language. Richards and Rodgers also outline this method in *Approaches and Methods in Language Learning*. Instead of teaching primarily in the native tongue, a teacher presents instruction in a foreign language almost exclusively in the target language. When students have questions, the teacher answers them in the target language, combining words with charades to try and communicate the message without having to explain a concept in the student's native tongue. The goal of the Direct Method is not exact translation, but for students to be able to effectively communicate in the target language, with an emphasis on speaking and listening. The language is taught through the teacher's body and mental skills, without the assistance of the native tongue (Naik, 2013). According to supporters of the Direct Method, the spontaneous use of the target language is encouraged, and the learners will be able to deduce grammar rules by hearing the language in context (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Since the goal of this method is to be able to use a language in context, correct pronunciation and inflection are emphasized in instruction. Literature may be used in teaching the target language, but it is not the focus as it is in the Grammar-Translation method.

Silent Way

The Silent Way is an approach to foreign language study developed by Caleb Gattegno in 1963, that stems from the belief that teachers should be silent as much as

possible in the classroom to encourage student participation and practice in the target language. Using this method, students are encouraged to practice in the target language on their own early on in the learning process. Gattegno believed that meaning is created through a process by which the “learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 81). The Silent Way focuses on problem-solving processes and the use of visual aids such as colored rods or color-coded pronunciation charts to promote student recall. Gattegno saw the teaching of vocabulary as central to language teaching but believed that not as much time needed to be spent on teaching specific grammar rules; students would (in his opinion), deduce grammar rules by interacting with the language through problem-solving activities. Gattegno (1972) opposed other methods that try to promote foreign language learning through the same processes as first language learning, asserting that the foreign language learner is unlike the first language learner and “cannot learn another language in the same way because of what he now knows” (p. 11). Using the Silent Way, teachers do devote class time emphasizing correct pronunciation and correcting students’ grammatical mistakes. Although it is considered an alternative method, the Silent Way does maintain some influence, particularly in the area of teaching pronunciation (Messum, 2012). Because of this, the Silent Way is still sometimes used as a method in teaching languages, although it is considered an alternative method.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is a method of language teaching developed in the 1970’s that focuses on teaching language in context. If dialogues are used, they are used in context, and the focus is not on memorization of specific texts, but on effective

communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2011). Effective communication, in context of the goals of the Communicative approach, encompasses both speaking/listening as well as reading/writing skills. A teacher can use any number of methods to promote effective communication, but a few examples of possible methods are role-plays, dialogues/conversations, games, hands-on activities, pair and group work (Matamoros-Gonzalez et. all, 2017). Language, through this model, is seen as a means of expression, and should not be separated from meaning and context when being taught in a classroom setting.

Natural Approach

The Natural Approach to foreign language education was developed in 1977 by Tracy Terrell, a Spanish teacher in California. Terrell was critical of the typical ways of teaching foreign languages in schools, seeing that students in the first several years of foreign language classes come out with little to no language speaking ability. He suggested that we raise our expectations for oral competency and lower our expectations for structural accuracy (Terrell, 1977). His reasoning behind developing this method is that foreign language should be taught similar to the way that children acquire a first language. Since first language is learned in context, starting out with simple sentence structures and moving towards more complex language structures, Terrell believed that a foreign language should be learned the same way. Natural approach supporters believe that there should be little to no time spent early on in language classes correcting grammar or explicitly explaining grammar rules (Hall, 2011). Students, through the lens of the natural method, should be encouraged to model simple sentence structures that build in complexity.

Community Language Learning Method

Community Language Learning (CLL) is a theory of language learning developed in the 1970s by Charles A. Curran, a counselor and professor of psychology. This language learning model, also known as Counseling-Learning, is rooted in psychology-based educational techniques. The Community Language Learning method redefines the classroom roles; teachers are “counselors” and students are “clients” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 90). The CLL model is a humanistic model, meaning that it engages the whole person- emotions, feelings, behavior, and linguistic knowledge. The client transitions to becoming increasingly independent in using the target language, but only after establishing feelings of confidence and security by relying mainly on the counselor in the earlier stages of learning. The teacher in the Community Language Learning method has to react to the sensitivity of the learner and the language learning atmosphere (Nurhasanah, 2015). An example of an educational method using the Community Language Learning method, outlined by Richards and Rodgers, is translation, in which students form a circle and the client whispers to the counselor in his/her first language the message he/she wants to communicate to the group. The counselor then translates the message for the group, and the client repeats the counselor’s translation. This method of translation helps the client to feel secure when interacting with the class (Rodgers, 2001). Those feelings of security are thought to help students perform better in the language learning setting.

Comprehensible Input Method

A method known as the Comprehensible Input method developed from a language learning theory proposed by Stephen Krashen in the 1970s and 1980s. Krashen

hypothesized that students will learn a language best when they understand what they are hearing and reading (Krashen, 1981). Krashen makes the distinction between language “acquisition” and language “learning”. Language acquisition, he asserts, is a subconscious process similar to first language learning, in which grammar and error correction are not relevant (Krashen, 1981). Language learning, on the other hand, is an active process in which explicit grammar instruction and error correction are a part of the curriculum. As the student increases in his/her knowledge of grammatical structure, the accountability for accurate usage of the language will increase (p. 5). Thus, the grammar instruction and error correction build over time.

Summary of Methods

There are four primary ways in which these seven methods differ from one another. The first way that the methods differ is in regard to which of the four skills of communication--reading (R), writing (W), listening (L), and speaking (S)--are prioritized in language instruction. The second way these methods differ is in whether or not grammar is explicitly taught and corrected by the classroom teacher. The third area of difference is whether or not the native language (L1) is used when presenting the target language. The fourth is whether or not the learners’ grammar is corrected by the teacher in the classroom setting. Table 1 below provides a visual summary of the seven methods and these differences:

Table 1. *Distinguishing the differences between the seven methods of instruction.*

Method	Communication Skills Emphasized				Explicit Grammar Instruction? (Y/N)	Use of L1 in classroom?	Explicit Correction? (Y/N)
	R	W	S	L			
Grammar-Translation	✓	✓			Y	Y; teacher and student	Y
Direct			✓	✓	N	Y; student only	N
Silent Way			✓	✓	N	Y; in materials	Y; grammar and pronunciation
Communicative Language Teaching	✓	✓	✓	✓	N	N	N
Natural Approach	✓	✓	✓	✓	N	N	N
Community Language Learning			✓		N	Y; student only	N
Comprehensible Input	✓	✓	✓	✓	Y	Y; teacher only briefly	N

Defining Effective Methods

As previously established, the primary tool for evaluating the effectiveness of these language teaching methods are the 5 “C” goal areas outlined by ACTFL: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. There are specific learning standards developed by ACTFL that fall into these five goal areas. Underneath the broader category of communication, there are the four primary skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. All of these are essential components of language proficiency, so the extent to which a particular method develops these four skills will also be used to measure effectiveness. Selecting a specific model for foreign language education will

primarily correspond to the extent to which it promotes effective communication but must allow room for the other four “C” goal areas to be incorporated into the curriculum. Another question relevant to determining effective methods is the approach to grammar instruction and correction. As previously established, one of the primary aspects in which these methods differ is their presentation and correction of grammar in the target language. A question that must be addressed, then, is whether or not there is evidence to support explicit grammar instruction over the reliance on exposure for grammar rules to be deduced. Thus, an effective method must adhere to the 5 “C”s, teach the four skills of communication, and provide an effective framework for grammar instruction and correction.

Communication

Communication is the aspect of language learning that is generally most emphasized within the classroom. As previously established, effective communication requires proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Thus, an effective method of language teaching must have tools designed to develop a student’s ability to communicate on all four of those levels.

In order to be considered proficient in a foreign language, one must have a solid foundation of understanding the grammatical structure and usage of a language. According to the European Parliament (2006), “competence in foreign languages requires knowledge of vocabulary and functional grammar and an awareness of the main types of verbal interaction and registers of language” (p. 12). An effective teaching model must also have tools to continue to develop a student’s understanding of grammar usage and function in the target language.

The American Council for Teaching Foreign Languages establishes three areas of communication that a student should be prepared for: interpersonal communication, interpretive communication, and presentational communication (Cutshall, 2012). Interpersonal communication involves “active negotiation of meaning among individuals”, while interpretive communication involves “appropriate cultural interpretation of meanings”, and presentational communication refers to “the creation of messages in a manner that facilitates interpretation of members of the other culture” (p. 35). The standards of communication published by ACTFL aim to connect context and culture to communication, so that students can meaningfully communicate in context.

Cultures

Language study, in its fullest form, cannot be divorced from culture study. The development and usage of a language has many ties to the culture and history of a nation. Language is an element of culture, but only a small part of what defines a culture. The *Standards of Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* developed by ACTFL (2006) argue that “the true content of the foreign language course is not the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language” (p. 1). Learning a foreign language can and should be a tool that a language learner uses to understand the culture behind the target language.

According to the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* developed by ACTFL (2006), the foreign language student should “use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices, products, and perspectives of the cultures studied” (p. 1). Thus, in the development of a foreign language course, the

method used for teaching should have room for the study of specific cultural practices and products.

Connections

Connections, according to the national foreign language standards, refer to the ability to make connections between foreign language and other disciplines. The foreign language teacher should strive, when possible, to connect the language being taught to other disciplines. This will be easier to do in upper-level language courses; for example, the new AP Curriculum Framework for foreign languages has been expanded to include “global challenges, beauty and aesthetics, science and technology, family and communities, personal and public identities, and contemporary life” (Cutshall, 2012, p. 33). Although more challenging to implement other disciplines in lower-level language classes, the best models of foreign language education will connect with other disciplines to make language study more applicable to students.

Comparisons

The ACTFL Standards developed under the goal of “Comparisons” emphasize the importance of making cultural and language comparisons. The foreign language student will be able to “use the language to investigate...the nature of language through comparisons of the language and culture studied and their own” (ACTFL World-Readiness Standards, 2006, p. 1). Ideally, by studying another language and culture, a student will even be better able to understand his/her own language and culture. Through comparing languages, the student will develop insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with culture competence (p. 1). In studying another language,

the student will learn more about the structure and nature of language itself, and thus learn more about his/her first language in the process of comparison.

Communities

The “Communities” goal area of standards is essentially successful implementation of the other 4 goal areas of study in the world. The foreign language student should be able to use the acquired foreign language “both within and beyond the school setting” (ACTFL World-Readiness Standards, 2006, p. 1). Although a teacher and a specific method of foreign language education can only control the classroom setting, both can provide a student with the tools needed to be able to use a foreign language successfully in a “real-world” context. The experiences in the classroom will provide them the ability to use language outside of the classroom, with members of the community. Ultimately, language is not simply a subject used in school, but a bridge to connect cultures and communities outside of the classroom setting. According to ACTFL, many language teachers judged Community as the most difficult “C” to integrate into the language classroom because they assume that successful community integration requires global travel (Cutshall, 2006). However, successful community integration can be accomplished using a variety of means, including “travel and study abroad, service learning projects, formal and informal interaction with native language speakers, visits to restaurants, ethnic festivals or other locations where the target language is spoken or culture is celebrated, reading books and periodicals or listening to music in the target language, participating in sports or games from the target culture, and more” (p. 33). While travel and study abroad programs can be highly beneficial for the study of language and culture in context, an advantage of the diversity of the United States is that one does not often

have to travel far to find an opportunity to interact with people from other language backgrounds and cultural communities.

Grammar Instruction

As we have seen, the methods that are used to teach foreign language differ in the areas of grammar instruction. Some method developers argue that instruction of grammar rules should be primarily implicit, similar to the same way a native language is acquired. Other developers argue that second and foreign language instruction processes should be different than first language acquisition, and thus grammar should be taught explicitly. Language researchers Norris and Ortega (2008) studied various language classroom settings with varying forms of grammar instruction and concluded that students that received at least some level of explicit grammar instruction developed a better understanding of the target language. Another study conducted by Vooren, Casteleyn, and Mottart (2012) studying the beliefs of language teachers towards explicit grammar instruction found that teachers believe that teaching “grammatical rules provide a structure to learning any language” (p. 647). While teachers agreed that less class time can be devoted to grammar instruction in higher levels of language learning, they agreed that at least at the early levels of teaching there should be explicit grammar instruction.

Selecting Effective Methods

Now that the criteria have been set for what makes an effective method of foreign language instruction, the previously outlined methods must be evaluated for their ability to adhere to these standards of effectiveness. Although all seven of the aforementioned methods of language instruction are still used in the classroom, the majority of them have serious drawbacks that make them less than ideal to use as the primary means of teaching

a foreign language. The most effective methods, which will be analyzed more in depth, are Communicative Language Teaching, the Natural Way, and the Comprehensible Input method.

Eliminating Less Effective Methods

The primary reason that methods will be considered less effective is their inability to conform to the 5 C's of the ACTFL standards. Since many of the common methods of foreign language education were developed in the mid 1900s before the implementation of the current foreign language standards, they may no longer be practical for American foreign language classrooms. Another reason that contributes to a method being less effective is the disconnect between theory and practical classroom application.

The Grammar-Translation method is perhaps the oldest methodology of the seven, and even though it has received a lot of pushback in recent years, it is still used in classrooms today. This method has limitations because it focuses on being able to read literature, with a small amount of emphasis on written language, to the exclusion of the other 2 elements of communication (listening and speaking) and the other 4 C's of language proficiency. One of the main drawbacks of the Grammar-Translation method is that "there is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or education" (Richard & Rodgers, 2001, p. 7). Although many would agree that this is a less effective foreign language teaching method (Matamoros-González et. all 2017, Sanders 2017, Richards & Rodgers 2001, Natsir & Sanjaya 2014), educators often use it because it does not require much work on the part of the teacher.

The Direct Method does meet some requirements of the ACTFL national standards, in that it aims to present the target language in context to promote connections between language and culture, but practically, it also presents some issues. The emphasis is on speaking and listening more than reading and writing. Proponents of this method do not outline how to “safeguard against misunderstanding without translating (especially, some abstract ideas), without reference to the first language...or how to apply this method beyond elementary stage of language learning” (Liu & Shi, 2007, p. 70). Since grammar rules are not often explicitly taught, the student must deduce grammar rules and usage, which does not always happen in actual classroom scenarios.

Community Language Learning and the Silent Way lack practicality in implementation practices. The Silent Way and Community Language Learning primarily emphasize the communication skill of speaking without much emphasis on the other three skills. Especially in early levels of language learning, the students need a significant amount of direction from the teacher since they have no context by which to understand or use the new language (Vooren, Casteleyn, & Mottart, 2012). CLL and the Silent Way aim to give more responsibility to students and take the pressure of the all-knowing teacher off of practicing the language, but the idea of the “silent” or “counseling” teacher are not as practical for introductory level courses in which students need more teacher direction and involvement. The Silent Way particularly is not very efficient, since time in the classroom could be saved by a teacher giving a short explanation of a phrase or grammar rule instead of having to rely on gestures and symbols to try and communicate with students. Language teaching in this method is separated from the social context; while words and phrases may be learned, there is not much room for implementation of

culture, comparisons, connections, and communities, since the classroom setting is not an interactive environment and learning is not contextualized.

Effective Methods

The methods that are left, then, are the Natural Way, Communicative Language Teaching, and the Comprehensible Input Approach. All of these methods emphasize the importance of developing all four communication skills through a progression of knowledge gained by increasing exposure to and practice with the target language. The Natural approach and the Communicative approach both emphasize communicative competence over grammatical competence. Where grammatical competence stresses the importance of “accuracy”, communicative competence emphasizes the importance of “fluency” (Gurunathan & Geethanjali, 2016, p. 112). The Comprehensible Input Theory also values communication and meaningful language interaction, with the building of grammar structure and usage along the way. Communicative competence methods focus on learning through purposeful interaction. All three of these methods emphasize the importance of learning in context, not simply learning words or grammar rules or phrases by themselves. Since there is a focus on context, there is a possibility of the 5 C’s of effective language learning to be implemented into the curriculum. The question, therefore, is whether or not there is evidence to support the effectiveness of these methods, and whether one is more effective than the other.

The Natural Approach

As previously discussed, Terrell and the supporters of the Natural Approach believe that educators should aim to expose foreign language students to a new language in a way that mimics how children acquire a first language (Terrell, 1977). Ideally, this method

would provide room to implement the goal areas of culture, comparisons, connections, and communities, since a child learning a first language also acquires these over time as he/she learns a first language in context. The Natural Approach is similar in many ways to the Direct Method, but it differs in that the Direct Method focuses more on hearing and repeating specific target phrases. The Natural Approach ideally exposes students to more language usage in context which over time will build their ability to communicate in the target language. The question, therefore, is whether or not adolescent and adult brains learn a foreign language best in the same way that they learn a first language. If so, then the Natural method is a viable approach to foreign language learning since it leaves room to incorporate the 5 goal areas of the American foreign language standards.

One of Terrell's main arguments for developing the Natural Approach is that "people of all ages and backgrounds do acquire second languages very often without the help of formal education or special courses" (Terrell, 1977, p. 328). He argues that in the classroom setting, students were not being exposed enough to the language in context, and thus were learning foreign languages slower. Terrell encourages teachers to provide students with as many opportunities to communicate as possible, both inside and outside of the classroom. The work outside of the classroom is where self-correcting of the grammatical mistakes should take place (Terrell, 1977). The Natural Approach is based on the belief that language education builds off of listening comprehension, and the student should be exposed to as much listening material as possible before being expected to communicate in the target language. His main three innovations to language education are that "all classroom activities should be devoted to communication with focus on content", "no speech errors should be corrected", and "students should feel free

to respond in L1, L2, or any mixture of the two” (pp. 330-331). The techniques used in this approach are “role-plays, dialogues/conversations, reading and comprehension activities, games, oral presentations, and group and pair work”, so that the student can have many opportunities to interact with the target language in context (Metamoros-Gonzalez et. all, 2007, p. 971). The techniques used are not necessarily unique; they are tools used in other methods of foreign language education.

Advantages of the Natural Approach

An advantage of the Natural Approach is that students are able to communicate in context sooner by being exposed to language usage in context and being expected to communicate early on in the language course, regardless of grammatical mistakes. Students also have the opportunity early on in the language course to spend the majority of time listening to language in context before being expected to respond.

Using the Natural Approach, when students are expected to give a response, they do not have the added stress of having to produce grammatically correct sentences. This can encourage a student’s confidence in his/her communication abilities in the target language and inspire a desire to continue improving in the language. Gardner, Smythe, and Brundt (1997) showed that “anxiety was low in confident learners and they feel that they are able to do well, whereas less confident learners experience higher anxiety and feel that they lack the ability to perform well” (p. 22).

Another advantage of the Natural Approach is the emphasis that it puts on vocabulary learning. There have been numerous studies that have shown that new word learning is linked to “phonological memory skills” (e.g., Duyck, Szmalec, Kemps, & Vandierendonck, 2003; Gathercole, Service, Hitch, Adams, & Martin, 1999; Masoura &

Gathercole, 1999; Palladino & Cornoldi, 2004). Thus, the emphasis that the Natural Approach puts on learning vocabulary positively impacts the phonological memory, which in turn helps students to create meaning when learning new words.

Disadvantages of the Natural Approach

Unfortunately for Terrell and supporters of the Natural Approach, there is research to support that “the language learning capability of adolescents and adults who are acquiring a second language differs from that of children who are acquiring their native language” (Chiang & Costello, 1983, p. 19). The understanding of grammar rules and language conventions should be explicit in second and foreign language education, in order to demonstrate the differences between L1 and L2 after a basic understanding of language has been established through the acquisition of L1. Thus, the methods for teaching a foreign or second language cannot be the same as the way a first language is required. There may be overlaps, but the Natural Approach advocates for presenting a new language in as many of the same ways as possible as a first language is presented.

Another drawback of the Natural Approach is the way that grammatical mistakes are not addressed in the classroom. Although it can be helpful for boosting a student’s confidence, this confidence may be falsely placed if he/she is committing many grammatical mistakes and must then spend the remainder of the time in language courses unlearning said mistakes. This concept applies not only to language teaching, but also to teaching in general. Teachers should provide their students with feedback on their work and mistakes so that students have an opportunity to grow and achieve. If teachers are not providing feedback, the students are not receiving the tools that they need in order to

establish an accurate foundation of knowledge upon which they can build as they progress in expanding their knowledge base.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is similar to the Natural Approach in that there is emphasis placed on exposing students early on to language usage in context. Students are also encouraged early on in the course of learning the language to attempt communication, and a variety of methods may be used to promote contextualized exposure to the target language. Meaning and context are emphasized through Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As the name suggests, much of the Communicative Language Teaching approach focuses on the importance of communication. The Natural Approach focuses on communication as well, but one key difference is that the Communicative Language Teaching approach focuses more on communicative competence, which involves not only communication, but the ability to analyze context and know how to vary the use of a language according to the setting and participants (Gurunathan & Geethanjali, 2016). On top of that, the proponents of the Communicative Language Teaching approach also emphasize the linguistic and instrumental components of the language, so grammar is also taught in context, though not as explicitly as in approaches such as the Grammar-Translation method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In a similar manner to the Natural Approach, errors are not often corrected in the initial stages of learning. Teachers from a Communicative Language Teaching approach want their students to be able to learn through a process of trial and error, acquiring language usage abilities to be able to communicate in context. Many

teaching resources can be used with the Communicative approach; the approach itself primarily provides a framework for the goals behind foreign language learning.

Advantages of Communicative Language Teaching

There are several advantages of Communicative Language Teaching. One advantage is that because it is a broad approach, a variety of teaching tools can be incorporated to differentiate instruction for various types of learners and provide students with a broad range of resources through which to learn a language. Another advantage is the focus on the meaning behind language and its usage, and the effort to provide learners with the ability to know how to vary a language based on the context. This is an important part of communication as outlined by ACTFL, which fulfills the standards of “active negotiation of meaning among individuals”, and “appropriate cultural interpretation of meanings” (ACTFL World-Readiness Standards, 2006, p. 35). The contextualized presentation of the target language also provides opportunities to teach a student about culture and connections to other disciplines, two more goal areas of language competency. Ideally, the Communicative approach would also provide students with the tools needed to use the target language in the community outside of the classroom, a fourth foreign language competency goal.

Disadvantages of Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching has some of the same disadvantages of the Natural Approach. One disadvantage is the focus on fluency, sometimes to the exclusion of accuracy. If mistakes are not corrected early on in the learning process, a language learner may continue making the same mistakes and have to spend more time later on unlearning these mistakes. It also may be more difficult to teach the goal area of

comparison and allow a student to make comparisons between the target language and first language if structure and grammar are not explicitly taught. Another disadvantage is that because Communicative Language Teaching is more of an approach than an actual method, it requires more work on the part of teachers to develop a specific syllabus and tools that will be used to teach a foreign language. Another disadvantage is that this approach may be more difficult to implement with language learners who have had no exposure to the target language. Since many of the activities revolve around communication, it can be difficult to implement this approach for the lowest level foreign language classes.

Comprehensible Input Method

Through the Comprehensible Input Method, foreign language instruction is based on providing meaningful opportunities to interact with the language in context at a comprehensible level. Grammar correction is contextualized, and the teacher's role is to help a student understand why certain errors were made and how to fix them. While grammar rules are taught, they are not the main focus of instruction in the Comprehensible Input Method. The goal is to provide students with opportunities to interact with the language in a variety of facets (reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and to provide grammar rules in context when relevant to further instruction (Beattie, 2005). In order to provide information that is comprehensible, an instructor must garner an understanding of what the student already knows and provide language exposure at that level and slightly above that level to continue to build on a student's language knowledge (Beattie, 2005). The key to the Comprehensible Input Method is providing

relevant context for language instruction, in which the input is “neither too difficult to understand nor too easy” (Liu, 2013, p. 2075).

Advantages of the Comprehensible Input Method

Since there is evidence to support explicit grammar teaching, this method provides an ideal framework for grammar instruction and correction. As the students learn new grammar rules, they are then provided with opportunities to see and use these conventions in context before learning new grammar rules. If grammar correction is contextualized and the teacher helps the learner to understand his/her mistakes, the student is better able to understand in the future how to improve correct usage of the language. The Comprehensible Input Method also provides opportunities to use all four of the essential skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in context to develop language proficiency. Thus, there is an adequate focus on the “C” of communication, and room to incorporate the other 4 “C’s” into the curriculum.

Disadvantages of the Comprehensible Input Method

A disadvantage of this method is that it can be difficult for a teacher to know how to best design the syllabi in order to best ensure an adequate level of comprehension for all learners. This method is based off of the fact that grammar instruction and correction should build, and the teacher must decide the rate of progression. If the Comprehensible Input method really is considered successful “when the last student comprehends” the instruction, there can be a large learning gap between when the first and the last students comprehend the new grammar rules and techniques (Liu, 2013, p. 2075). If this balance is achieved, the Comprehensible Input method can be very effective, but finding that balance can be difficult.

Techniques

In addition to considering effective methods of language instruction, it is beneficial to consider which specific teaching techniques can be used to implement these methods. There are many techniques that can be used as tools to teach a language, and some of these techniques are developed specifically from the framework of the methods that have been discussed already in this thesis. It is important for teachers to have a broad variety of techniques in his/her “toolbox” to provide students with as many ways as possible to interact with the target language.

Audiolingual Technique

The Audiolingual technique has a foundation in Behaviorism psychology as outlined by B.F. Skinner. From an audio-linguistic standpoint, repeating phrases through controlled practice of common language patterns and language chunks would lead to mastery of the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The teacher’s role in the Audiolingual classroom is to provide a specific outlined dialogue to students, and students through repetition and drills will memorize these dialogues. The goal is for students to learn grammatical structure and specific language rules through mimicking perfectly structured sentences. The teacher can expound upon specific grammar rules for clarification purposes, but the primary learning of the language is meant to occur through the repeated dialogue drills. The drills are meant to help the students respond quickly and precisely (Matamoros-Gonzalez et. all, 2017). Through visual and audio exercises in the classroom, students memorize dialogues and sentence structures that will help them understand the grammatical patterns of the target language.

Task-Based Learning Technique

The task-based learning technique focuses on context and meaningful communication. Task-based instruction, summarized by Feez (1998), emphasizes process over product, concentrating on purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning. There are a variety of “tasks” that are used for task-based learning. Some examples of tasks are finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, making a telephone call, writing a letter, or reading a set of instructions and assembling a toy (Richards & Rogers, 2001). Essentially, a “task” is anything that has meaningful contextual use of the target language with a real-world application. The role of the teacher in the Task-Based Learning method is to provide the tasks for students to complete and prepare students to accomplish language learning tasks on their own.

Total Physical Response Technique

The Total Physical Response technique is, as it sounds, an attempt to teach a foreign language using the kinesthetic sensory system. James Asher, a professor of Psychology at San Jose State University, developed this method of language learning in 1979 based on patterns of a child learning a first language. Asher asserts that since children initially acquire first language abilities through motions related to commands, a foreign language can be taught to adults in the same way (Asher, 1977, p. 4). He also believes that the use of games and movement reduces the stress of language learners, which in turn promotes better retention. The teacher’s role at first is to explain and demonstrate the new vocabulary with words and actions, and then through a series of steps, the student will transition to giving commands to other students, who then demonstrate the command with actions.

Teaching Proficiency through Prose and Storytelling Technique

Teaching Proficiency through Prose and Storytelling (TPRS) is a foreign language teaching technique developed by Spanish high school teacher Blaine Ray in the 1990s. Its development was highly influenced by both the Natural Way and the Total Physical Response technique and is based on Krashen's "comprehensible input" theory (Demir & Çubukçu, 2014). The goal with the TPRS technique is to help students master basic structures and elements of the target language. Ray asserts that "making the class 100% comprehensible is the key for the success of TPRS" (2012, p. 9). There are three steps involved in the TPRS. The first step is to teach the new grammar or vocabulary structures. The second step is to involve the class in creating a story asking clarifying (who/what/when/where/why) questions. The third step is to read a story using the discussed language structures (Ray, 2012). Using this technique involves gestures, brief translation when needed, eye contact, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and asking and answering questions.

Integrating Techniques into Methods

Although these specific techniques could be used in a wide variety of classroom settings, some techniques are more compatible with some methods than with others. For example, since the Grammar-Translation method does not focus on speaking and listening skills, the Audiolingual (AL) technique would not be useful for this approach. Neither would the Total-Physical Response (TPR) or the Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) since Grammar-Translation is a method of reading and translating written passages. Translating passages could be defined as a task, and thus Task-Based Learning would be a technique that a teacher using a Grammar-Translation

model could implement. On the other hand, methods such as the Comprehensible Input method would support the use of any of the four outlined techniques. The Comprehensible Input method promotes reading, writing, listening, and speaking and active learner participation in the classroom with only small amounts of L1 instruction, so Audiolingual, Task-Based Learning, Total Physical Response, and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling techniques are all compatible with this method. Here is a summary of which techniques are most compatible with each method:

Table 2. *Compatibility of techniques with methods.*

Method	Compatible Techniques			
	AL	TBL	TPR	TPRS
Grammar-Translation		✓		
Direct	✓	✓		
Silent Way	✓	✓		✓
Communicative Language Teaching	✓	✓	✓	✓
Natural Approach	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community Language Learning	✓			✓
Comprehensible Input	✓	✓	✓	✓

An Eclectic Approach

There are several methods to teaching foreign language that are beneficial to students in the foreign language classroom, and each method has its own unique advantages and disadvantages. It is difficult to advocate for one method above the rest at all levels of language learning. Of the current commonly used methods in foreign language classrooms, the three methods (Natural Way, Communicative Language Teaching, and

Comprehensible Input Method) by themselves conform best to the established standards of effective methods. However, it is most beneficial to utilize a combination of approaches to language teaching, taking into account the level of the learners involved. Using a combination of approaches can be defined as the “Eclectic Approach” (Kumar, 2013, p. 1). Although the Grammar-Translation model is understood to be insufficient as a stand-alone model of foreign language, it can be helpful to incorporate elements of Grammar-Translation in the initial stages of language learning, and then using more of a Communicative Language Teaching approach later on, once a student has gained some base-level knowledge of a language and its grammatical elements. Task-Based Learning is also easily incorporated with a Communicative Language Teaching approach. Since the Communicative Language Teaching approach emphasizes the importance of understanding a language and its meaning in context, Task-Based Learning can provide helpful tools by which to expose students to a variety of methods by which to practice hearing and using the language in context. The Communicative Language Teaching approach might be more effectively used in more advanced language classes, since there is not as much explicit grammar instruction. It will be easier for students who already have some exposure to the target language to understand new grammar rules implicitly. The Comprehensible Input method is often more practical for students who have no previous exposure to the target language. The combination of explicit and implicit teaching of grammar rules in context helps the learner to establish a foundation for understanding the grammar conventions of the target language. Since the TPRS technique was developed based on Krashen’s Comprehensible Input theory, it is a helpful tool to use as a direct way of implementing the Comprehensible Input method.

Table 3 (below) provides a visual summary of the level of target language use by both the learner and the teacher within the classroom. This could be a helpful tool for a teacher designing a lesson plan because he/she could choose which method framework through which to develop a lesson plan depending on the goal of the lesson. If the teacher's goal in a particular lesson is to speak primarily in the target language in order to promote students' listening skills, using a Direct Method of teaching would be beneficial. If the teacher is wanting to use the native language to clearly explain translation rules in order to promote students' reading and writing skills, a Grammar-Translation approach would be appropriate. Below is the visual summary of the level of target language usage in the classroom for learners and teachers with each method. Green represents high target language usage, yellow represents a moderate level target language usage, and orange represents a low level of target language usage.

Table 3. *Level of target language usage by teacher and learner.*

Level of Target Language Use by Teacher		Level of Target Language Use by Learner			
		Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
High	Direct	Low	Low	Mod	High
	Communicative	Mod	Mod	High	High
	Natural	Mod	Mod	High	High
	Comprehensible Input	Mod	Mod	High	High
Moderate	Silent Way	Low	Low	High	High
	Community Language Learning	Low	Low	Low	Mod
Low	Grammar-Translation	High	High	Low	Low

The important questions for teachers to ask when considering which combination of approaches to use are “who the learners are, what their current level of language

proficiency is, what sort of communicative needs they have, and the circumstances in which they will be using [the language] in the future” (Liu & Shi, 2007, p. 71). The specific combination of approaches can and should look different in each classroom setting. Not only will the specific combination of approaches look different in each classroom setting, it will also look different within each classroom on a day-to-day basis. One day a teacher may use one method and combination of techniques, and a different combination the next day. The combination depends on the level of the learners as well as what content is being taught.

It seems that providing students with contextualized exposure to a foreign language and correcting student errors in the classroom do not have to be mutually exclusive. The best model of foreign language will combine contextualized communication and grammatical usage and function of a language at all levels of instruction. At the onset of language learning, there may be more grammar instruction and a bit less emphasis on using the language to communicate. As the learner progresses, more classroom time can be spent on communication among individuals. However, at all levels of language learning, culture and connections can and should be incorporated by the language teacher.

The Eclectic Approach in Praxis

Table 4 provides a sample of a lesson plan that demonstrates what it would look like to use the Eclectic Approach for a Spanish 1 classroom. This plan shows a week layout for the first three days of class, introducing greetings, foods, and the present tense. The learning standards referenced are the Virginia standards of learning for Spanish 1. Each day has the standard of learning, what material will be covered, and how the material will

be taught using direction instruction (DI), guided practice, (GP), and independent practice (IP).

Table 4. 3-Day lesson plan displaying the use of the Eclectic Approach.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
<p>SI.1.1: The student will exchange simple spoken and written information in Spanish. 1. Use basic greetings, farewells, and expressions of courtesy both orally and in writing.</p>	<p>SI.1.3: Ask and answer questions about familiar topics, such as family members, personal belongings, school, and leisure activities, time, and weather.</p>	<p>SI.1.3: Ask and answer questions about familiar topics, such as family members, personal belongings, school, and leisure activities, time, and weather.</p>
<p>Topic: Greetings</p> <p>DI: The teacher will demonstrate the use of common Spanish greetings using target language only and hand gestures.</p> <p>GP: Students will listen to recordings of greetings and repeat greetings to each other in groups using hand gestures.</p> <p>IP: In partners, students will begin to prepare a skit of two characters meeting for the first time.</p>	<p>Topic: Foods</p> <p>DI: Show video of a conversation in Spanish between two students talking about what foods they eat.</p> <p>GP: Group “Go Fish” game in Spanish practicing food vocabulary.</p> <p>IP: Student will write a list in Spanish of what types of foods he/she likes to eat.</p>	<p>Topic: Present Tense</p> <p>DI: Teacher will first demonstrate the present tense by presenting a short dialogue. Then follow up with 1 min explanations of the present tense conjugation in English for -ar, -er, and -ir verbs.</p> <p>GP: Teacher will write sentences on board with infinitive verb and have students come up and conjugate verb in the present tense.</p> <p>IP: Students will cut pictures out of magazines of activities and write one sentence in Spanish using the present tense about what each person is doing.</p>

In this lesson plan, Days 1 and 2 demonstrate more of a Communicative approach to language learning. The teacher is presenting the new concepts solely in Spanish, without

an English explanation, using pictures and gestures to promote student understanding of the new concepts being introduced. Day 1 teaching greetings also demonstrates the use of the Audiolingual technique, because students are hearing and repeating select phrases. The Total Physical Response technique is also demonstrated through the use of hand gestures to communicate phrases.

Day 3 demonstrates more of a Comprehensible Input method supplemented by the use of the TPRS technique. The present tense is first presented through story dialogue in the target language, and then the teacher goes back and explains the dialogue using a short commentary in English before transitioning back into Spanish. The learning is also facilitated by the use of the Task-Based Learning technique in cutting out the magazines and writing sentences in Spanish. Using the Comprehensible Input method, the majority of the teacher and student conversation is in Spanish, but the teacher inputs in the native language occasionally to clarify what is being taught.

The specific combination of approaches can look different every day depending on what material is being introduced and the needs of the learners in the classroom. In the classroom outlined above, the teacher could use a Grammar-Translation method later on in the course to translate texts between English and Spanish, or the Natural Way to review previously discussed concepts. Designing lesson plans using an Eclectic Approach may require more work on the part of the teacher in varying lesson materials and presentation, but in the end the learners will benefit from the variety of instructional methods and practices.

Conclusion

Currently, the most effective for foreign language education are the Natural Way, the Communicative Method, and the Comprehensible Input Method. As language researchers continue to grow in their understanding of how foreign languages are best learned, the specific methods that are considered effective may change over time. However, even with the development of new methods, the importance of using a combination of approaches and continuing to be a reflective practitioner will not change. It will still be essential to adopt an Eclectic Approach that incorporates contextualized explicit grammar instruction.

It will also be essential to teach language in a way that focuses not only on communication, but also on comparisons, cultures, connections, and communities.

Although a well-balanced Eclectic Approach to foreign language education can be difficult to achieve, all educators, and especially Christian educators, should strive for excellence in teaching. Ultimately, we as Christian educators are called in “whatever [we] do to work at it with all [our] hearts, as working for the Lord and not for men” (Colossians 3:23, New American Standard Version). We work hard as teachers to educate to the best of our ability because we are working for the Lord, striving to be faithful to the calling the Lord has given us to be teachers of His children. The 5 “C’s” can be used in a missional context; we love others when we not only share the gospel with them in their own language, but also take the time to love them by understanding their culture and the connections that language has to other aspects of life. The importance of communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities, as established by ACTFL, are also relevant to a missional context, and can be adapted to make the classroom a place of ministry by seeking to understand the students that are a part of it.

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