

Chapter 5

Language centered methods

Book Name : Understanding Language Learning

Summarized by Saeed Mojarradi Ph.D. Candidate

Professor : Dr.Haniye Davatgari

language teaching methods evolve and improve over time as their merits and demerits become more and more apparent with the accumulation of experience and experimentation, ultimately leading to the development of a new method with a new label.

during the transitional time then dissatisfaction with one method results in the general development of another they're will necessarily be overlapping tendencies. Therefore a method in the later phase of its life may appear to be slightly different from what it was in an earlier phase.

In order to fully understand the fundamental characteristics of any given category of method and to differentiate it meaningfully from other categories it is necessary to go back to the foundational texts that provide what may be called a canonical description of the theoretical principles and classroom procedures of a method that made prototypically represent the category to which it belongs. We are speaking about audio lingual method which illustrates the essential characteristics of language centered methods.

Although audio lingual method is considered to be very much an American method (Ellis in 1990) some of its basics can be traced to almost simultaneous developments in Britain and the United States.

Palmer and West developed principles and procedures of what came to be called the structural situational method.

It's primarily centered around the triple principles of **selection** , **graduation** and **presentation**.

Selection deals with the choice of lexical and grammatical content.

Graduation deals with the organization and sequencing of content.

Presentation deals with the aims and activities of classroom teaching.

In 1936 Palmer, West and their associates which was later revised by West and published in 1953 with the title. that is called a General service list of English words.

The list consisted of a core vocabulary of about 2000 words selected on the basis of such criteria as frequency usefulness and productivity and graded for complexity.

Palmer and Hornby attempted to classify major grammatical structures into sentence patterns and also sought to introduce them in situational dialogues.

Hornby ,s book A guide to patterns and usage of English published in 1954 became a standard Reference Book of basic English sentence patterns for textbook writers and classroom teachers. As the British applied linguist were engaged developing the structure of situational method their American counterparts were called upon by their government already thrown into World War II to devise effective short-term intensive courses to teach conversational issues in German , French , Italian, Chinese , and other languages to army personnel who could work as interpreters , code-room assistants and translators.

Esther de Waal and by the mid-1950s the program evolved into a full-fledged audio lingual method of teaching and quickly became the predominant American approach to teaching English as second language.

In an influential book titled language and language learning theory and practice Brooks in 1960 offers a comprehensive treatment of the audio lingual method.

Although the British structural situational method focus on the situational context and the functions of content of language more than the American audio lingual method did similarities between them are quite striking. Part of the reason is that linguists on both sides of the Atlantic were influenced by the tenants of structural linguistics .

Theoretical principles As mentioned the fundamental principles of language centered pedagogy are drawn from structural linguistics and behavioral psychology.

These two schools of thought from sister disciplines have informed **the theory of language** , language learning and language teaching and curricular specifications of language centered pedagogy.

Theory of language

Language centered pedagogists believed in the theory of language proposed and propagated by American structural English during the 1950s.

Structural linguist treated language as a system of systems consisting of several hierarchically linked building blocks: phonemes , morphemes, phrases , clauses and sentences each with its own internal structure.

These subsystems of language was thought to be linearly connected in a structured systematic and rule governed way that's certain phonemes systematically cluster together to form a morpheme certain morphemes systematically classed together to form a phrase and so forth. Secondly structure of linguists view the language as aural-oral thus emphasizing listening and speaking. your speech was considered primarily forming the very basis of language. its structure was viewed as being at the heart of a speech.

Early every language was looked upon as unit each having a fit number of a structural patterns. Each structure can be analyzed described systematized hand graded and by implication can be learnt and taught by taking a similar discrete path.

It is better we know that structural linguists rejected the views of traditional grammarians Who depended on philosophical and mentalistic approaches to the study of language in his state is structuralists claimed to drive their view of language through a positivist and empiricist approach.

Theory of language learning

Language centered pedagogists derived their theory of language learning from behavior is a school of American psychology which was popular during the 1950s and 60s.

Like structural linguists , behavioral psychologists too were the skeptical about mentalism and rejected an explanation of human behavior in terms of emotive feelings or mental processes. Consequently they looked at all learning as a simple mechanism of stimulus response and reinforcement. Experience is the basis of all learning, and all learning outcomes can be observed and measured in the changes that occur in behaviors.

Given their belief that all learning is governed by the stimulus response reinforcement mechanisms behaviorists did not make any distinction between children learning and language learning.

Their theory of language learning can be summed up in a series of assumptions they made:

- First and foremost , learning to speak a language is the same as learning to ride a bicycle or drive a car. language learning is no different from the learning of others school subjects like mathematics or science. it is no more than a systematic accumulation of consciously collected discrete pieces of knowledge gained through repeated exposure practice and application. this is a central belief that logically leads to all of the assumptions of varying importance.
- Second language learning is just a process of mechanical habit formation through

repetition. forming a habit in the context of language learning is described as developing the ability to perform a particular linguistic feature such as a sound a word or a grammatical item automatically that is without paying conscious attention to it such a habit can be formed only through repeated practice aided by positive reinforcement.

- Third , habit formation takes place by means of analogy rather than analysis. analysis involves problem solving, that has an analogy involves the perception of similarities and differences. in the context of language learning this means an inductive approach in which learner's themselves identify the underlying structure of a pattern is preferable to a deductive approach. pattern practice therefore is an important tool of language learning.
- Fourth, language learning is it linear, incremental, additive process. that's ,it entails mastering of one discrete item at a time moving to the next only after the previous one has been fully mastered. it also involves gradually adding one building block after another. Accumulating in due course all the linguistic elements that are combined to form the totality of a language. because his speech is primary. discrete items of language can be learnt effectively if they are presented in spoken form before they are seen in the written form.
- Finally, discrete items of language should be introduced in carefully constructed dialogue is embedded in a carefully selected linguistic and cultural context. Language should not be separated from culture the words should be incorporated in it matrix of references to the culture of the target language community.

Theory of language teaching

Audio lingual theory of language teaching is in fact a mirror image of its theory of language learning. because learning a language is considered to involve forming habits in order to assimilate and use a hierarchical system of systems comma language teaching is nothing more than a planned presentation of those subsystems combined with provision of opportunities for repetition.

The purpose of teaching ,therefore ,is twofold :

In the initial stage ,the teacher , Using a textbook serves as a model provide examples of linguistic input and then in the later stage acts as skillful manipulator of questions commands and other cues in order to elicit correct responses from in the learner.

Content specifications.

Language centered methods adhere to the synthetic approach to syllabus design in which the content of learning and teaching is defined in terms of discrete items of grammatical and lexical forms of the language that are presented to the learners.

In other words, linguistic forms constitute organizing principle for syllabus construction. drawing from the available inventory of linguistic forms compiled by grammarian standard linguistic analysis, The syllabus design select and sequences define illogical lexical and grammatical elements of the language that can be included in greater textbooks used for classroom teaching.

The teacher presents the elements of language forms one by one to the learners who are men supposed to put them together to figure out the totality of the language system the primary task of the learner is to synthesize the discrete items of language in order to develop adequate knowledge /ability in the language. Selection and graduation that's what items to select and in what sequence to present them are but to challenges facing the syllabus designer.

Language centers pedagogic implicitly followed the frequency range and availability criteria for selection identified by Mackey in 1965 recall from chapter 3. **Frequency** refers to the items that the learners are likely to encounter most whereas **range** refers to the spread of an item across text or contexts.

Frequency relates to where the item is used by used by whom and for what purposes. **availability** is determined by the degree to which an item is necessary and appropriate.

Classroom procedures

the activities of any language teaching method champion alive and understood in part by studying the input and interactional modification that the teachers are advised to carry out for promoting desired learning outcomes in the classroom.

Input modification

Language center to pedagogic believe that form based input modifications are not only necessary and but also sufficient for the development of linguistic as well as pragmatic knowledge or ability in the L2.

The grammatical items of the target language are introduced to the learners mostly through structural patterns. in a popular Handbook of the time Paul stone and bruder in 1975 provided a comprehensive 145 page long index of structural patterns arranged in alphabetical order.

Adjectives (as adjective as) , demonstrative., indefinite , much , many , other , another , some / any , phrases , possessive
Adverbs like already /yet , comparison, frequency here there, etc.

Paul Stone and bruder Suggested **three types of drills** :
mechanical , meaningful and communicative

Mechanical drills Are automatic manipulated patches aimed at habit formation. the learner response is fully controlled and there is only one correct way of responding.

Meaningful drills have the same objective of mechanical habit formation but the responses may be correctly expressed in more than one way.

Communicative drills are supposed to help learners transfer structural patterns to appropriate communication situations but in reality it is still a drill rather than free communication because we are still within the realm of the cue response pattern.

Interactional activities

Interactional activities of teachers and learners in the classroom are characterized in terms of three PS **presentation, practice** and **production**.

Presentation: at the presentation stage already selected and graded linguistic items are introduced through a carefully constructed dialogue and contains several examples of the new items.

The dialogue may also provide new insights into the culture of the target language community. learner's hear the tape recording of the model dialogue or hear a reading of it by their teacher's repeat each line and sometimes act out the dialer they're also encouraged to memorize the dialogue.

At the second stage, the learners practice the new linguistic items through mechanical, meaningful, or communicative drills .The pattern, practice consists of isolated, decontextualized sentences , with the same grammatical structure but different lexical items . they are also giving substitution tables which help them see the pattern government grammatical structure involved.

The learners are being sent to language lab for further drills in sentence patterns as well as in stress, rhyme , and Intonation. This is usually followed by exercise in reading and writing, which also involve the use of the grammar and vocabulary already familiarized . Thus, the language skills are presented and practiced in isolation and in rigid sequence: Listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The production stage, dilemmas are given the opportunity to role-play dialogues similar to the ones introducing class all of the language lab. They are supposed to modify the language they

have memorized in order to write a depreciation. They're also encouraged to talk about a selected topic in a carefully controlled context.

The Assumption here is that they will be able to successfully transfer their linguistic knowledge of discrete items of grammar into communicative in appropriate context, a questionable assumption that we revisit it shortly.

A critical assessment

Audio lingual method represents a milestone in the annals of language teaching for one good reason: unlike earlier methods such as grammar translation method it was based on then articulated and then coordinated theories of language, language learning, and language teaching, prompting its proponents to call scientific method.

The systematic nature of language centered the methods proved to be immensely helpful to the classroom teacher.

The entire pedagogic agenda was considered to be teacher friendly, as it provided in a neat rule of thumb framework for teachers with which to work. It could be used at all proficiency levels. It was Blessed with a narrowly defined objectives of mastery of grammatical structures, Aided by coherent Designed Syllabuses with a preselected and pre sequenced items, and clearly delineated evaluation measures that focus on assessing the learning of discrete items of language.

Being systematic is, of course, different from being successful. How can the merits and demerits of language centered methods be estimated ?

In the preface to the second edition of his authoritative book on audio lingual method , Brooks 1964 declared: The comfortable grammar translation days are over. The new challenge is to teach language as communication face-to-face communication in books.

As this statement clearly indicates , the central goal of language centered methods , in spite of their unmistakable emphasize on the mastery of grammatical structures is indeed to teach language as communication .

What does it mean to teach language as communication and to what extent are the language cent red methods conceptually and procedurally equipped to deal with it?

Teaching language as communication is a book written by Widdowson in 1978.

Widdowson goes on to argue that teaching of usage does not guarantee a knowledge of use, implying that any teaching of language as communication entails the teaching of languages use, not just language usage. In a later work , he states the problem of language-centered methods succinctly.