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LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of modern language teaching and learning can be traced back to the 20th century, a time when travel by land, sea, and air became more accessible to a larger portion of the population. Initially limited to Europe and North America, travel eventually expanded globally, allowing people from all continents to explore foreign lands. This accessibility marked a departure from the exclusive domain of pilgrims, explorers, and the wealthy, making foreign travel achievable for the majority in developed nations. Additionally, advancements such as the discovery of electricity and wireless communication facilitated global contact, irrespective of geographical location or occupation. In this article, will look at early language learning and language teaching approaches.

KEYWORDS

Universal basic education, vivant, Natural Method, PPP methodology, paramount, 'vive la difference'

INTRODUCTION

In previous centuries, the study of foreign languages was largely limited to classical languages like Latin and Greek, accessible only to a minority with formal education. Later, languages such as French, associated with the upper classes in various countries like Russia

and England, were included in education. Private tutors, often native speakers, were employed to teach these languages in households. The 20th century, marked by two world wars in Europe, also witnessed significant sociological changes. Women gained more

equality, asserting their rights to education and suffrage. The emphasis shifted towards peaceful coexistence over territorial conflicts. By the century's end, most European countries adopted democratic systems, providing universal basic education and improving working conditions while offering social benefits to the disadvantaged. Widespread travel for both work and leisure became common, even among the elderly, due to increased life expectancy and opportunities denied to them in their youth. As a result of these sociological, political, and economic shifts, education policies began to incorporate modern languages into state school curricula. This transition marked a shift from the traditional focus on classical, dead languages, which were primarily studied as a means to enter higher education and certain professions. The overview below outlines the evolution of language teaching and learning from classical languages to modern vivan languages in response to these changes.

The Grammar Translation Method, originating in Europe during the 16th century, was rooted in the establishment of grammar schools. Here, students received a rigorous education focused on Latin grammar, including the study of declensions and conjugations, translation exercises, and practice in composing sentences. Bilingual texts and dialogues were commonly used for instruction. Once students grasped the basics, they progressed to advanced

grammar and rhetoric. This method was regarded as essential mental training, preparing students for higher education pursuits. Consequently, when modern languages were introduced into European school curricula from the 18th century onwards, they were taught using the same grammar translation approach.

Another Method also became known as the Natural Method, emphasizing principles such as using only the target language, speaking slowly and clearly to learners, and prioritizing the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This approach advocates for language to be heard before being seen, with grammar rules introduced only after practice. Translation is discouraged in this method. Despite its historical significance, it is still utilized today, notably by Berlitz Schools worldwide. However, critics argue that it can be too restrictive and monotonous for both teachers and learners, catering well only to those whose learning style aligns perfectly with its principles. Additionally, it may hinder meaningful exchanges and spontaneous language interactions, which are essential in natural language acquisition.

The situational approach to language teaching contains elements of the Direct Method and has evolved from it. In this method, language is taught within specific real-life situations, such as at a train station or in a restaurant. New language is orally drilled using sentence patterns, and vocabulary relevant to

the situation is taught and tested. Many modern language textbooks for secondary schools still incorporate elements of this approach. It typically follows the Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) methodology, where the teacher presents new language, learners practice it in controlled exercises like drills, and then engage in free production by generating their own sentences using the initially presented model. This approach and methodology are widely recognized and utilized in language teaching.

Topic-Driven approaches the topic is paramount. Learners select (or the teacher offers) a range of topics which are of interest and relevant to them. The language around this topic is provided by the teacher. This would include structures and lexis, consideration of style and register as appropriate. The essence of topic-driven approaches is that they contextualize language. In addition, if learners have a choice of topics, learning is more motivated. Last one approach is Intercultural language Learner. The approach involves exploration of cultural concepts, stereotypes, generalizations, assumptions and the murky depths beneath surface language. It involves confrontation, and the aim is to clear the air interculturally so that we can truly live tolerantly, contentedly, and constructively in a 'vive la difference' Europe!

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