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METHODS AND APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

Abstract: The study aims of the article describes popular methods and approaches to TEFL, their main features, development and current trends in language teaching. Attention is paid to secondary school pupil characteristics as well. This thesis is based on a questionnaire research towards English language teachers at secondary school level and what methods and approaches are currently being used in TEFL.

Key words: secondary school level, English language, method, approach, teaching.

Language: English

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Introduction

The concepts of an approach, technique method are defined to avoid confusion because different authors of popular methodology literature define these terms differently. It contains chapter dealing with conditions of a choice of a suitable method and questions the role of teaching materials, their benefits for the teaching process as well as their disadvantages. The target group of learners in this thesis is the one of younger adolescents. Those are namely pupils of secondary schools since the research part of this work focuses on secondary school pupils. Schoolchildren aged about from six until nine attend primary schools. Primary schools directly continue in secondary schools with pupils from the age of ten till fifteen. In this case, the factor of age plays an important role in the decisions about what and how to teach in the class and therefore also the choice of teaching methods, procedures, and techniques. This age group of learners has a great disposition for learning. They are able to operate in abstract concepts, which is very important in terms of language learning as for example in understanding grammar rules or understanding abstract terms.

Pupils at the age of approximately ten and on are usually happy to work in groups in comparison to younger learners. They prefer working by themselves. The pedagogue then needs to acknowledge this type

of inhibitions and work with them to make the learning process happen successfully. Teenagers are searching for their identity in the world and their own place as well as opinions. They long for peer approval and belonging into any group, where they can feel secure and accepted. When the teacher wants their pupils to be engaged, they need to present a topic in a way that is relevant to their pupils' lives and authentic. It is always wise to show that the topics learnt at school are connected to their lives outside of the class, even better when it engages their hobbies and interests which lead to positive motivational belief.

Every approach is based on a different view on the nature of the language or different theory about the language and the way people learn and use it. Another aspect of differentiation among the approaches is the purpose of language learning and teaching, the objective. Whether it is for understanding and analyzing written texts, ability to communicate in the target language or to accomplish knowledge of other aspects of the taught language. Some of the approaches are contradictory, some evolve from the earlier ones, and others develop or improve older approaches.

The following list of approaches attempts to summarize the objective of an approach, short introduction to its development, role of the teacher and the pupil, arrangement of the four skills, attitude to

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mistakes and accuracy, and procedures or techniques applied within the approach.

The Grammar-Translation approach gives out a perfect understanding of its main objective. The G-T approach implies methods, procedures, and techniques employing deductive attitude to grammar instruction and translation from target language to student's first language and vice versa. Techniques used within this approach are for instance translation, grammar drills, and vocabulary memorization.

The basis of the Grammar-Translation approach reaches out as far as teaching Latin more than five hundred years ago. It was Latin back then that played the role of the international language of the communication, education, and religion in Europe. Latin language, however, lost its dominance in the sphere of communication and education and was substituted by modern languages like French or English later on. The approach to teaching those modern languages remained almost the same, though. "By the nineteenth century, this approach was based on the study of Latin had become the standard way of studying foreign languages in schools. A typical textbook in the mid-nineteenth century thus consisted of chapters of lessons organized around grammar points. Each grammar point was listed, rules on its use were explained, and it was illustrated by sample sentences" (Richards 1986: 3)

The main important objective of language learning within the Grammar-Translation approach is to learn language for the purposes of reading literature written in it and also to "benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign-language study" (Richards, Rogers 1968: 4). The G-T approach approaches language learning through thorough analysis of its grammar rules. Understanding of those grammar rules is applied and practiced via translating texts or separate sentences from the target language into student's mother tongue and the other way round. Firstly vocabulary is selected by the given sentences or texts and memorized through bilingual word lists in the target language that is equipped with their equivalent in the mother tongue of the language learners and followed by translation exercises. The main focus of the G-T approach is based on reading and writing skills with almost none or very little attention to speaking and listening. In other words, learners are to study vocabulary in the form of lists of isolated words and they practice them only via translation exercises.

Grammar is taught deductively where the teacher gives detailed explanations of the grammar in the

mother tongue of the pupils with the main focus on the inflection of words, form, and parsing. Elaborate texts are introduced to learners and read and translated very early in the language instruction. Texts, however, only serve as examples of grammatical structures and material for translation without much regard to the context of the texts. Separate sentences are often used for drill exercises in translation from T1 into L1 and vice versa. Apart from rules about language instruction and techniques used, discipline plays an important role within this approach. Learners are supposed to develop their foreign language skills as required by the principles of the G-T approach and on top of it to develop their intellectual capacity.

The Grammar-Translation approach dominated foreign language teaching for more than hundred years from the 1840s to the 1940s (Richards, Rogers 1968: 4), and prevailed in language teaching for a very long time even after many newer views on language and teaching were introduced. The first distinctive and clearly organized reaction to the Grammar Translation approach was the Direct Approach.

The survey showed that most of the teachers are interested in learning about the new trends in TEFL methodology using various resources. Most teachers prefer to follow the resources on the Internet that helps them to improve their teaching. The teachers teaching in schools often attend training courses in order to keep up with the developing TEFL methodology.

The practical part of the dissertation was supposed to include a survey aimed at the pupils' view on the methods and approaches used in the English language classes, too. This part of the research, however, was not carried out because I came to the conclusion that it would not offer a valid source of information for the subject matter of this dissertation project, since the thesis was focused on the teacher's point of view. However, the pupil's opinion on the current language teaching practice might be an interesting subject of further research.

The purpose of this paper was to point out the diversity of TEFL methodology and its constant development and changes, and to highlight the importance of the knowledge of TEFL methodology for the consciously developing teaching practice. Since there is no such thing as a universal method, every teacher develops their own way of teaching. It is not a stable frame, though. It develops with the teacher and adjusts to the individual needs of pupils. It is interdependent with the teaching materials and changes along with the TEFL methodology.

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