HOW TO TEACH FOREIGN LANGUAGES
(GENERAL REMARKS)

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ABSTRACT

The Recent reforms in foreign language teaching in Uzbekistan are mainly focused on teaching English at all levels and stages of education. In this regard, CEFR serves as the main basis for the development of a national standard. Today, there is a growing interest among students in learning English and other foreign languages, as evidenced by the growing desire of students to obtain international CEFR and IELTS certificates. In this course, we will discuss importance and rules of teaching foreign languages which are considered to be the most useful for those who are willing to teach languages in a really communicative way.

Key words: methods, classroom comparisons, language acquisition, instructed language, natural settings, communicative instruction, classroom principles.

Every few years, new foreign language teaching methods arrive on the scene. New textbooks appear far more frequently. They are usually proclaimed to be more effective than those that have gone before, and, in many cases, these methods or textbooks are promoted or even prescribed for immediate use. New methods and textbooks may reflect current developments in linguistic/applied linguistic theory or recent pedagogical trends. Sometimes they are said to be based on recent developments in language acquisition theory and research. For example, one approach to teaching may emphasize the value of having students imitate and practice a set of correct sentences while another emphasizes the importance of encouraging 'natural' communication be-tween learners. How is a teacher to evaluate the potential effectiveness of new methods? One important basis for evaluating is, of course, the teacher's own experience with previous successes or disappointments. In addition, teachers who are informed about some of the findings of recent research are better prepared to judge whether the new proposals for language teaching are likely to bring about positive changes in students' learning.

The article is about how English language can be learned at classrooms on the bases of new pedagogical technologies with having taken into consideration the

national aspect, i.e. influencing native Uzbek language and typical mistakes and difficulties in learning English by Uzbek speaking students. First of all we have written it for English language teachers who teach this language to Uzbek students at schools at 10-11 grades, but it could also be useful for postgraduate learners who are only going to learn a wonderful world of English. We believe that information about findings and theoretical views in second language acquisition research can make you a better judge of claims made by textbook writers and proponents of various language teaching methods. Such information, combined with insights gained from our experience as a language teacher or learner, can help an English language teacher evaluate proposed changes in classroom methodology.

Most people would agree that learning a second language in a natural acquisition context or 'on the street' is not the same as learning in the classroom. Many believe that learning 'on the street' is more effective. This belief may be based on the fact that most successful learners have had exposure to the language outside the classroom. What is special about natural language learning? Can we create the same environment in the classroom? Should we? Or are there essential contributions that only instruction—and not natural exposure—can provide?

In this article, we will look at five proposals which theorists have made for how second languages should be taught. We will review research on second language learning which has been carried out in classroom settings. This will permit us to explore further the way in which second language research and theory contribute to our understanding of the advantages and the limitations of different approaches to second language teaching.

Five principles for classroom teaching

The teaching methodologies in Classrooms A and B differ because they reflect opposing theoretical views concerning the most effective way to learn a second language in classroom settings.

Theories have been proposed for the best way to learn a second language in the classroom and teaching methods have been developed to implement them. But the only way to answer the question 'Which theoretical proposal holds the greatest promise for improving language learning in classroom settings?' is through research which specifically investigates relationships between teaching and learning.

In the section below, we will examine five proposals relating to this issue, provide examples from classroom interaction to illustrate how the proposals get translated into classroom practice, and discuss how the findings from some of the formal research in SLA fit them. For each proposal, a few relevant studies will be presented, discussed, and compared with one another. The labels we have given these proposals are:

1 Get it right from the beginning

2 Say what you mean and mean what you say

3 Just listen

4 Teach what is teachable

5 Get it right in the end

The 'Get it right from the beginning' proposal for second language teaching best describes the underlying theory behind the teaching practices observed in Classroom A. Indeed, it is the proposal which probably best describes the way in which most of us were taught a second language in school. It reflects the behaviourist view of language acquisition in assuming that learners need to build up their language knowledge gradually by practising only correct forms. Teachers avoid letting beginning learners speak freely because this would allow them to make errors. The errors, it is said, could become habits. So it is better to prevent these bad habits before they happen.

The students have no reason to get involved or to think about what they are saying. Indeed, some students who have no idea what the sentences mean will successfully repeat them anyway, while their minds wander off to other things.

Research findings

There is little classroom research to support this proposal. In fact, it was the frequent failure of traditional grammar-based methods to produce fluency and accuracy in second language learners which led to the development of more communicative approaches to teaching in the first place.

Supporters of communicative language teaching have argued that language is not learned by the gradual accumulation of one item after another. They suggest that errors are a natural and valuable part of the language learning process. Furthermore, they believe that the motivation of learners is often stifled by an insistence on correctness in the earliest stages of second language learning. These opponents of the "Get it right from the beginning" proposal argue that it is better to encourage learners to develop "fluency" before "accuracy".

Recently, some researchers and educators have reacted to the trend toward communicative language teaching and have revived the concern that allowing learners too much 'freedom' without correction and explicit instruction will lead to early fossilization of errors. Once again we hear the call for making sure learners "get it right from the beginning".

The principle of saying what you mean and meaning what you say

This is the theoretical view underlying the teacher-student behaviour in the transcript from Classroom B. Based on the interactionists' hypothesis, advocates of 'Say what you mean and mean what you say' emphasize the necessity for learners to have access to meaningful and comprehensible input through conversational

interactions with teachers and other students. They have argued that when learners are given the opportunity to engage in conversations, they are compelled to "negotiate meaning", that is, to express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions, etc., in a way which permits them to arrive at a mutual understanding. The negotiation, in turn, leads learners to acquire the language forms—the words and the grammatical structures—which carry the meaning.

Negotiation of meaning is accomplished through a variety of modifications which naturally arise in conversational interaction. For example, learners will ask each other or their teacher for clarification, confirmation, repetition, and other kinds of information as they attempt to negotiate meaning. This can be seen in the transcripts from Classroom B.

The claim is that as learners, in interaction with other learners and teachers, work toward a mutual understanding in the negotiation process, language acquisition is facilitated. Advocates of interactionism argue quite simply that learners will learn by "saying what they mean and meaning what they say" in conversations which encourage them to do so.

The principle of listening

This proposal is based on the assumption that it is not necessary to drill and memorize language forms in order to learn them. However, unlike the interactionists' emphasis on providing opportunities for interaction of the kind we saw in some of the excerpts in the 'Say what you mean and mean what you say' proposal, the emphasis here is on providing comprehensible input through listening and/or reading activities.

Just listen' is one of the most influential—and most controversial— approaches to second language teaching because it not only holds that second language learners need not drill and practice language in order to learn it, but also that they do not need to speak at all, except to get other people to speak to them. According to this view, it is enough to hear and understand the target language. And, as you saw in the classroom description above, one way to do this is to provide learners with a steady diet of listening and reading comprehension activities with no (or very few) opportunities to speak or interact with the teacher or other learners in the classroom.

The material which the students read and listen to is not graded in any rigid way according to a sequence of linguistic simplicity. Rather, the program planners grade materials on the basis of what they consider intuitively to be at an appropriate level for the different groups of learners, because a given text has shorter sentences, clearer illustrations, or is based on a theme or topic that is familiar to the learners.

The individual whose name is most closely associated with this proposal is Stephen Krashen, particularly with his hypothesis that the crucial requirement for second language acquisition is the availability of comprehensible input.

Research findings

Several studies which are relevant to this proposal include: (1) research in experimental comprehension-based ESI. programs in Canada; (2) research investigating the effects of the "Total physical response" method of second language teaching; and (3) research in Canadian Native language immersion programs.

Teach what is teacheable

The proposal referred to as "Teach what is teachable" is one which has received increasing attention in second language acquisition research in recent years. The researcher most closely associated with this view is Manfred Pienemann. He and his associates are concerned with being able to explain why it often seems that some things can be taught successfully whereas other things, even after extensive or intensive teaching, seem to remain unac-quired. They claim that their research provides evidence that some linguistic structures, for example, basic sentence word order (both simple and complex) develops along a particular developmental path. Thus, for example, any attempt to teach a word order pattern that is a 'Stage 4' pattern to learners at 'Stage 1' will not work because learners have to pass through 'Stage 2' and get to 'Stage 3' before they are ready to acquire what is at 'Stage 4'. The underlying cause of the stages has not been fully explained, but there has been considerable research showing that they may be based at least in part on learners' developing ability to process (unconsciously analyse and organize) certain elements in the stream of speech they hear.

Researchers supporting this view also claim that certain other aspects of lan-guage—vocabulary, some grammatical features—can be taught at any time. A learner's success in learning these variational features will depend on factors such as motivation, intelligence, and the quality of instruction.

Getting right in the end

Get it right in the end' is similar to the "Teach what is teachable" proposal. Its proponents recognize a role for instruction, but also assume that not everything has to be taught. That is, they assume that much will be acquired naturally, through the use of language for communication. They also agree that some things cannot be taught if the timing of the teaching fails to take the student's readiness (stage of development) into account. This proposal differs from the 'Teach what is teachable' proposal, however, in that it emphasizes the idea that some aspects of language mustbe taught. For example, when an error learners make is the result of transfer from their first language, and when all the learners in a group tend to make the same error, it will be virtually impossible for learners to discover this error on their own. We can see this in Example 14, where francophone learners of English are having difficulties with adverb placement.

"Get it right in the end" also differs from "Just listen" in that it is assumed that learners will need some guidance in learning some specific features of the target language. Furthermore, it is assumed that what learners learn when they are focusing on language itself can lead to changes in their interlanguage systems, not just to an appearance of change brought about by conscious attention to a few details of form. On the other hand, the supporters of this proposal do not claim that teaching particular language points will prevent learners from making errors. Nor do they assume that learners will be able to begin using a form or structure with complete accuracy as soon as it is taught. Furthermore, they do not argue that the focused teaching must be done in a way which involves explicit explanations of the point or that learners need to be able to explain why something is right or wrong. Rather, they claim that the learners' attention must be focused on the fact that their language use differs from that of a more proficient speaker. As we will see in the examples below, teachers must look for the right moment to create increased awareness on the part of the learner—ideally, at a time when the learner is motivated to say something and wants to say it as clearly and correctly as possible.

Proponents of' 'Get it right in the end' argue that it is sometimes necessary to draw learners' attention to their errors and to focus on certain linguistic (vocabulary or grammar) points. The difference between this proposal and the 'Get it right from the beginning' proposal is that it acknowledges that it is appropriate for learners to engage in meaningful language use from the very beginning of their exposure to the second language. They assume that much of language acquisition will develop naturally out of such language use, without formal instruction which focuses on the language itself.

The difference between this proposal and the 'Just listen' and 'Say what you mean and mean what you say' proposals is that it is not assumed that comprehensible input and meaningful interaction will be enough to bring learners to high levels of accuracy as well as fluency. Researchers who support this proposal argue that learners can benefit from, and sometimes require, explicit focus on the language.

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