Topics
- Ideas for exploring learning styles.
- Teaching approaches.

Ideas for exploring learning styles

REFLECTIVE TASK 1

Here are three different situations for learning English. Which situation is closest to the one in which you teach?

Junko is an eight-year-old Japanese girl Her parents are working in England. She attends a Japanese school. After one year, she has picked up quite a lot of English from the au pair girl who works for the family and from the children who live next door. She can chat away quite happily with other children and she often translates for her mother when they go shopping to the market. Her mother finds it difficult to speak English.

Rosa is an eight year-old girl who lives in Colombia in South America. She learns English at school. She does not hear or use any English outside school. She is not sure why she is *learning English, except that her parents think it is important* At the end of one year of English, she knows a few words of English.

Dorji is an eight year-old boy from Bhutan in the Himalayas. He is in Class 2 and he is learning all his subjects through English. Outside school, he will see some shop signs in English and he may watch English films at home on his video with his parents. By the end of two years, he already knows a lot of English and can use it to communicate with his teachers, who speak to him in English.

Teaching approaches & NAP

Now, watch some videos by clicking on the image below:

Think about these questions:

- Do the videos relate learning to different learning styles implicitly?
- Do they also link EYL to sociocultural theory?
- Do the videos promote a communicative classroom?
- Do you find these videos helpful?

The traditional versus the Communicative Approach

The traditional techniques used to teach grammar found in structural grammar books did not really foster communication. They obliged learners to painfully long perseverance in order to memorize language patterns.

This resulted in bored, disaffected students who managed to produce correct forms on exercises and tests, but consistently made errors when they tried to use the language in context. This does not mean doing away with grammar, of course, but finding more effective ways of teaching it.

On the other hand, there are many teachers who influenced by recent theories of language learning and language acquisition, expect learners to acquire a second language in the same way as they acquired their first language, that is ,

without overt grammar instruction. Students are expected to absorb the rules of the second language by means of reading ,listening and using the language in communicative tasks. This is not usually the case, grammar cannot be guessed or inferred most of the times and learners need to compare and contrast the grammar in the target language with the grammar of their mother tongue. We must remember that learners' age is a crucial factor here, as the older they get, the more active their understanding will be of what grammar is and how it works.

Life has changed and so has learning styles. Therefore, we should try to make our teaching more challenging, more appealing to our students of today and our main concern should be communication rather than grammar. In order to

achieve these aims new strategies should be used.

Extensive drilling and memorization of grammar forms takes us back to 1970's and this is the 21st century! In order to communicate students need to use grammar patterns, but let them develop their _language awareness._

As you may well remember from previous Didactics lessons, Chomsky maintained that human beings are born with an internal language acquisition device (LAD) that enables them to acquire whatever language they are exposed to. This is part of our genetic inheritance and this is what helps us to learn a foreign language.

This is the basic assumption underlying the communicative approach and we have extensively read and discussed Chomsky's concepts, but now is the time to integrate theory and practice.

Let us now compare the traditional teaching approach with the communicative approach.

- What would you describe as traditional grammar exercises?
- See if you agree with the list below

- drills
- gap-filling exercises
- underline the correct form of the verb
- provide plural forms

Traditional teaching techniques were supplanted by or combined with the more effective strategies that would raise learners' awareness of grammar forms, thus facilitating communicative language use.

Harmer's (2012) summary of GT, AL, CLT, and TBL.

1 Grammar-translation

GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION was the most common way of learning languages for hundreds of years. Students studied the grammar of sentences in the TARGET LANGUAGE (the language they wanted to learn). They translated them into their own language – or the other way round. Grammar-translation became unpopular because students translated written sentences rather than spoken conversation, and because they didn't do enough speaking. However, it is clear that asking students to translate into and out of their language and English can teach them a lot about the similarities and differences between the two languages.

2 Audio-lingual methodology

AUDIO-LINGUAL METHODOLOGY (A-L) gave students a lot of speaking practice by using habit-formation DRILLS. Students repeated sentences again and again until they were memorised. A-L methodology is connected to the theory of BEHAVIOURISM.

- A-L methodology uses a STIMULUS-RESPONSE-REINFORCEMENT approach to language learning. A stimulus (a teacher's prompt) provokes a student response (a sentence), and this response is reinforced by the reward of, for example, teacher PRAISE and student satisfaction. If you repeat this procedure often enough, some people suggested, the language will be learnt.

- Behavourist theories of language learning were heavily criticised. It was argued that if all language was the result of stimulus-response-reinforcement, how come we can all say new things that we have never said before? These new things can't be the result of Behavourist conditioning, surely! One of the results of this was that teachers stopped using *only* A-L methodology.

- However, one the main ingredients of audio-lingualism (language drilling →47) is still used in many lessons because we believe that frequent repetition is a key to successful learning. One of the most popular ways of teaching new language, PPP (PRESENTATION, PRACTICE AND PRODUCTION →44), mixes drilling with contextualised explanation and opportunities for language use.

3 The communicative approach/communicative language teaching

- THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH/COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT) focuses on the idea that people get language if they have opportunities to use it, and that if students have a desire to communicate and a purpose for communicating (rather than just practising a grammar item), then language learning will 'take care of itself'.

- In CLT, students do many speaking and writing tasks, trying to use any and all of the language that they can. CLT focuses more on CONTENT than on FORM; it concentrates on how successfully students can *communicate*, rather than on whether they are speaking or writing correctly. CORRECTION often takes place *after* the students have tried to speak or write communicatively →74.

4 Task-based learning (TBL)

- TASK-BASED LEARNING (TBL) is an approach where teachers set their students larger tasks, such as writing a newspaper article, giving an oral presentation, creating an online film reviews page or arranging a meeting, rather than concentrating only on the language. The students may STUDY language, too, of course, but only if this will help them do the task; it is the planning and the completion of the task that is most important. A TBL approach would base its SYLLABUS →80 on tasks rather than lists of grammar items. In some versions of TBL, language study comes after the task – to deal with any mistakes that occurred during the task.

- In a task-based sequence we might get INTERMEDIATE or UPPER-INTERMEDIATE students to plan a trip to a city in a foreign country by looking for information on the INTERNET and then writing an itinerary; we might ask the students to design a questionnaire which they can then use for video or audio interviews in the street.