chapter **11**

Methods/Approaches of Teaching ESOL: A Historical Overview

KEY ISSUES

- ❖ Historical overview of methods and approaches to teaching English as a foreign/second language
- ❖ The grammar-translation method
- ❖ The direct method
- ❖ The audio-lingual method
- ❖ Suggestopedia
- ❖ The silent way
- ❖ Total physical response
- ❖ The natural approach
- ❖ The communicative approach

For centuries, people have attempted to learn foreign/second languages through formal education. The methods and approaches employed have changed through the years, having been impacted by advancements in the theories and psychology of learning.

Basic assumptions about why and how people learn, shape the way in which languages have been taught.

The Grammar-Translation Method

The grammar-translation method (also known as the classical method) was based on the belief that different kinds of knowledge were located in separate sections of the brain. Mathematic knowledge, for example, was thought to be located in one area, art in another, language in another, and so on. It was believed that studying different subjects was a good way of exercising the brain. Thus, learning another language provided the necessary mental exercise to develop the part of the brain believed to be earmarked for languages.

The main goal for learning a language was not for speaking and/or communication. The driving force was to exercise the mind and at the same time to be able to read in that language. The languages taught in those early days were Latin and Greek, so another reason for studying foreign languages was to appreciate the classics in their original language. It must be pointed out that education was the privilege of an elite class, thus it was a "mark of an educated person" to be able to read the classics.

The name of the method, grammar-translation, captures the main emphases of this method (i.e., the study of grammatical aspects of language and the use of translation as a means of ascertaining comprehension). Communicating in the language was not a goal, so classes were taught primarily in the students' native language, and the teacher made no effort to emphasize correct pronunciation of the language. Grammar study was the focus of the lessons, with much rote memorization of grammatical aspects such as verb conjugations and recitation of rules that described language functions. It was not surprising, then, that even students who spent several years studying a foreign language were not able to speak that language. Much time was spent in learning about the language, not the language itself. Fortunately, this method is not widely used today in teaching English to English language learners. Yet, unfortunately, some aspects of this method are still employed to teach modern languages in the United States, primarily at the high school and university levels. Emphasis on reading and translating passages, conjugation of verbs, and explanation and memorization of grammatical rules still are observed in foreign language classrooms today.

The Direct Method

The direct method was a complete departure from the grammar-translation method. This method dates back to 1884 when the German scholar and psychologist F. Frankle provided a theoretical justification for the method by writing about the direct association between forms and meaning in the target language. It is also based on the work of Gouin, who in the 1880s observed children learning language in natural settings.

The emphasis is on the direct associations the student makes between objects and concepts and the corresponding words in the target language. The use of the native language, as in the grammar-translation method, is avoided; the use of the target language is emphasized at all times. In this method, the primary goals are for students to think and speak the language; thus, no use of the native language is allowed. Teachers employ objects, visuals, and realia to make the input comprehensible. Instruction revolves around specific topics. Aspects of grammar are taught inductively through the handling of the topic. For example, when studying different types of sports that people practice, students are also introduced to verbs. The focus is not verbs and verb conjugations, but the context is a logical way to expose students to aspects of grammar. By much exposure and handling of the content, students inductively learn the appropriate use of different verbs that relate to sports. In addition, cultural aspects of the countries where the target language is spoken are also included in the lessons. For example, when studying Spanish, students would discuss the sports that are widely practiced in Spain or Mexico. This also brings in aspects of geography—where are these countries located? What aspects of language are related to directionality in describing the location, such as the names of the cardinal points (norte/north, sur/south, este/east, oeste/west)? How should these be used appropriately when referring to location (al norte de . . .; al sur de . . .; al este de . . .; al

oeste de . . .)? In this process, vocabulary is emphasized, and interaction among students and with the teacher is fostered, although it is limited to mostly asking and responding to questions. Reading and writing are also taught from the beginning.

The most widely known application of the direct method is practiced at the Berlitz language schools located throughout the world. Although the founder, Maximilian Berlitz, referred to the method as the Berlitz method, the principles applied have been and continue to be those of the direct method. Berlitz classes are generally for highly motivated adults who need to speak a foreign language for business purposes. Although many of the techniques developed for the direct method have also been used in other methods, applying the direct method in noncommercial schools fell out of favor as early as 1920 (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). The grammar-translation method dominated public school and university language teaching in the United States until World War II.

Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)

The United States involvement in World War II brought a significant change in the teaching of languages in U.S. schools. It quickly became apparent that the grammar-translation method had not produced people who were able to speak the foreign languages they had studied. The U.S. government asked the universities to develop foreign language programs that produced students who could communicate effectively in those languages.

Changes in the beliefs about how people learn impacted the teaching methodologies being developed. Based on the behavioristic psychology (refer to Chapter 1), the audio-lingual method was developed.

In the audio-lingual method, the emphasis was on the memorization of a series of dialogues and the rote practice of language structures. The basic premises on which the method was based were that language is speech, not writing, and language is a set of habits. It was believed that much practice of the dialogues would develop oral language proficiency. The use of the native language was avoided.

The method became very popular in the 1960s. Language laboratories began to surge, and students were required to listen to audiotapes and repeat dialogues that captured aspects of daily living. In addition, specific structural patterns of the language studied were embedded in those dialogues. Students were required to participate in a number of practice drills designed to help them memorize the structures and be able to plug other words into the structure. For example, in a substitution drill, the structure might have been:

I am going to the *post office*.

Students were then required to substitute the word *post office* for other words, such as *supermarket, park, beach,* or *drugstore*.

The belief was that students, through much practice, would form a "habit" and be able to speak the language when needed. Although the intent was to develop fluent and proficient speakers by providing much oral practice of the dialogues and the use of numerous drills to help in this endeavor, the reality was that language proficiency was not the outcome. Years later, students who studied with the audio-lingual method still remembered the dialogues but could not speak the foreign language they had studied. Thus, the method was not successful at accomplishing the main goal. It was too prescriptive; there was no opportunity provided for "true" communication to take place in the ALM classroom. Students had been taught a "script," and people do not speak following a particular script.

Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia was developed by Bulgarian psychiatrist–educator Georgi Lozanov (1982), who wanted to eliminate the psychological barriers that people have to learning. It uses drama, art, physical exercise, and desuggestive–suggestive communicative psychotherapy as well as the traditional modes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to teach a second language. The influence of the science of suggestology is clear in this method that calls class meetings "sessions" (Freeman and Freeman, 1998).

In this method, the classroom atmosphere is crucial. Creating a relaxed, nonthreatening learning environment is essential for its success. The goal is that students will assimilate the content of the lessons without feeling any type of stress or fatigue.

Classrooms are equipped with comfortable seating arrangements and dim lighting in an effort to provide an inviting and appealing environment. Soothing music is employed to invite relaxation and allow students to feel comfortable in the language classroom. The use of the native language is also allowed, especially to give directions and to create that welcoming atmosphere. Based on the belief that how students feel about learning will make a difference in the learning process, Suggestopedia takes into consideration the affective domain. It could be said that the philosophy of the little engine that could—"I think I can, I think I can, I know I can" (Piper, 1976)—is one of the basic underlying principles of Suggestopedia. If the students feel they can learn, they will.

The use of drama, songs, and games provides for much practice, yet in a less-threatening and more enjoyable fashion. As in the ALM, dialogues are employed, but they are presented in an enhanced fashion through creative dramatics. The rehearsing of roles provides the necessary practice, yet there is a purpose for practicing. When people are preparing for dramatic roles, they most likely spend much time rehearsing.

Despite the advancements over the audio-lingual method, Suggestopedia has not been widely adopted in the United States. It is impractical for large classes. In addition, current textbooks do not embrace this methodology, thus making it difficult for teachers to apply the principles in regular classrooms.

The Silent Way

Developed by Caleb Gattegno, the Silent Way requires that the teachers remain silent much of the time, thus its name. In this method, students are responsible for their own learning. Based on the belief that students are initiators of learning and capable of independently acquiring language, the Silent Way provides a classroom environment in which this can take place. The teacher models once, and the students are then given the opportunity to work together to try to reproduce what has been modeled.

Beginners are initially taught the sounds of the new language from color-coded sound charts. Next, teachers focus on language structures, sometimes using colored, plastic rods to visually represent parts of words or sentences. As students begin to understand more of the language, they are taught stories using the rods as props. At all stages of the method, the teacher models as little as possible, and students try to repeat after careful listening with help from each other. The teacher leads them toward correct responses by nods or negative head shakes (Ibid).

The Silent Way is a fairly complex method that requires the teacher to receive extensive training in the use of the methodology. Students also need to be well versed in the use of the charts and the rods to participate effectively in the lessons. Because, according to research, teachers speak from 65 percent to 95 percent of the time in traditional classrooms, it is difficult to find teachers who are comfortable with the required "silence" of the Silent Way, thus limiting the number of teachers available to teach employing this method.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

The total physical response (TPR) method was developed by psychologist James Asher (1974). This method is based on the principle that people learn better when they are involved physically as well as mentally. In TPR, students are required to respond nonverbally (physically) to a series of commands. As the teacher gives a command and the students respond physically, the teacher ascertains students' comprehension of the command. Initially, the teacher begins with simple commands such as:

Teacher: Stand up! (teacher models)
Students: Respond by standing up. (physical response, not verbal)
Teacher: Walk to the front of the room.
Students: Respond by walking to the front of the room.

Teacher:	Turn around and walk back to your seats.
Students:	Respond by turning around and walking to their seats.
Teacher:	Sit down.
Students:	Respond by sitting down.

Once the students have practiced a number of times, the teacher simply gives the command and the students respond. Eventually the students will give the commands, thus developing oral proficiency.

In TPR, teachers can employ pictures, objects, and realia for students to manipulate as they respond nonverbally. For example, the students are studying a unit on "emotions." The teacher can pass out pictures of people displaying different emotions. Then, the teacher can give the following commands:

Teacher:	Raise the picture of the girl who seems sad.
Student(s):	Raise(s) picture of sad girl.
Teacher:	Stand up if you have a picture of two boys who seem happy.
Student(s):	(who has/have that picture): Stand(s) up.
Teacher:	Place on the board the picture that shows a woman who seems surprised.
Student(s):	(who has/have that picture): Walk(s) up to the board and place(s) the picture on the magnetic board.

Commands become more complex as the students continue to develop listening comprehension and knowledge of subject matter. For example, with the assistance of pictures, students can be asked to categorize modes of transportation by land, water, or air, or they could be asked to rearrange pictures to show the life cycle of a butterfly.

Once students are able to respond to a series of commands and can give the commands themselves, the teacher can introduce the reading and the writing aspects of language. However, the emphasis in TPR is on listening comprehension until oral proficiency is developed.

TPR is an excellent method to employ with students who are in the preproduction/silent stage of language development. Students who are not yet speaking are able to be involved in lessons and respond nonverbally. Thus, these students begin to feel a sense of belonging and success as they participate in the lessons. The students benefit from the involvement in the lessons, and the teachers are able to ascertain whether or not the students are developing listening comprehension.

TPR is somewhat limited within the confines of a classroom; however, with the use of pictures, and other types of manipulatives, a resourceful teacher can bring the outside world into the classroom. For example, a teacher may prepare a transparency of a picture that depicts many actions. Each student gets a copy of the picture (black and white is acceptable for this type of activity). The teacher employs the transparency to demonstrate the actions following the commands given. Students imitate and follow along. This is an excellent way to introduce verbs and new vocabulary using TPR.

Sample 1: Florida Waterbirds
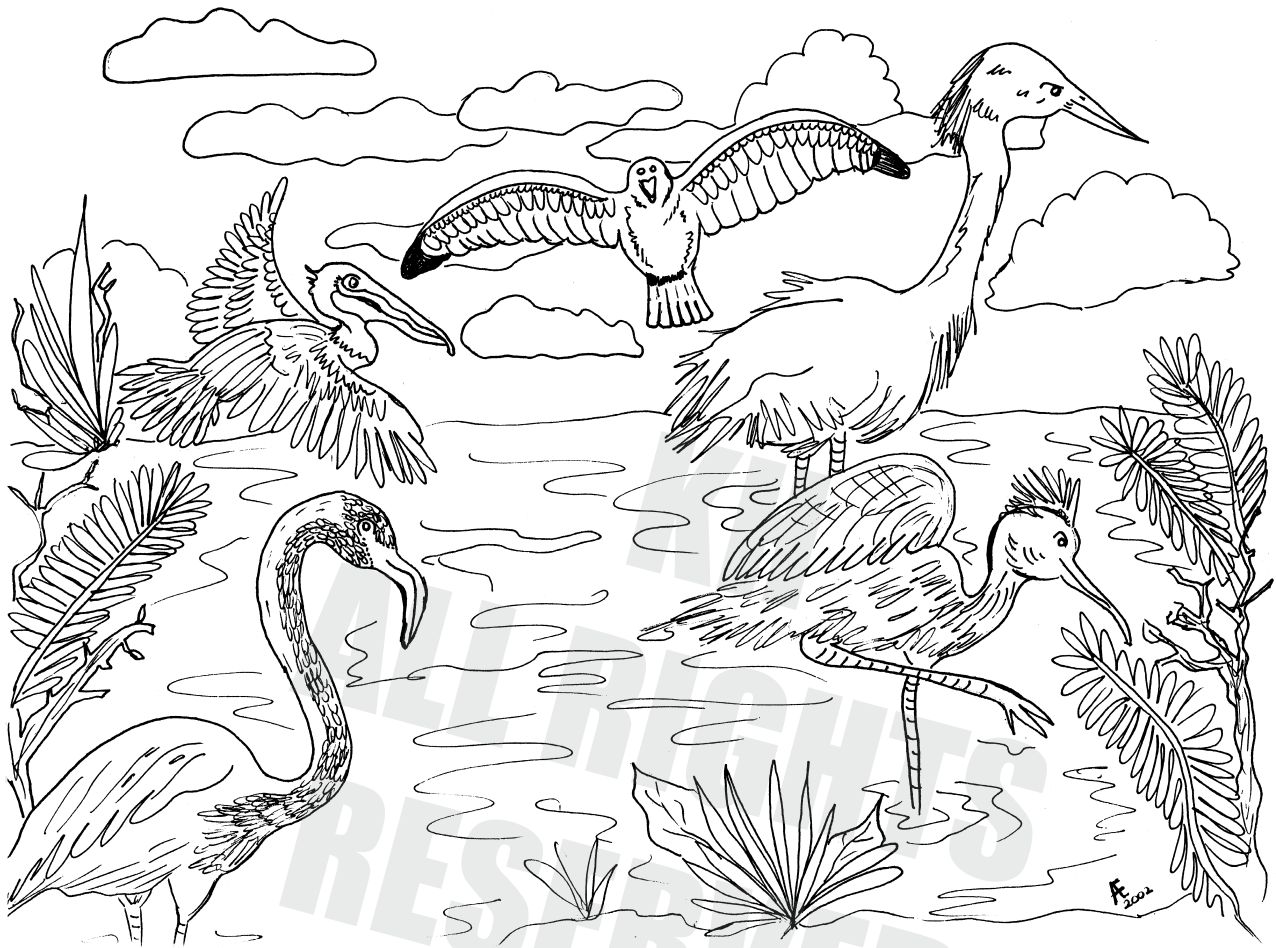
List of Commands:

1. Look up at the clouds.
2. Show me the clouds.
3. Jump in the water.
4. Swim over to the blue heron.
5. Stand like the blue heron.
6. Flap your wings like a bird.
7. Let's count the birds in the picture

8. Wave to the pelican.
9. Squawk like a laughing gull.
10. Pet the flamingo.
11. Get out of the water.
12. Shake yourself off.
13. Wave "good-bye" to the birds.

Sample 2: In the Field

List of Commands:

1. Walk up to the scarecrow.
2. Walk around the scarecrow.
3. Wave "hello" to the scarecrow.
4. Touch the scarecrow's hat.
5. Wave "good-bye" to the scarecrow.
6. Walk up to the ball.
7. Pick up the ball.
8. Put down the ball.
9. Walk up to the pear tree.
10. Pick up two pears from the ground.
11. Place the pears in the basket.
12. Pick up one more pear.
13. Bite off a piece from the pear.
14. Chew the piece of pear.
15. Skip over to the other tree.
16. Get close to the trunk.
17. Step on and crush the leaves.
18. Look up!
19. Wave to the squirrel.
20. Peek in the hole in the trunk.
21. Walk past the scarecrow.
22. Wave "good-bye" as you leave the field.

Another excellent way to employ TPR is by the use of logical sequences of actions, also known as Gouin series, such as driving a car or taking a picture.

The following are two examples:

Driving a Car

I take my car key in my hand.
I walk to the car.
I unlock the car door or I use my remote to unlock the door.
I open the car door.
I get into the car.
I close the door.
I put on the seat belt.
I place the key in the ignition.
I start the car.
I take off.

Taking a Picture (Traditional)

I get the camera.
I open the film compartment of the camera.
I place the film in the camera.
I close the camera.
I check to see that the camera is ready.
I look through the lens of the camera.
I focus.
I take the picture.

Taking a Picture (Digital)

I get the camera.
I check to see that the camera is ready.
I take the picture.
I check the picture.
I save the picture (or I delete the picture).
I load the picture onto the computer.
I send the picture to my friend.

These Gouin series can be longer or shorter, depending on how much language the teacher wishes to employ at one time. Initially, the teacher models the actions, and the students pantomime the actions. As soon as the teacher feels the students can respond without imitating the actions, the teacher simply describes the action, and the students respond by demonstrating the actions (Curtain and Dahlberg, 2004).

The following benefits of the Gouin series have been identified (Knop, in Curtain and Dahlberg, 2004):

1. It links language to action and visuals, leading to improved comprehension.
2. It teaches appropriate verbal and physical behavior, making it especially useful for teaching cultural behaviors.
3. It is easy to recall because it has multiple meaning reinforcers:
   ❖ Physical actions
   ❖ Visuals and props
   ❖ Logical sequence
   ❖ Appeal to several senses
   ❖ Beginning, middle, and end

Gouin series are also an excellent way of developing reading and writing skills. Once the students are able to say the series, the teacher can record the sentences on sentence strips. Students can then be introduced to the reading of the sentences. Students can illustrate the series and write the actions illustrated. Illustrations can be compiled in book form or can be displayed sequentially in the classroom.

Following is a sample Gouin series that has been illustrated and described in print.
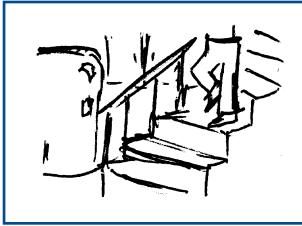
Getting Ready for School
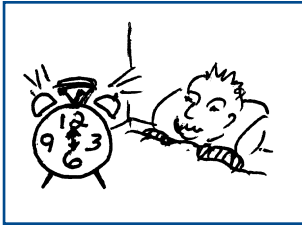
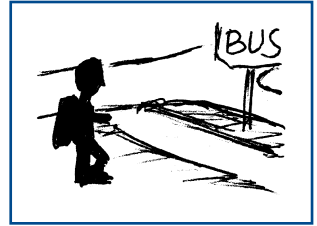|			
I wake up at 6:00 a.m.	I get up and brush my teeth.	I get dressed.	I comb my hair.
I go to the kitchen.	I have breakfast.	I get my backpack.	I walk to the bus stop.

Other benefits of the Gouin series are:

1. it elicits students' interest and active participation;
2. it gives an authentic experience using the target language; and
3. it facilitates the natural emergence and development of oral communication (The State of New Jersey Curriculum Frameworks for World Languages, 2006).

The Natural Approach

Tracy Terrell (1977, 1981) developed the natural approach based on Krashen's monitor model (discussed in detail in Chapter 10). The main goal of this method is to develop immediate communicative competency. For this reason, most, if not all, classroom activities are designed to encourage communication. Terrell (1977) suggested that the entire class period be devoted to communication activities rather than to explanation of grammatical aspects of language. This method is based on Krashen's moni-

tor model, so it should be easy to understand why the emphasis would be on providing the students with the opportunity to *acquire* language rather than forcing them to learn it, by emphasizing language form. In this method, the key to comprehension and oral production is the acquisition of vocabulary. Thus, much opportunity for listening/speaking (when ready) is afforded to students. Class time is not devoted to grammatical lectures or mechanical exercises. Any explanation and practice of linguistic forms should be done outside of class for the most part. Outside work is planned carefully and structured to provide the necessary practice with language forms. Although this was Terrell's position in his earlier writings, he seemed to amend his position in his last writings (1991). He suggests that there might be some benefit to providing form-focused instruction as a means of establishing form–meaning relationships in communicative activities. Teaching grammar for the sake of grammar instruction is not effective. However, clarifying it in context, using advanced organizers to tie it in with communicative activities, does have some value.

According to Terrell (1977), error correction is negative in terms of motivation and attitude; thus, he does not advocate the correction of speech errors in the process of oral language development. This position reflects Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, which purports that when students experience an embarrassing situation, the affective filter goes up, interrupting the language acquisition process. Thus, error correction would have a negative effect on the process.

The natural approach bases language acquisition on the natural order of native language development. Because native language development follows a progression (as discussed in Chapter 10), during the silent period, students would be allowed to respond in their native language. The emphasis is on listening comprehension, so if students respond in their native language, they are demonstrating comprehension. At the same time, students can be exposed to a wide variety of topics and still be comfortable in the communication process.

It is imperative, in this method, that teachers provide comprehensible input at all times. The use of visuals (graphs, charts, pictures, objects, realia), gestures, demonstrations, and motherese/parentese (slower speech, simpler language repetition, rephrasing, clear enunciation) is required. In addition, the use of yes/no type questions, either/or type questions, and questions that require short answers is strongly suggested in the beginning stages of second language acquisition. The use of total physical response (TPR) is emphasized, particularly during the comprehension (silent/preproduction) stage.

The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach to language teaching is based on several theoretical premises:

1. The communication principle: Activities that involve communication promote the acquisition of language.
2. The task-principle: Activities that engage students in the completion of real-world tasks promote language acquisition.

3. The meaningfulness principle: Learners are engaged in activities that promote authentic and meaningful use of language.

The main goal in this approach is for the learner to become communicatively competent. The learner develops competency in using the language appropriately in given social contexts. Much emphasis is given to activities that allow the second language learner to negotiate meaning in activities that require oral communication in the second language.

In the communicative approach, it is important to create an "information gap" between speakers. Thus, the need to communicate is authentic because communication must take place to narrow the gap and accomplish the task (i.e., "I/we have what you need, and you have what I/we need to complete our task"). The task cannot be completed individually; partners must work together to successfully complete the assigned task.

Classroom activities must be varied and must include interactive language games, information-sharing activities, social interactions, need for impromptu responses, and the use of authentic materials, such as the newspaper for oral discussions on current events.

Sauvignon (1983, 1997, 2002) suggests designing the curriculum to include language arts (or language analysis activities), language-for-a-purpose (content-based and immersion) activities, personalized language use, theatre arts (including simulations, role-plays, and social interaction games), and language use "beyond the classroom" (including planning activities that take the learners outside the classroom to engage in real-world encounters).

The communicative approach embraces the principle of "learning by doing," encouraging the use of English from the beginning of instruction. Thus, language acquisition takes place as a result of using the second language in meaningful communication from the onset in the process.

Kagan (1995), one of the greatest proponents of cooperative learning in the classroom, has described how this strategy is very effective in ESL classrooms, particularly when employing the communicative approach. According to Kagan, language

acquisition is fostered by input that is comprehensible, developmentally appropriate, redundant, and accurate. In cooperative groups, students need to make themselves understood, so they naturally adjust their input to make it comprehensible. This is a must in communicative settings. In cooperative groups, students receive repeated input from the members in the group, providing the necessary redundancy for language learning to move from short-term comprehension to long-term acquisition.

When analyzing the communicative approach, it could be said that peer output is less accurate than teacher output. However, Kagan stated that in cooperative groups, frequent communicative output produces language acquisition far more readily than does formal accurate input. The same could be said of the communicative approach. Thus, the use of cooperative groups in a communicative approach environment should be strongly encouraged.

Points to Remember Points to Remember Points to Remember

- ❖ In the grammar-translation method (also known as the classical method), the emphasis was on teaching grammar and employing translation to ascertain comprehension.
- ❖ The grammar-translation method did not produce speakers of the languages studied.
- ❖ In the grammar-translation method, much use of the native language was employed because the goal was not oral proficiency.
- ❖ In the grammar-translation method, teachers did not necessarily have to be fluent speakers of the target language because the focus was not on communication.
- ❖ The grammar-translation method dominated public schools and university language teaching in the United States until World War II.
- ❖ Today, unfortunately, there is still some evidence of the use of the grammar-translation method in some public schools.
- ❖ The direct method was a complete departure form the grammar-translation method.
- ❖ The direct method did not allow for the use of the native language in the classroom.
- ❖ The direct method required the use of visuals to convey meaning in an effort to eliminate translation.
- ❖ The emphasis in the direct method was on developing proficient thinkers and speakers in the target language.
- ❖ The direct method takes its name from the emphasis in the "direct" use of the target language.
- ❖ The most widely known application of the direct method is practiced at the Berlitz language schools.
- ❖ The audio-lingual method (based on behavioristic psychology) emphasized the use of habit forming as a way to develop language proficiency.
- ❖ The main goal of the audio-lingual method was to develop fluent speakers of the languages studied.
- ❖ In the audio-lingual method, the emphasis was on the rote memorization of dialogues.
- ❖ In the audio-lingual method, the belief was that much oral practice (dialogue memorization) would result in communicative competence.
- ❖ The audio-lingual method was unsuccessful because students could recite the dialogues but could not "communicate" in the target language.

- ❖ TPR stands for total physical response.
- ❖ In TPR, students are actively engaged in the language acquisition process by responding nonverbally (physically).
- ❖ TPR is an effective method to employ while second language learners are in the silent (comprehension/preproduction) period.
- ❖ The TPR method allows teachers to ascertain comprehension long before second language learners are able to respond verbally.
- ❖ TPR is an effective method of including second language learners in lessons while in the silent period.
- ❖ TPR helps second/new language learners develop a sense of belonging and accomplishment while still in the silent period.
- ❖ Pictures, objects, and realia are effective to enhance and expand the use of TPR in the classroom.
- ❖ The natural approach is based on Krashen's monitor model.
- ❖ The natural approach respects the ELL's silent period.
- ❖ Error correction is discouraged in the natural approach.
- ❖ In the natural approach, the emphasis is on developing oral language proficiency.
- ❖ In the natural approach, the teaching of grammar/language forms is discouraged.
- ❖ In the natural approach, TPR is widely employed.
- ❖ The communicative approach emphasizes meaningful communication in the ESOL classroom.
- ❖ The communicative approach requires the use of varied activities where authentic communication takes place.
- ❖ The communicative approach embraces the principle of "learning by doing."
- ❖ Cooperative groups provide a vehicle for language acquisition in the communicative approach.
- ❖ The communicative approach is based on the need for an "information gap" as a means to encourage meaningful communication.