



MODERN APPROACHES TO TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

The article discusses modern approaches to foreign language teaching that have emerged within the framework of the communicative approach (Lexical Approach, Task-Based Learning, Language Awareness, Content-Based Instruction, Dogme, Demand High). The principles underlying each approach are listed, and the corresponding lesson structure is described. Common features inherent in these approaches are identified, and parallels are drawn with current trends in domestic methods of foreign language teaching. Based on the analysis, conclusions are made about the main focuses of contemporary English-language foreign language teaching methodology.

Keywords: Approach, methodological principles, awareness, general academic skills, eclecticism.

Introduction

For decades, scholars have been searching for the most effective method of teaching foreign languages that aligns with existing learning conditions and meets the educational standards [Naumova 2014, 154-155]. However, there is still no unified theory on how a foreign language is acquired and how to teach it [Hall 2011, 104]. Therefore, new approaches to foreign language teaching are still being actively proposed, aiming to eliminate the shortcomings of previously existing methods and to meet the demands of modern society.

Moreover, Richards and Rogers [Richards, Rogers 2012, 250] express the opinion that knowledge of the principles and techniques of various methods and approaches enriches the teacher's pedagogical repertoire, enabling them to analyze and compare approaches, and select and adapt what will work in their classroom. This is echoed by G. Brown, who asserts that professional teachers are proficient in various pedagogical approaches, allowing them to work successfully with students



of different ages, levels, nationalities, and needs [Brown, 2011]. Let's now move on to a brief description of the foundations of modern approaches to foreign language teaching, as well as the methods and techniques they offer.

Communicative Language Teaching

The modern approaches to foreign language teaching that we will discuss originated within the framework of the communicative approach and retain many of its features, so let's briefly touch upon it. The primary goal of teaching within the communicative approach is to develop communicative competence. This is achieved through the use of authentic language materials; perceiving language not as an object of study but as a means of communication; working with language not only at the level of phrases and sentences but also at the level of discourse; using pair and group work formats; focusing on the characteristics and needs of learners, and offering them choices (for example, in work formats and study materials) [Larsen-Freeman 2008, 125-128].

Learning a foreign language is not about memorizing a set of isolated structures, but about acquiring the ability to use the language effectively in communication, i.e., developing all components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic [CEFR 2018]. Language serves as a means to solve communicative tasks, so the content of education is determined not by a set of disconnected grammatical structures but by the language phenomena used to accomplish these tasks. Grammar and vocabulary are situational, meaning that the communicative situation determines the grammatical forms and vocabulary to be practiced. Learners are trained in applying strategies that will help them communicate successfully.

Lexical Approach

As the name suggests, this approach is based on the assertion that vocabulary, meaning words and their combinations, is the primary building block of language. Over the last twenty years, research has indeed shown that the role of vocabulary in language functioning was previously underestimated [Richards, Rogers 2012, 132]. Additionally, through the study of language corpora—databases consisting of large amounts of text—it has been demonstrated that most utterances by native speakers contain a limited set of fixed and free word combinations (chunks)



[Richards, Rogers 2012, 133]. Thus, the lexical approach emphasizes reliance on vocabulary in language teaching.

Michael Lewis [Lewis 1993; Lewis 1997], one of the founders of the approach, suggests focusing on the following areas. First, it is working with word formation from the early stages of foreign language learning, which allows students to enrich their vocabulary. The second type of tasks proposed by proponents of the lexical approach involves exercises on working with word combinations, such as recognizing fixed expressions in a text (context), forming possible free word combinations, and working with corpora and dictionaries.

The third type of exercises focuses on synonyms, antonyms, and nuances of meaning, such as selecting a synonym based on context, paraphrasing using a word with a similar/opposite meaning. It also includes exercises for identifying features of formal and informal styles, identifying formal and informal equivalents of lexical units, using vocabulary according to context, and paraphrasing with a change in register.

Critics of the approach point out the following shortcomings. First, they emphasize that although the fixed word combinations used by native speakers in spoken language are limited in number, there are so many of them that even a small part cannot be covered within the scope of a foreign language course. Second, it is impossible to focus solely on vocabulary in a foreign language course while ignoring other aspects of the language. However, in our firm belief, the use of elements of the lexical approach in language teaching and the development of teaching materials enriches teaching practice and makes it more effective.

Language Awareness Although the communicative approach emphasizes meaning and communication rather than grammatical forms or lexical units, researchers (see, for example, [Ellis 2012; Schmidt 1990]) insist on the importance of drawing students' attention to grammatical forms and working consciously with them. R. Bolitho et al. [Bolitho, Carter 2003, 251] define *language awareness* (LA) as a pedagogical approach focused on consciously directing attention to language use, which helps develop a conscious understanding of how language functions. In other words, students discover the language independently. However, it is important to note that conscious analysis of language phenomena does not imply studying the system of the language, as was the case in the grammar-translation method. Implicit



introduction of grammatical material is preferred over explicit teaching because it encourages students to think, analyze language, hypothesize rules, test their hypotheses, and only then arrive at the correct answer (if it exists) and practice recognizing and using the form.

Conclusions

Thus, we can affirm that the eclectic yet reasonable application of techniques and methods offered by various approaches enriches the practice of teaching foreign languages. It is important to acknowledge that modern approaches have many advantages: they allow for the development of general academic skills, as required by contemporary educational standards, they foster student motivation by engaging them in activities and adding variety to the learning process. A teacher who is proficient in the techniques of various pedagogical approaches, knows how to combine them wisely, and understands the principles on which the teaching materials they use are based, is capable of making their lessons both interesting and useful for students.

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