

## **Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching and Learning over Time**

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Résumé de l'article

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## *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching and Learning over Time*

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### *Abstract*

This study is an attempt to review the main language teaching approaches and methods used in the last hundred and fifty years or so. This is justified by the fact that though some teachers, native and non-native, may have some knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of their classroom practices and techniques, they may lack an understanding of some other related past and present teaching methods and approaches. Those methods and approaches are reviewed in a simple and straightforward fashion. The theoretical, economic, political, and educational factors affecting their development, implementation, and change are touched upon in order for teachers to better understand their classroom implementation and seek to improve it and justify it with reference to a clearer, simpler, and more straightforward reading of the literature on the topic in focus.

*Key terms: approaches; methods; qualification; language; teaching; learning*

### *Introduction*

One way to measure teachers' qualifications is by looking into their teaching styles, classroom practices, and implementation, and weighing them against appropriate established approaches and methodologies. Therefore, adequate training in and knowledge of language teaching theories are of paramount importance. Cambridge University developed two language training programs, CELTA and DELTA, for English language teachers who seek international certification. CELTA covers the following five practical topics: teaching and learning context, language analysis and awareness, planning and resources for different teaching contexts, and developing teaching skills and professionalism. As for DELTA, while still practical, it is more theoretical than CELTA, as it covers "historical and current approaches and methods" (British council – Delta syllabus, p. 2). Both certificates are significant in the sense that they are accepted by language centers all over the world. With reference to the recruitment website page of the English Language Institute of King Abdulaziz University, of Jeddah, KSA, for instance, preference goes to candidates who have these two certificates. In some other educational institutions across the world, some teachers are hired simply because they are native speakers of English, not because they have teaching competencies (Braine, 1999). Also, in Hong Kong, "undergraduate degree holders can be appointed as school teachers even if they do not possess teaching qualifications" (Kember, 2016, p. 10). In many English language centers and institutes in the Middle East, a great number of English language teachers, native speakers in particular, do not have any language teaching certificates. They have degrees in subjects like mathematics, physics, etc., and therefore have little, if any, idea about language teaching methods and approaches. I have been involved in interviewing candidates for English language teaching positions at a university in the Middle East, and I have had firsthand experience with many such cases. In some other contexts in the Arab world,

Tunisia as an example, teachers of English refer mainly to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), though the term 'eclectic' may at times crop up in discussions between teachers and teacher-trainers. Approaches and methods predating CLT, however, remain unknown to some teachers who have specialized in sub-specialties like literature, civilization, etc. The course given to students of English specializing in applied linguistics remains largely theory-based and is therefore far from helping students have a full and practical grasp of the approaches and methodologies in question. Only when they are about to start teaching, and through a pre-service training, and later through an in-service training do teachers of English (from the different sub-specialties) start to experiment with and put to practice their understanding of CLT.

Some teachers or critics may argue that practice often trumps theory. However, it should be pointed out that a solid knowledge of theories surely benefits and translates to teachers' practices. Balboni (2018) argues that "epistemological and methodological anarchy flourishes in the absence of any theoretical framework that can serve as scaffolding for the whole of language education" (p. 2). Surely, teachers need to resort to different theories depending on the kinds of students they have and depending on the different needs of different students. A teacher whose students need to present scientific findings orally, for instance, would refer to CLT and would focus on modelling and speaking, rather than on mastering grammar or sentence structure. A teacher's choice of such techniques is better justified by theory.

Therefore, this paper attempts to bridge the gap and help these less qualified teachers have easier access to and a more solid understanding of the different language teaching theories to which they might resort when they teach students with different needs and objectives. The paper also seeks to help teachers and students alike understand teaching practices and techniques and relate them to the changes affecting language teaching, be they theoretical, economic, political, or educational, etc. This paper attempts to summarize the huge body of literature on this issue. Teachers may always have access to primary resources but this paper cuts a long story short, as it were, and the busy teacher would be spared the many unnecessary details. This paper provides a simplified reading of the main methods and approaches, and attempts to explain the changes and transitions between them.

### *Concepts and definitions*

In this section, four key concepts at the basis of language teaching methodology are defined for two main reasons. First, teachers and learners may find them ambiguous in meaning. Second, they are major terms in the literature review in this paper. These four terms are: paradigm, approach, method, and procedures.

#### *Paradigm*

This is the most enigmatic concept. In plain English, it is an *established* comprehensive *view* that guides and lays out teachers' and learners' practices. Learner-centered rather than teacher-centered practices, process-oriented rather than product-oriented instruction, the social nature of learning rather than decontextualized learning, learning as a life-long process rather than as a process that ends once a test is taken, etc., are but a few beliefs at the basis of the new paradigm, also called constructivist paradigm, and learning paradigm. In the old paradigm (also called traditional paradigm, instructional paradigm or teaching paradigm), focus was on increasing the quantity of information. In the new paradigm, focus is on the effectiveness of the learning process

and on what learners can do with the new information. Though the term ‘paradigm’ can sometimes be used to refer to the concept of approach, it is broader in focus.

### *Approach*

An approach is a theory about the nature of language, language learning and teaching. It has to do with “correlative assumptions” about how people learn and teachers teach in general. It is the level at which views, assumptions, and beliefs (specified under the term ‘paradigm’; that guide and establish teachers’ and learners’ practices, and about language and learning in general) are specified.

### *Method*

It is the level at which an approach is applied. With reference to Richards and Rodgers (2015), “method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented” (p. 21).

### *Procedures*

Procedures are step-by-step measures to execute a method. They are also called techniques and a few examples are given below. Common procedures for the grammar-translation method, for instance, include the following:

1. A second language text is read by the class.
2. A passage from the second language text is translated by the students to their mother tongue.
3. New words are translated by the students from the second language to their mother tongue.
4. A grammar rule is given to the students. Using the new translated words, students apply the rule.
5. Vocabulary of the second language is memorized.
6. The grammar rule is stated and memorized by the students.
7. Errors made by the students are corrected and the right answers are provided.
8. We may, however, come across variations to these procedures, also called techniques.

### *Approaches and Methods*

The intention, in this section, is to shed light on some of the most important teaching methods and approaches in the history of English language learning and teaching. The reader’s attention should be drawn to the fact that the terms ‘method’ and ‘approach’ are used with particular teaching trends for reasons that will be explained below.

As we shall see below, teaching methods change over time. One goal is to improve teaching effectiveness; another goal is to answer the changing needs of learners themselves, or even to keep pace with the arising theories on the nature of language and language learning. For more comprehensive details about teaching approaches and methods, teachers, and especially researchers are advised to consult Rodgers et al. (2001), Mukalel (2005), and Richards and Rodgers (2015). This last publication would be of particular interests to the readers of this review paper as it

basically follows the same pattern. The worth and value of this paper, however, is most manifest as it addresses the same issues but in more concise and clearer terms, which could be of paramount importance to busy practitioners, teachers, and teacher-trainers.

### *Grammar-translation method*

As its name indicates, grammar-translation method is a way of learning a language through a “detailed study of its grammar” (Nagaraj, 1996, p. 2). Grammar rules are then applied to translate sentences from L1 into L2 and vice-versa. This method rests on the same methods of teaching Greek and Latin, which both were then thought to include intrinsic components that build *will* and *intellect* in the mind of learners. *Will* and *intellect* are two basic components that formed, among other things, the concept of “faculty psychology”- a concept upon which rested old-fashioned European educational disciplines.

The principal characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method are as follows:

1. The primary goal behind learning a language is to read its literature. The grammar rules of a language are studied in great detail, and then used alongside the studied vocabulary to translate sentences into and out of the target language. In so doing, “The first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language” (Stern, 1983, p. 455).
2. There is little emphasis, if any, on speaking and listening. There is, however, an outright focus on writing and reading. The reading texts are the source of the selected vocabulary, which is later taught through bilingual word lists.
3. Emphasis is on accuracy. Grammar is taught deductively, and then practiced through translation exercises. The learners are required to achieve high standards in translation. This is indicative of “having an intrinsic moral value, [and] was a prerequisite for passing the increasing number of formal written examinations that grew up during the century” (Howatt, 1984, p. 132).
4. Instruction is done using the students’ native language. Teachers use L1 for explanation and for comparing between the students’ first language and the taught language.

Grammar Translation dominated European and foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s, and in modified and “various forms” it continues to be widely used “in all parts of the world” today (Mukalel, 2005, p. 45). More recently, Seeroi (2012) wrote on the merits of the grammar-translation method in today’s Japan and in the rest of the world.

It seems worthy to note that grammar translation theory makes few demands on teachers. It is still used in situations where understanding literary texts is the primary focus of foreign language study, especially when there is little need for a speaking knowledge of the language. Contemporary texts for the teaching of foreign languages at the college level, in many parts of the world, often reflect Grammar-Translation principles. These texts are frequently the products of people trained in literature rather than in language teaching or in applied linguistics (Richards & Rodgers, 2015). More recent use of grammar translation method is documented in countries like Indonesia (Hermita, 2009), Jordan (Aqel, 2013), Lithuania (Dagilienė, 2012), and in Saudi Arabia (AlRefaii, 2013).

One good reason behind its being considered a method rather than a theory, according to Richards and Rodgers (2015), is that “it is a method for which there is no

theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory” (p. 7).

From the 1880s on, with the advent of the Reform Movement, linguists such as Henry Sweet in England, Wilhelm Viëtor in Germany, and Paul Passy in France began to call for a change towards a focus on speech rather than on the language written form. They opted for teaching the phonetic sound system of languages (i.e. phonetics), which gave new insights on speech processes. Now there was an emphasis on speech rather than on the written form of the language. In 1886, The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was designed to transcribe the sounds of languages. In addition to the new focus on speech and the phonetic system, teachers started using conversation texts and dialogues for the purpose of introducing idioms and conversational phrases. These conversation texts and dialogues are presented in meaningful contexts, which are also crucial to present grammar rules inductively, with a very limited use of translation of new words. These new principles of the time laid the basis for a more principled approach to language teaching- one based on more “naturalistic principles of language learning, such as are seen in first language acquisition” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 11). This led to the development of the direct method.

### *The Direct Method*

The direct method is defined as a way to study a language through conversation, discussion, and reading in the target language itself, without use of formal grammar study, translation or recourse to the learners’ first language (Dash & Dash, 2007; Eden, 1998; Palmer & Palmer, 1970).

This was one of the first moves towards more “natural” and “realistic” (Crystal, 2007, p. 438) language learning methods, in the sense that second language learning became somehow similar to the way a child acquired their first language, with less focus on language analysis and more towards the practical meaning-related use of the language. The direct method pioneers such as Gouin (1880), together with pioneers from the Reform Movement (members of the International Phonetics Association, IPA for short) contributed to this change from focus on form to focus on use.

The interest is now in intensive oral interaction in the target language, and in trying to “directly” convey meaning through demonstration and action. Students would be able to induce the rules of grammar and the meaning of words through a direct, active, spontaneous, and intensive use of the target language in class. The main source of knowledge, therefore, is no longer the textbook which is replaced by the native teacher - a source of correct pronunciation and grammar rules.<sup>1</sup>

In private schools, and where learners could pay for what they learnt, the direct method was quite successful. In public schools, however, it was not that easy to pay native speaker teachers. Also, it was counterproductive to strictly adhere to the principles of the direct method. Native speaker teachers are not always proficient and skilled enough to teach a language, even if it is their mother tongue. It goes without saying that being a native speaker of a language does not mean having the skill and the proficiency to teach it. In addition, instead of using long explanations in the target language, “a simple, brief explanation in the student’s native language would have been a more efficient route to comprehension” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 13). In addition, and though it was innovative at the level of teaching procedures, it failed to

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<sup>1</sup> This is also called the Berlitz method, though the term ‘direct’ is not used by Berlitz.

address more basic issues such as methodological principles (Sweet, 1899), which is one of the reasons behind the appearance of a more methodologically principled method - the oral method.

### *The Oral Method*

Palmer (1921, p. v) in the dedicatory preface to his book *The Oral Method of Teaching Languages* made the following note:

The demand for language lessons on a **conversational basis** was rapidly increasing, not only in England, but all over the world- and . . . there was apparently not a single book yet in existence which gave clear and **precise indications** to teachers as to **how such a course should be conducted**; it was left to each individual teacher to work out his own system, good, bad, or indifferent. [Emphasis added]

Palmer's above quotation highlights one of the reasons behind the advent of the oral method, which was the need for a principled methodology to conduct lessons which are based on conversations. The materials forming the basis for instruction, as suggested by Palmer himself, include but are not limited to: question and answer drills of all sorts, yes and no drills, sequential groups, conversion exercises, fluency exercises, pronunciation and intonation exercises, and exercises in conscious and unconscious oral assimilation.

Palmer's advice to the learners of a language is to "go among the natives, mix with them, listen to them, accustom yourself to hearing the language as spoken in everyday conversation...make no systematic study of grammar, make no written notes, perform no conscious analysis; in short, pick up the language as you did your mother tongue" (Palmer, 1921, p. 1). The idea was to dispense with books, which were considered an obstacle between the learners and the teacher, and to embrace a complete oral approach to teaching and learning. With little or almost no writing and reading, with no formal analysis or study of the structure of language, and with no recourse to his or her mother tongue, the learner can pick up the language exactly in the same way the child does with his or her mother tongue.

Now the challenge is how to put into logical order this huge body of conversations. In other words, there is a need to come up with a principled methodology to select, grade, and then present the materials which are now taught orally before they are presented in written format.

This "new" principled methodology starts with a scheme of classification to select the content, and then to grade it from smaller articles to larger structures, and from single words to structures of more words. After selecting and grading the content, Palmer presented the content in two main manners; the first is based on the 'ears before eyes strategy' and the second on the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) format. In this PPP format, which influenced more recent approaches such as the audiolingual method, CLT, and even CBLT, the teacher first presents information to the students and shares it with them. This is followed by a second stage in which students practice what was presented to them without fear of failure. In the third stage, learners produce what they have learnt and transfer it to freer dialogues and activities. Throughout the learning process, the written format is presented only after a sufficient grammatical and lexical basis is established. This grammatical and lexical basis is established through the use of "situations in which the meaning is quite clear" (Pittman, 1963, pp. 155-156).

Pittman uses the term ‘situational’ to refer to these situations (hence the second label: situational method) where concrete objects, pictures, and realia are used alongside actions and gestures to demonstrate meanings of new vocabulary.

The difference between the terms ‘oral’ and ‘situational’ is mainly a matter of age; in that the oral approach appeared in the 1920’s while situational language teaching appeared in the 1960’s. Other minor differences do exist, but the main one relates to time.

The oral method, however, was criticized for many reasons, chief among which is the inability of many learners to use this PPP model or lesson format to move from the staged and controlled to freer practice. Yet, it should be noted that the oral method was the basis of the underlying theoretical frameworks of major textbooks throughout the 1980s and beyond (Hubbard et al., 1983).

### *Audiolingualism*

The entry of the US into World War II was one of the main reasons behind the development of audiolingualism. The US army needed personnel fluent in foreign languages, and American universities were commissioned to develop a foreign language program for military personnel. In 1942, the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was established. The objective is “to attain conversational proficiency in a variety of foreign languages” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 58). Because that was not the objective of traditional language teaching approaches in the US, a new approach was called for. This new approach, i.e. audiolingualism, was underpinned by structural linguistics and behaviorism. Structural linguistics is, in part, a reaction against grammar-translation, and against the belief that grammatical categories of Indo-European languages represented ideal categories in languages. With the increased interest in non-European languages, structural linguistics focused on the phonemic, morphological and syntactic systems underlying the grammar of a given language, rather than according to traditional categories of Latin grammar. Linguists developed a more sophisticated methodology to collect and analyze data. Spoken utterances were phonetically transcribed, and the phonemic, morphological (stems, prefixes, suffixes, etc.), and syntactic (phrases, clauses, sentence types) systems underlying the grammar of the language were studied. As for behaviorism, a theory on the psychology of learning, it stipulates that “the human being is an organism capable of a wide repertoire of behaviors” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 63).

With reference to Brooks (1964), the short-term objectives of the method include training in listening comprehension, accurate pronunciation, recognition of speech symbols as graphic signs on the printed page, and the ability to reproduce these symbols in writing. The ability to use the language as the native speaker used it was, however, a long-term objective.

The short-term objective was mainly to develop learners’ oral fluency, with particular attention to correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Therefore, the emphasis was on two main skills- listening and speaking. Classroom practices were centered around dialogues and drills. The teacher uses dialogues to contextualize and memorize key structures and cultural aspects of the target language. After a particular dialogue is presented and memorized, its structures are drilled and practiced in the form of exercises. Some of the drills used include repetition, inflection, replacement, restatement, completion, transposition, etc. (For more details, see Richards and Rodgers, 2015, pp. 67-69). Overall, the audiolingual method to language teaching



views language mainly as speech that can be approached through structure, and that practice makes perfect.

Yet, as of 1970, it started to give way to the communicative approach, and that was the beginning of a paradigm shift, from a traditional paradigm (teaching paradigm) to a constructivist paradigm (learning paradigm).

### *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)*

Here we come to a paradigm shift. Therefore, a few words might be needed to help the reader gain a clearer understanding of the term ‘paradigm’ and its relation to approaches. Basically, all methods / approaches preceding CLT are within a particular comprehensive view that is essentially teacher-centered. This first comprehensive view (also called paradigm) includes the grammar translation method, the direct method, the oral method, and the audiolingual method. Then we move to a second paradigm, which is learner-centered, and which includes CLT, the whole language approach, the outcome-based approach, the task-based approach, and the text-based approach. So, a paradigm is a comprehensive view that can be either teacher-based or learner-based, and which guides the formulation of the different language teaching and learning methods and approaches.

CLT marks the beginning of a paradigm shift, from teaching to learning, from the traditional to the process-oriented paradigm in which learners construct meaning, and in which the teacher is ‘a guide on the side’ rather than ‘a sage on the stage’. In other words, a teacher is a simple facilitator that helps learners find their way on a learning journey, rather than the sole source of knowledge that learners refer to whenever they need information about language use.

The term ‘competence’ is a key word in CLT. In 1972, Dell Hymes came up with the notion of communicative competence- a notion in contrast to Chomsky’s notion of competence, which is essentially linguistic. Chomsky focuses on linguistic competence and disregards linguistic performance. Chomsky (1965) believes that the child is born with language acquisition devices (LAD) which help him / her acquire, recognize, and produce grammatically correct language in an ideal speaker-listener interaction and in a homogenous speech community, without being affected by environmental distractors such as memory limitation, shift of attention or interest, etc. This view was critiqued by Hymes (1972) who came up with the concept of ‘communicative competence’. Hymes views competence as inclusive of both theoretical and practical needs, and therefore rejects the dichotomy between competence and performance in that they are but two sides of the same coin. Performance is the observable part of an inferred ability (i.e. competence); and they both are influenced by cognitive and social factors, given that users or speakers of a language cannot be isolated from their speech community- a community with its own linguistic requirements for speakers to be communicatively competent- hence the term ‘communicative competence’. With reference to Hymes (1972), a communicatively competent speaker is someone with the knowledge and ability to use language with respect to the following:

1. whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible.
2. whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available.

3. whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated.
4. whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails.

Later, other researchers (Allen, 1980; Brumfit, 1980; Canale and Swain, 1980; Halliday, 1975; Prabhu, 1987; Widdowson, 1978) provided more insights into CLT theory and practice. The focus of this paper, however, is not to provide a detailed review of their works.

The origin of CLT can also be traced back to the establishment of The Common European Market. With the increasing interdependence between the European countries came the need for people to communicate in the languages of the Common European Market. The Council of Europe sponsored research on this issue. The British linguist Wilkins (1972) proposed a functional or communicative understanding of language- an understanding that would form the basis of a yet to be developed syllabi for communicative language teaching. Now, the core language is described through an analysis of the system of meaning that laid behind language use, rather than through traditional concepts of vocabulary and grammar. Wilkins (1972) described two types of meaning: notional categories (concepts such as time, space, sequence, quantity, location, frequency, cause and effect, etc.), and functional categories (such as requests, denials, offers, complaints, etc.). The notional-functional understanding of language was later developed and published in a book entitled *Notional Syllabuses* (1976), and together with contributions from other researchers and the work of the Council of Europe, significantly contributed to communicative language teaching.

At the procedural level, CLT could be said to be based on earlier approaches. In fact, the Practice-Presentation-Production (PPP) format could be traced back to the oral method and also to audiolingual classes. In this three-step process, we find:

1. Presentation: the teacher presents new language items (a grammatical structure or a language function) through the use of words, pictures, audio, acting out, brainstorming, realia, etc.
2. Practice: The teacher provides students with exercises to practice the presented language items. Activities like gap-filling, problem solving, multiple choice questions, controlled role plays, sentence construction are used to this end. Practice is never free at this stage, and the objective is to ensure accuracy.
3. Production: At this stage, the teacher provides occasions for learners to actively produce more freely what has been practiced. The learners engage in activities like topics for writing, free role plays, discussions, etc. The focus here is more on fluency.

CLT, by this token, does not seem to do away with earlier theory and practice. According to Richards and Rodgers (2015), “techniques and classroom management associated with a number of classroom procedures (e.g., group activities, language games, role plays)...[and] the ways in which they are used are [not] exclusive to CLT classrooms” (p. 102).

I should mention that CLT has continued to influence classroom practices today, more particularly with its stronger version- the task-based approach- an approach that underscores “using English to learn it” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279).

CLT, however, was critiqued for its inapplicability in other cultures, its promotion of fossilization, and also for its native speakerism. The latter, however, was revisited with the advent of intercultural communicative language teaching.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Whole Language Approach*

The term “whole language” first appeared in the 1980s in the US, used by a group of educators whose concern was to teach what was understood to be language arts, and that is the teaching of reading and writing for first language learners.

The argument is that language should be taught as a whole, rather than with focus on discrete and isolated features of the language. Reading strategies like word-by-word or “bottom-up” are not considered appropriate because “if language isn’t kept whole, it isn’t language any more” (Rigg, 1991, p. 522).

The emphasis, in whole language, is on learning to read and write naturally. Learners and teachers focus on reading and writing for pleasure. In the 1990s, primary school children in the US were taught using this approach, which soon attracted the attention of specialists in second language teaching, especially because it complies with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching and the Natural Approach- two dominant approaches back then. It is in line with CLT in that both are based on experiential learning, integration of skills, and authentic language, etc. Also, whole teaching relates to Natural Approach principles as it stipulates that children and adults should learn language the way children are believed to acquire their first language.

For students, reading (literature in particular) is a means to discover, explore, and communicate meaning to a real audience, which could be other students. The purpose of the learners is not simply learning a particular skill (reading or writing), but interacting with a real audience - mainly fellow students and authors. As such, the teacher is not ‘a sage on the stage’; rather, he or she is a mere “facilitator and an active participant in the learning community” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 143). The students select a range of authentic real-world materials such as newspapers, signs, storybooks, etc. They can also produce their own materials instead of buying designed ones. Such practices are also common in CLT, CBI, and TBLT.

The Whole Language approach was, however, rejected by some researchers (Levine & Munsch, 2013; Song & Young, 2008). One reason behind such a rejection is that it is an approach that seeks to impose L1 standards and principles to second and foreign language learning. The premise that attention to authentic texts alone, without clear focus on a structured reading process in which learners’ attention is drawn to sounds and symbols does not seem to be tenable in second and foreign language contexts. Another reason for rejection is that, in reading for instance, context is not sufficient for word recognition, in particular in contexts where the language is taught as a second language, and also when learners are from a disadvantaged sociocultural context. These learners, in particular, need highly systematic, direct, and intensive instruction that takes into consideration their developmental level (Birsh & Carreker, 1999). Such needed kind of instruction is not used in whole-language teaching as the main focus in this approach is on L1 learners.

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<sup>2</sup> For more details, see Byram (2003)

### *An Outcome-based language teaching approach: Competency-based Language Teaching (CBLT)*

Under the rubric of ‘outcome-based language teaching approaches, Richards and Rodgers (2015) lump together the competency-based language teaching (CBLT), the Standards Movement, and the Common European Framework of Reference. While CBLT is a language teaching approach; the Standards Movement and the CEFR are approaches meant to quantify the outcome of a learning process and tools to set out clear standards for language learning and teaching across the four skills, respectively. Therefore, I intend to focus on CBLT solely in this section.

CBLT is considered outcome-based as it starts with a description of the learning outcomes. Outcomes are what learners should be able to know and do by the end of a course. When the outcomes are defined, course designers move on to identify issues related to methodology and syllabus. Outcome-based learning is very much linked to public accountability, wherein educational decisions have to be in line with the declared goals of the public policy.

### *The Competency-based Language Teaching (approach)*

By the end of the 1970s, in the United States there was a need to adopt an approach to teach adults, particularly new immigrants who needed work-related language competencies. The ultimate goal is for those individuals to be able to survive in the society in which they live. In this approach, precise educational goals (also called outcomes) are defined with particular attention paid to “precise measurable descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors students should possess at the end of a course of study” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 151).

In the implementation of a CBLT program, the following eight factors are involved (Auerbach, 1986, pp. 414-415).

1. An emphasis on helping learners to become successful in functioning in society and in the world.
2. An emphasis on life skills, rather than on knowledge of language itself.
3. An emphasis on task-oriented learning (e.g. following instructions to carry out a simple task).
4. An emphasis on modularized instruction, i.e. clear, broken down, and well-defined chunks of meaningful language are used for teachers and students to attain very well-defined objectives, and for the purpose of having a clear sense of progress.
5. An emphasis on an a priori identification of outcomes, which are now known to and agreed upon by the public, the teachers and the learners.
6. A continuous and ongoing assessment: students are pre-tested (to identify skills they lack) then post-tested after instruction. If learners do not achieve the level required in a competency, they carry on working on it until they demonstrate a mastery of the skill in a further post-test.
7. Learners should demonstrate a clear mastery of performance objectives, i.e. learners are tested on how well they can demonstrate pre-specified behaviors.
8. Instruction is individualized and student-centered. Content, level, pace, and objectives are defined in terms of learners’ needs in relation to the demands of society and the world.

In a word, these factors point to one clear objective behind this approach: the focus is no longer on what a learner knows about a language, but on what he or she can do with it.

An example of a CBLT lesson format is as follows:

1. Warm up / Review: A brainstorming task, an interactive task, or a revision of a previous lesson content.
2. Introduction: The teacher introduces the lesson objectives (Sometimes, it's one objective), and informs the students of what they will do.
3. Presentation: New information, language functions and forms that will be used in that lesson are explained, modeled, and drilled by the teacher. They are to be introduced in the introduction first.
4. Comprehension check: This could be considered a part of the presentation stage. The teacher herein checks that students have understood the language content they have been introduced to, before moving on to the guided practice stage.
5. Guided practice: The students engage in short and controlled activities for a guided practice of the introduced language content.
6. Communicative practice: In a mini-stage lesson, students pair up or team up and complete a communicative task, using the language they have focused upon in the guided practice stage.
7. Evaluation: Students evaluate the extent of their learning by “showing, explaining, analysing or reflecting on what they have learned during the lesson” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 161).
8. Application: The learnt content is extended to new situations and applied in new activities.

*The Task-based (approach) (one strong version of CLT)*

For a better understanding of TBLT, there is a need to shed light on the origin of the term ‘task’ as first used in second language acquisition (Long & Crookes, 1993). With reference to Ellis (2003) “tasks...hold a central place in current SLA research and also in language pedagogy” (p. 1). The argument for the use of the tasks and the term *task* is that “engaging learners in task work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused activities, and hence ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place” (Richards & Rodgers, 2015, p. 175). Once immersed in tasks that lead to a negotiation of meaning, learners find themselves engaged in naturalistic and meaningful communication. Students are then asked to engage in functional tasks in which they primarily focus on meaning rather than on the accuracy of the language use. This view, however, was critiqued by a number of researchers such as Cook (2000), who calls for a revisiting of Nunan’s (1989) focus “on meaning rather than on form”, and also considers Krashen’s insistence on giving comprehensible messages rather crude. Cook (2000) gives the example of students being asked to “practise sequences of sounds which, while phonologically possible are not instances of actual words - a technique which is still recommended...in some contemporary works on pronunciation teaching” (p. 165). Cook (2000) also contends that forms which are presumably meaningless have their pragmatic meanings.

An exemplar task-based lesson format comprises three main parts: a pre-task, a task cycle, and a post-task. The figure below sums up this format. It has to be mentioned, however, that different terms may be used in the literature to refer to these steps.

Table 1  
*A Plan for a Task-based Approach Lesson*

Stages		
<b>Pre-task</b>	<b>Introduction to the task</b>	Theme and objectives of the lesson (brainstorming, pictures, mime, personal experience, games, etc.)
<b>Task Cycle</b>	<b>Task</b>	Pairs & group work: tasks (involving reading a text, listening to a recording, talking about an issue, etc.) - No language correction - Confidence-building
	<b>Planning</b> (Students prepare an oral report of their task)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students prepare an oral report of previous task to whole class.</li> <li>- Notes of the summary are taken, with time limit for each group.</li> <li>- Teacher monitors work, advises on clarity, organization, accuracy, etc.</li> </ul>
	<b>Report</b> (Students present their reports to the whole class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One student from each group reports the summary of their task. The rest listen and take note, comment, or add extra information.</li> <li>- The teacher guides the students to the realization of the task. He or she may rephrase what students say but gives no overt correction.</li> </ul>
<b>Post-task</b>	<b>The language Focus</b>	Turning to grammar after having exposure to vocabulary in the precedent stages. This can be done through an analysis (e.g. finding verbs in the simple past) of some of the language forms from the recording or the text, then through a more controlled practice (sentence completion, etc.).

TBLL approach, however, is considered to be very demanding on the part of teachers. Teachers have to be course designers and material developers, bearing in mind that this approach requires lessons to be built from the bottom up. Teachers need to take into account the needs of particular students in particular contexts. Ready-made and commercial textbooks may no longer be of much use to teachers and learners.

*The text-based (approach)*

In plain English, the text-based approach is derived from a genre theory of the nature of language, and seeks to explicitly teach the structure and grammatical features of spoken and written texts, taking into account the social and cultural contexts of the use of those texts. At this level, two key terms need to be defined: text and genre.

Text is any written or spoken form of a language that has a whole which includes a beginning, a middle, and an end and which reflects appropriate grammar and vocabulary.

Genre can be defined as the sum of contexts, situations, purposes, audiences, and relationships that govern language use. Scientific writings, fiction, interviews, reports, and songs are examples of different genres, each of which has its specific text types. Each of these text types has its distinctive pattern of organization and linguistic features.

As mentioned earlier, text-based learning draws on an explicit teaching of the structure and grammatical features of a text. Students' attention is drawn to the linguistic features of the discourse. Students are directly exposed to the organizational features of the studied texts. This explicit and conscious learning is at odds with the implicit models of language learning reflected in the natural approach, communicative language teaching and task-based language learning. The teacher, using authentic texts, is an expert who scaffolds learning by leading learners through an analysis of texts towards an identification of their organizational and linguistic features. Then the teacher and the learners work together to create a similar text. Later, the students are left alone to work on their own text. The table below provides more details on a TBL lesson plan (See Richards & Rodgers, 2015 for more details).

Table 2  
*A Plan for a Text-based Approach Lesson*

Stages	
Stage 1: Building the context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introducing the social context of the text</li> <li>- Exploring the text's cultural context features and its social purposes</li> <li>- Investigating the register of the text to understand the immediate context of the situation.</li> </ul>
Stage 2: Modelling and deconstructing the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigating the structural pattern and language features of a text.</li> <li>- Comparing the model text with other examples of the same text type.</li> </ul>
Stage 3: Joint construction of a text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The teacher and students jointly construct texts similar to the text-type.</li> </ul>
Stage 4: Independent construction of a text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Independently of the teacher, students create and construct similar texts.</li> </ul>
Stage 5: Linking to related texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students link what they learnt to other texts in the same or in similar contexts.</li> </ul>

To conclude, text-based learning is basically about using authentic texts to analyse their lexico-grammatical features and use them in particular social practices.

#### *Summary table*

The table below sums up the most common classroom practices in the above-mentioned methods and approaches. For reasons of space, and because this paper essentially aims to guide teachers' practices, the focus is on some of the practices in the related methods and approaches.

Table 3

*A Summary Table for English Language Approaches and Methodologies*

Approach or Method <sup>3</sup>	Theoretical Foundations	Classroom Practices
Grammar Translation Method	-Based on the <i>method</i> used in teaching Greek and Latin.	- Translation from L2 to L1 - Deductive teaching of rules - Mistakes corrected on the spot
Direct Method	Native speakers- the source of correct pronunciation and grammar rules.	- Demonstrate, do not explain. - Target language only - Acting, moving, drawing, pointing, touching, etc., but never explaining.
Oral Method	- Speech is the basis of language, and structure is the heart of the speaking ability.	- Drills, sequential groups, conversion exercises - Fluency, pronunciation, and intonation exercises - Reading and writing only after a sufficient grammatical or lexical basis is established.
Audiolingual Method	Structural linguistics and behaviorism.	- Drills, repetition, rewarding students' trials, tape recorders and audiovisual equipment.
<b>Paradigm Shift: from teacher-centered to learner centered</b>		
Communicative Language Teaching	- Communicative competence in the common European Market. - Communication is at the core of teaching and learning (The notional / functional syllabi). - The native speaker model	- Group activities - Language games - Role plays - Information gap activities
The Whole language approach	- A philosophy or a trend from general education, not from language teaching itself.	- Generating stories & discussing issues - Creating a role play - Drawing pictures and maps - Other real world activities
The Outcome-based Approach: CBLT	An approach that starts with a description of the learning outcomes, and the competencies to be mastered.	- Group & pair work, role play - Real-world tasks (job applications, job interviews, cooking a meal, etc.)
The Task-based Approach	Learning takes place when learners engage in naturalistic and meaningful tasks that lead to meaningful communication.	- Brainstorming, pictures, mimics, personal experience
The Text-based Approach	Key terms: text; genre Based on genre theory of the nature of language.	- Pictures, audiovisuals, realia, field trips, comparing differences, jigsaws

<sup>3</sup> The term method, rather than approach, is used when there is no literature offering a rationale or a justification for it or attempting to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.



### *Conclusion*

This paper reviewed the main English language teaching approaches and methods over the last hundred and fifty years or so. The main aims were to simplify key concepts, to provide a concise yet comprehensive reading of those approaches and methods, and to highlight the reasons behind the shift from one approach / method to the other.

The main points made by the authors are as follows:

- Language teaching has been based on two paradigms: a teacher-centered paradigm and a learner-centered paradigm
- The teacher-centered paradigm includes the grammar translation method, the direct method, the oral method, and the audiolingual method.
- The learner-centered paradigm includes communicative language teaching, the whole language approach, the outcome-based approach (competency-based approach), the task-based approach, and the text-based approach.
- The move from the teacher-centered to the learner-centered paradigm was warranted by the “new” comprehensive view that learners live in a socio-cultural context where the process of learning is more important than information itself, and that teachers are mere guides of a learning process in which learners themselves are in the center of a trip to discover and acquire language.
- In the teacher-centered paradigm, teachers use techniques like translation and immediate correction of mistakes (GTM), demonstration, target language only, and moving (Direct Method), drills, fluency and intonation exercises (Oral Method), drills, tape-recording, and rewarding students’ trials (Audio-lingual Method).
- In the learner-centered paradigm, focus was more on learners themselves getting engaged in group activities (CLT), generating stories and discussing issues (Whole Language Approach), doing real-world tasks (Outcome-based Approach), relating personal experience (Task-based Approach), going on field trips and comparing differences (Text-based Approach).

The reader’s attention should also be drawn to the fact that no approach or methodology is better than the other. It makes more sense to speak about appropriateness in relation to goals, audiences, social and educational contexts, and also to accountability to ministries of education and to the educational policies of states / nations. Language teaching is, in many ways, related to the political structure, identities, and governance of countries. Also, one main question that teachers should ask themselves is: what will my students do with what I am going to teach them? This should be the first step towards the building of a lesson and the move towards a sound choice of a particular method or approach. The teacher who knows about the ins and outs of his or her learning and teaching settings is the main arbiter of relevance as to what method/approach he/she should adopt.

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