

TOPIC 13

ENGLISH TITLE: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: FROM GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION METHOD TO CURRENT APPROACHES.

SPANISH TITLE: HISTORIA DE LA EVOLUCIÓN DE LA DIDÁCTICA DE LAS LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS: DE LOS MÉTODOS DE GRAMÁTICA TRADUCCIÓN A LOS ENFOQUES ACTUALES.



I am going to start by exposing the general guideline of the topic of my choice that I will later explain into more detail

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1 - INTRODUCTION

Before starting with the development of this topic, the legislative for primary education are **Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29th, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3rd, of Education** (From here on out LOMLOE), **Royal Decree 157 of March 1st, which establishes the organization and minimum teachings of Primary Education.** (hereinafter *Royal Decree 157 of March 1st*) and **Foral Decree 67/2022, of June 22nd, which establishes the curriculum of the teachings of the Primary Education stage in the Foral Community of Navarra.**

For centuries, the formal teaching of foreign languages was restricted to privileged or advanced schooling, gave particular importance to form over meaning and made use mostly of the grammar translation method. However, since the end of the 19th century, the search for the “best” method and the “best” age to start teaching and learning a foreign language

was inspired first by existing theories on human psychology and behavior, secondly by language learning and language acquisition theories and finally by the importance of communicating and developing competences in the foreign language.

Although the need to learn foreign languages is almost as old as human history, the origins of modern language education are in the study and teaching of Latin in the 17th century. Comenius was one of the first people who talked about the need of a “science” for teaching a foreign language. For him, the word didactics meant “the art of teaching everything to everyone”. However, it was not until the 19th century when foreign languages were included in the curriculum of European schools.

Through this topic we are going to explain the main methods and approaches relative to language teaching. I have divided them into three main sections: more traditional methods, other methods and new tendencies in education.

2 - TRADITIONAL METHODS

Starting with traditional approaches, the first thing we have to say about them is that they lack a theoretical linguistic or pedagogical framework and most of their principles are rejected by current foreign language teaching trends. The three most important teaching methods included in this group are the Grammar Translation method, Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method.

2.1 - Grammar Translation Method

► **History:** This method was historically used in teaching Greek and Latin. The approach was generalized to teach modern languages and stayed in schools until the 1960s.

► Principal features:

- This method only took into account the field of Linguistics that dealt with vocabulary, grammar or meaning, forgetting about the one that dealt with communication. That's why the primary skills to be developed are reading and writing, Little attention is given to speaking and listening.
- Classes are taught in the students' mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. And paid little or no attention to pronunciation. Being the teacher the authority in the classroom. This way, the students have a passive role in the classroom, where there is little interaction among them.
- Memorization and translation were used as means of learning a language. Most of the session is devoted to translating sentences. The sentence as a unit was taken into consideration as a distinguishing part, in this method.
- What we aim for in this method is accuracy instead of fluency. So, vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. And elaborated explanations of grammar are always provided. Reading of difficult texts starts early in the course of study, paying little attention to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.

► **Advantages:** Communication between the teacher and the learner does not cause linguistic problems.

► **Disadvantages:**

- It is an unnatural method. According to KRASHEN, S. The natural order of learning a language is listening, speaking, reading and writing so the learning process is reversed.
- Speech is neglected. It lays emphasis on reading and writing. It neglects speech. Thus, the students who are taught English through this method fail to express themselves adequately in spoken English.
- Exact translation is not possible.
- It does not give pattern practice. A person can learn a language only when he internalizes its patterns. This method attempts to teach language through rules and not by use.
- The method as such served only highly intellectual students and it was not meant for pupil with low IQ rate. So eventually, it makes students to develop a negative attitude and the learning process leads the student to turn away from the class.

2.2 - Direct Method

► **History:** The direct method of teaching foreign languages, sometimes called the *natural method*, uses only the target language. It was established in Germany and France around 1900 as a reaction against the Grammar-Translation Method. This method considers that we should teach the four linguistic skills, but emphasizing the oral ones, because as they claim, it is the natural way in which children learn their mother tongue. So the main aim of this method is that students develop the ability to think in the target language when conversing, reading or writing.

► **Principal features:**

- Avoidance of using the mother tongue and translational techniques.
- The teacher should demonstrate, not explain or translate, using real objects or pictures to help comprehension. So when teaching vocabulary, it must be through pantomiming, real-life objects, other visual materials and demonstrations. And in abstract vocabulary through association of ideas.
- Students are encouraged to speak as much as possible because according to this method the purpose of language learning is communication. The class is focused on question-answer patterns. Students are taught from the beginning to ask questions as well as answer them.
- Pronunciation is worked from the beginning and grammar, in opposition to the grammar-translation method, it is taught inductively, which means that students discover the grammar rules while they are working on exercises.

- Regarding classroom interaction, it goes both ways, from teacher to students and from students to teacher. Students read short textbook passages with difficult words and expressions in the foreign language which were explained in the foreign language.

► **Advantages:**

- The teacher stops using the mother tongue to explain the second language. Due to this fact some non-translational techniques are developed.
- Aspects of the direct method are still present in many foreign language classrooms, such as the emphasis on listening and speaking, the use of the foreign language for all the class instructions or the use of visual material or realia to illustrate meaning.

► **Disadvantages:**

The main weakness of this method is that it considers that first and second languages are learnt in the same way, when in fact, they have importance differences regarding their way of acquisition. This causes some misunderstandings between teachers and students.

2.3 - Audio-Lingual Method

► **History:** The outbreak of World War II created the need to post large number of American soldiers all over the world. It was therefore necessary to provide these soldiers with at least basic verbal communication skills. Audio-lingual method came to be known as the “army method”, a term coined by *Professor Brooks* in 1964.

► **Principal features:**

- Separation of the skills, listening, speaking, reading, writing
- Language takes place naturally, within a context, and the foreign language and the mother tongue should be kept apart.
- The teacher is the model of the foreign language and the one in charge of correcting students’ errors every time they take place.
- The purpose of language learning is communication and the process of acquiring a language is through habit formation. The more often something is repeated, the greater the learning.
- Presentation of new language through dialogues.
- Based on the behaviourist theory: dialogues are learnt through repetition and imitation until students can use the structure spontaneously.
- It is similar to direct method: audio-lingual method tries to develop the target language skills in a direct way, but it does not focus on teaching vocabulary.

► **Advantages:**

- It develops simple techniques without translation.
- It separates the language skills.

► **Disadvantages:**

- Boredom of students: repetition and no spontaneity.
- Students have no control of their output. Teacher expects a particular response.

3 OTHER METHODS

Having dealt with the more traditional methods, it is time to deal with the next classification corresponding to other methods like suggestopedia, the silent way, community language teaching, total physical response and Task Based Approach.

3.1 - *Suggestopedia*

► **History:** Suggestopedia is a teaching method developed by the Bulgarian psychotherapist LOZANOV, G. It was developed in the 1970s. LOZANOV, G. developed the method to help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful and, thus, to help them overcome the barriers for learning.

► **Principal features:**

- The main feature of this method is that it aims to create an optimal atmosphere by means of decoration, furniture, the teacher's behaviour and specially through the use of music.
- The teacher attempts to increase the student's confidence because the more confident they feel the better they will learn.
- Students practice the new language through drama activities, games, songs and questionnaires mainly, although it was the teacher the one with complete authority in the class. This way students spontaneously speak and interact in the target language without interruption or correction.

► **Advantages:**

- It deals with the students' negative feelings about their own abilities.
- It sets up a non-evaluative class atmosphere.
- Teachers need to be lively, cheerful and efficient.

► **Disadvantages:**

- Teachers need to be well trained and have the right personality.
- Unclear how successful is this method with young learners.

3.2 - *The Silent Way*

► **History:** It was developed by GATTEGNO, C. and it is based on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom, and the students should be encouraged to produce as much language as possible.

► **Principal features:**

- The teacher starts from something the students already know and goes from that to the unknown.
- The teacher assumes that students are intelligent and bring with them the experience of already learning a language. Therefore, teachers should give help only when it is necessary.
- Errors are necessary and important because they show the teacher where things are unclear. Moreover, teachers look for progress, not for perfection.
- Students must be encouraged to work as a **group** - to try and solve problems in the target language together. The teacher's silence encourages group cooperation, this way, students can learn from one another.

► **Advantages:**

- The teacher provides challenges based on the students' abilities.
- Students work in groups.
- The method rejects to protect students from making errors.

► **Disadvantages:**

- Confusion about the meaning of words.
- Tremendous amount of ability on the part of the teacher.

3.3 - *Community Language Teaching*

► **History:** Its founder was CURRAN, C., an American priest, the key idea is that the students determine what is to be learned.

► **Principal features:**

- The teacher is a facilitator and provides support.
- In the basic form of CLL, a maximum of 12 students sit in a circle. There is a portable tape recorder inside the circle and the teacher (who is called "The Knower") stands outside the circle.
- When a student has decided they want to say something in the foreign language, they call the Knower over and whisper what they want to say, in their mother tongue. The teacher, also in a whisper, offers the equivalent utterance in English. The student attempts to repeat the utterance and when the Knower is satisfied, the utterance is recorded by the student. Another student repeats the process until there is a kind of dialogue recorded. The knower then replays the recording and transcribes it on the board. This is followed by analysis, and questions from students.

► **Advantages:**

- Students are involved in the learning process because they choose what they want to say.

- The atmosphere of security minimizes behaviour problems.

► **Disadvantages:**

- The teacher needs to be very good at both languages. Because the success of CLL depends on the translation expertise of the counsellor.
- The teacher can become too non-directive. The learner often needs direction, especially in first stages.

3.4 Total physical response (TPR)

► **History:** It was developed by ASHER, J. and it is based on the premise that the human brain has a biological program for acquiring any natural language on earth.

► **Principal features:**

- In this method oral language is accompanied by an action. The teacher tries to mimic the process that a child follows when learns his/her mother tongue: first, a period of oral comprehension in which the child responds physically and the oral production.
- Students must respond physically to the words of the teacher.
- Children usually love this method and it has been proved very useful specially in songs and games. A world-wide example of TPR is Simon says

► **Advantages:**

- Students will enjoy getting up out of their chairs and moving around.
- TPR works well with a mixed ability class
- It is good for kinaesthetic learners who need to be active in the class.

► **Disadvantages:**

- TPR is most useful for beginners.
- It does not give students the opportunity to express their own thoughts in a creative way.
- Additionally, the nature of TPR places an unnaturally heavy emphasis on the use of the imperative mood. This can lead to a learner appearing rude in real life situations.

4 - NEW TENDENCIES

It is time now, to deal with current tendencies in Education. Our society has changed enormously in the past years, so why not changing education with it? In this section, I am going to comment on trendy approaches or methods like the communicative approach, cooperative learning, learner centeredness, content and language integrated language and flipped classroom.

4.1 Communicative approach

The communicative approach is the approach that our current law, **LOMLOE**, proposes.

According to **LOMLOE**, we should make design learning situations. The design of learning situations depends on the third level of curricular concretion, since the centers, through their educational project and the heads of the didactic areas and departments, are the ones who have to plan the teaching and learning situations. These situations must take into account language use in different analog and virtual environments, as the foreign language is not only acquired within the classroom, but the different experiences outside it complement the learning process (for example, participation in exchanges, preparation of official certifications or access to original language content on digital platforms). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the different spheres of life in which the key competences are projected, and in particular, the competence in linguistic and multilingual communication.

The communicative approach focuses on giving students the skills to be able to communicate under various circumstances. As such, it places less emphasis on the learning of specific grammatical rules and more on obtaining native-speaker-like fluency and pronunciation. Students are assessed on their level of communicative competence rather than on their explicit knowledge. It can be considered more an approach or philosophy than a highly structured methodology. David Nunan famously listed five key elements to the communicative approach.

1. First of all, an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. Then, the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. Thirdly, the provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on the language but also on the learning process itself.
4. Next, an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. And, finally, an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

In the communicative approach, teachers use real-life situations in order to make their students communicate. These real-life situations can be as varied as you can think of. The role of the teacher in the communicative approach is flexible, he or she can adopt the role of a facilitator, a guide, a helper, a resource person, a coordinator or a cocommunicator among many others.

Communicative language teaching emphasizes “self-direction for the learners” and the teacher adopts different roles. On the one hand she is a “facilitator, a guide and a helper” and on the other hand a “coordinator, an idea-person and a co-communicator”. Moreover, whenever possible communicative language teaching involves the use of authentic materials in the classroom. The attitude towards errors is very tolerant because they are seen as a natural part of the learning process.

4.2 Cooperative learning

Dealing with cooperative learning, it is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with children of different levels of ability, use a variety of activities to improve their understanding of the Foreign Language. Each member of the team is responsible not only of learning but also of helping other teammates learn. This way, students work through the task until all group members successfully understand and complete it. This method develops social skills like leadership, decision or communication for example, and it also helps children develop skills in oral communication and positive relationships.

4.3 Content and Language Integrated Language (CLIL)

David Marsh created the term CLIL that stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning, in 1994, although its origins are found in the language immersion in Canada. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a very successful method used nowadays in the bilingual sections in the schools of our country. It teaches content through the medium of a foreign language.

This approach involves learning subjects such as History, Geography or Science, among others, through a foreign language in a more natural way, due to the fact that in the CLIL approach students forget about language to fully concentrate on content. This method has many advantages in Foreign Language learning. The most important ones are the following: complex language is acquired easier, it increases the learner motivation and it prepares students for future studies or job market.

Tasks in CLIL should focus on communication, stimulate fluency rather than accuracy, be open, encourage creativity, include lots of visual materials, and be child centred, varied and also bring the world into the classroom and the classroom into the world. Examples of CLIL projects are countless: from Prehistory to the Solar System among thousands of examples.

4.4 Flipped Classroom

Finally, the flipped classroom methodology makes reference to the one in which what was usually done at school is now done at home, and what was traditionally done at home is now done at school. The flipped classroom describes a reversal of traditional teaching where students gain first exposure to new material outside of class, usually by means of videos or readings, and then class time is used to do the harder work of assimilating that knowledge through strategies such as problem solving, discussions or debates. The main purpose of flipped classroom is to engage students in active learning. This methodology is still a very recent one and there are still many teachers who are reluctant to use them in their lessons.

5 EPILOGUE

Legislation

Spanish Constitution of 1978 (art.14, 27 and 49).

Organic Law of Educational, **LOMLOE 3/2020** of December 29th, which modifies **LOE 2/2006** of May 3rd

Royal Decree 157/2022, of March 1st, which establishes the organization and minimum teachings of Primary Education.

Foral Decree 67/2022, of June 22, which establishes the curriculum for the teachings of the Primary Education stage in the Foral Community of Navarra.

Foral Order 52/2023, of June 12, of the Minister of Education, regulating the evaluation and promotion of students who study Primary Education in the Foral Community of Navarra

Foral Order 69/2023, of August 21, of the Minister of Education, regulating educational inclusion in non-university educational centers of the Foral Community of Navarra.

Course start instructions

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Conclusion

As we have seen over the presentation of the topic, communication is the main purpose of any language, and it is a key word for us as English teachers. Not only is the essence of human interaction, it is also the center of language learning, where oral and written skills are involved.

Additionally, I would like to point out that there is a constant preoccupation for teachers and linguists to find more efficient and effective ways of teaching languages. However, we have to bear in mind that there is not a perfect teaching method. The best we can do as teachers is select what is better from each method and create our own methodology because as WILDE, O. once said “to the great poet there is only one method of music, his own. To the great painter there is only one manner of painting, that which he himself employs”.

I would like to **conclude** by summing up the main ideas I have developed. During this topic I have focused my attention on the history, principal features, techniques, strengths and weaknesses of the most known foreign language teaching methods. And we have seen the evolution from the more traditional to the new tendencies in education.

Before finishing with my topic I would like to thank you all for your attention and wish you a wonderful day/ afternoon.