


## Foreign language teaching methods

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### ABSTRACT

This article presented four methods of learning foreign languages: the grammar and translation method, the direct method, the audiolingual method, and the communicative method. Each method has been described in terms of its characteristics and approaches to language teaching. Opinions from linguists have been included to offer a critical view on each method. The grammar and translation method emphasizes reading and writing, the direct method focuses on oral communication and natural language acquisition, the audiolingual method values repetition and memorization, while the communicative method values meaningful communication and social interaction. From the presentation of the methods and the opinions of linguists, it was possible to understand the implications of each method in the teaching of foreign languages.

**Keywords:** Foreign language, Methods, Linguistics.

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## INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning has become increasingly important in the globalized era we live in. With the growing need for international communication, many people seek to learn new languages to improve their communication in different contexts. In this sense, there are several approaches and methods of teaching foreign languages, each with its own characteristics and advantages. This article briefly presents four of these methods and their characteristics. Authors' opinions have been included to help readers understand the implications of these methods in language teaching.

## GRAMMAR AND TRANSLATION METHOD

The method of Grammar and Translation is one of the oldest methods of teaching foreign languages, being widely used in Europe in the 19th century.

The Grammar and Translation method has as its main objective the teaching of written language, with a focus on grammar and vocabulary. The methodology consists of a series of steps that include the analysis of texts in a foreign language, translation into the mother tongue and, finally, the production of texts in a foreign language.

The first step of this method is the presentation of grammar rules. The rules are presented in logical and sequential order, starting with the simplest and progressing to the most complex. The rules are then applied in text translation and analysis exercises, where students have the opportunity to practice and internalize the knowledge.

The next step of the method is the translation of texts. Students are exposed to authentic texts in the foreign language and then translate these texts into their mother tongue. Translation helps to develop the ability to understand and interpret texts, in addition to contributing to the acquisition of vocabulary.

Finally, students are encouraged to produce texts in the foreign language. This stage of the method helps to develop oral and written communication skills, in addition to contributing to the acquisition of fluency.

The Grammar and Translation method has been criticized by some experts for its overemphasis on grammar and translation. Some argue that the method does not develop communicative skills, such as fluency and listening, as well as other methods. However, it is important to point out that the analytical and structured approach of the method can be a solid foundation for the development of more advanced communicative skills. In addition, the method continues to be used in some schools and universities around the world.

In turn, this methodology has been the subject of divergent opinions, despite criticism, there are authors who defend it. For example, Eliot (1909) advocated the method of Grammar and Translation as the most effective approach to teaching foreign languages. He stated that grammar is



the foundation of language, and that translation is the best way to develop the ability to understand and produce texts in the foreign language.

On the other hand, Krashen (1989) criticized the method of Grammar and Translation, arguing that it does not develop effective communicative skills. The author stated that language acquisition occurs naturally, through exposure to language in real communicative situations, and that the emphasis on grammar and translation can lead to rote and ineffective learning.

Henderson (2016) argued that the Grammar and Translation method can be useful as a complement to other, more communicative approaches. Because of his ideas, the method can be useful for students who already have a basic knowledge of the language, and that the emphasis on grammar and translation can help consolidate this knowledge.

In short, there are differing opinions on the method of Grammar and Translation. Some believe that it is effective for the development of grammar and translation skills, while others argue that it is not effective for the development of communicative skills. However, many agree that the method can be useful as a complement to other, more communicative approaches.

## **DIRECT METHOD**

The direct method is one of the oldest methods for teaching foreign languages and is characterized by emphasizing oral communication, using the foreign language as a medium of instruction from the beginning of the learning process.

This approach seeks to mimic the natural process of mother tongue acquisition, where comprehension and oral production come before reading and writing. The main objective is for students to be able to communicate in real and everyday situations using the foreign language, which is considered fundamental for the development of their communicative skills.

The direct method is based on the idea that language should be presented in concrete and meaningful contexts, through situations and tasks that are familiar to learners. The teacher mainly uses the target language in the classroom, avoiding the mother tongue as much as possible.

In this way, the student learns the language in a natural way, assimilating grammatical structures and vocabulary in an intuitive and functional way. The direct method also emphasizes the importance of pronunciation and correct intonation, as it believes that this is essential for effective communication.

One of the main advantages of the direct method is that it provides students with an authentic and immersive foreign language experience, which can increase their motivation and interest in learning. In addition, the direct method is particularly suitable for teaching living languages such as English, French, Spanish and other languages widely spoken around the world.



However, the direct method also has some limitations. For example, it can be difficult to assess student learning objectively and systematically. Additionally, the direct method may be more challenging for students with lower proficiency levels, who may have difficulty following instructions in a language they have not yet mastered.

In summary, the direct method is an effective approach to foreign language teaching that emphasizes oral communication and immersion in authentic and meaningful situations. Although it has some limitations, the direct method may be particularly suitable for students with more advanced levels of proficiency or those who want to learn a foreign language for specific purposes, such as business or travel.

Several authors have already expressed opinions about the direct method in the teaching of foreign languages. Berlitz (1914), the founder of the famous method of language teaching that bears his name, supported the direct approach and asserted that learning a foreign language should begin with speaking, not reading or grammar.

Swan (1989) stated that the direct method can be effective in improving communicative ability in a foreign language, but that grammar is still necessary for language comprehension. For Richard and Rodgers (2014), the direct method can be very effective for teaching communicative skills in foreign languages, but that it can be difficult for beginner learners or for those who need more grammatical support.

Brown (2000) states that the direct method is useful for providing learners with an authentic experience of communicating in a foreign language, but that it should not be used as the only approach in language teaching. For his part, Richards (2014) states that the direct method can be especially useful for students who want to learn a foreign language for practical purposes such as traveling or working, however, in the author's lesson, it should be combined with other approaches to provide a balanced foreign language education.

## **AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD**

The audiolingual method was one of the main approaches to foreign language teaching in the 1950s and 1960s. It emphasized repetition, memorization, and intensive practice of the target language, using oral and listening exercises to develop communicative skills.

The audiolingual method was developed as a response to the need to provide intensive foreign language training for military, diplomatic, and commercial purposes in the United States during World War II. It was inspired by the work of behaviorist linguists, who believed that language was a habit acquired through practice and repetition.

The audiolingual method emphasized imitation, repetition, and intensive practice of the target language through oral and auditory exercises. Students were exposed to common dialogues and



language patterns, which were repeated over and over again until students could reproduce them fluently. The goal was to develop communicative skills and automate linguistic responses.

One of the main advantages of the audiolingual method is that it emphasizes intensive practice of the target language, which can lead to a rapid improvement in students' fluency and communication skills. Additionally, the emphasis on listening and repetition can help learners develop good pronunciation and better understand spoken language.

The audiolingual method is also useful for students who want to learn a foreign language for specific purposes, such as travel or business. It can help develop practical and situational communicative skills, such as making reservations at a hotel or negotiating a contract.

However, the audiolingual method has some limitations. First of all, it does not emphasize the development of reading comprehension or grammar. Students may become proficient in speaking but may have difficulty reading and writing in the target language. Additionally, the emphasis on repetition can make classes monotonous and tedious, which can lead to a lack of motivation from students.

Another limitation is that the audiolingual method may not be suitable for all learners. Students with different learning abilities may find it difficult to adapt to such a structured and intensive approach. Additionally, the emphasis on oral practice can cause some students to feel inhibited and have difficulty expressing themselves verbally.

The audiolingual method has been the subject of much discussion among foreign language authors. Some authors describe it as a practice-centered approach that emphasizes repetition, imitation, and memorization to automate linguistic responses and develop communicative skills. Brown (2000), for example, when he states that the audiolingual method is a practice-based approach, which emphasizes the development of oral skill and the memorization of common linguistic patterns through repetition. Richards and Rodgers (2014) agree with this view and describe the method as a practice-centered approach, which emphasizes repetition, imitation, and memorization to automate linguistic responses and develop communicative skills.

However, some researchers point out some limitations of the audiolingual method. Swan (2005), for example, postulates that the audiolingual method is only suitable for learners with an auditory learning preference and that it may not be suitable for learners with different learning abilities. In addition, for the aforementioned author, the emphasis on oral practice can make some students feel inhibited and have difficulty expressing themselves verbally.

Berlitz (1914), founder of the Berlitz Language School, one of the schools that popularized the audiolingual method, describes the method as an intensive training in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar through oral and auditory exercises, aimed at developing fluency and communication



skills. However, other authors, such as Howatt (1984), argue that the audiolingual method may be insufficient to develop written comprehension or textual production skills.

In summary, the audiolingual method was a popular foreign language teaching approach in past decades, which emphasized intensive practice of the target language through oral and listening exercises. Although it has some limitations, the audiolingual method is still considered useful for developing practical and situational communicative skills, such as making reservations at a hotel or negotiating a contract.

## COMMUNICATIVE METHOD

The communicative method is an approach to foreign language teaching that emphasizes the use of language as a real and authentic means of communication, rather than focusing only on grammatical and structural aspects. This method emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of the audio-lingual method and the grammatical-translation method, which focused exclusively on formal aspects of the language.

The main objective of the communicative method is to develop students' communicative skills, both in comprehension and in oral and written production, so that they can communicate effectively in everyday situations. Teaching is task-driven, which are practical and meaningful projects that students must undertake in groups or individually.

An important aspect of the communicative method is the use of authentic communication situations. This means that the teaching materials are based on real everyday situations, such as informal conversations, business dialogues, professional emails, among others. In addition, classes are conducted largely in the target language, so students are immersed in the linguistic environment and can practice the language as much as possible.

Another important aspect of the communicative method is the emphasis on interaction between students. Classroom activities are designed to encourage collaboration and communication among students so that they can feel comfortable using the language and receive feedback from their peers and teachers.

The role of the teacher in the communicative method is that of a facilitator. The teacher guides and supports the students by offering feedback and correcting mistakes in a constructive manner. It also provides authentic materials and challenging communication situations so that students can practice their communicative skills.

The communicative method has been widely adopted around the world as an effective approach to foreign language teaching. It provides students with an opportunity to communicate in the target language in a meaningful and authentic way, helping them to develop their communication skills and feel more confident when speaking to people from different backgrounds and cultures.



In conclusion, the communicative method is an approach to foreign language teaching that emphasizes real and authentic communication, the use of real situations, and teamwork. It is an effective alternative to traditional grammar and translation-based methods, and has been widely adopted around the world as an effective approach to foreign language teaching.

The communicative method in the teaching of foreign languages is the subject of several opinions and perspectives on the part of renowned authors in the field.

Harmer (2007) considers the communicative method as one of the most important developments in foreign language teaching, highlighting its task-oriented approach and the placement of the student at the center of the learning process.

Richards (2014) emphasizes that the communicative method is based on the idea that language should be seen as a means of communication, enabling students to practice the language in authentic situations and, consequently, to develop confidence in communication in real contexts.

Rivers (1987) values the communicative method for its dynamic and interactive approach, which prioritizes interaction between students for the development of more effective communication skills.

Larsen-Freeman (2014) highlights the student-centered approach of the communicative method, emphasizing its flexibility and adaptability for different teaching contexts.

In short, the debate on the communicative method in the teaching of foreign languages is rich and diverse, evidencing its importance and continuous improvement.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

In conclusion, this article presented four methods of foreign language learning, along with opinions from linguists on their use in language teaching. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages, and it is important for foreign language teachers to be aware of these characteristics when choosing a method for their students.

In addition, the methods should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary. It is possible to combine different teaching methods and strategies to achieve the desired learning objectives. The most appropriate method will depend on the learning context and the needs of the students.

Ultimately, the primary goal of foreign language teaching should be effective and meaningful communication, and methods should be used flexibly and adaptably to achieve this goal.



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