

### Reading # 6

Richards, J. C. and Rodgers, T.S. Approaches and Methods in language teaching. C.U.P., pp. 14-30

## **2 The nature of approaches and methods in language teaching**

We saw in the preceding chapter that the changing rationale for foreign language study and the classroom techniques and procedures used to teach languages have reflected responses to a variety of historical issues and circumstances. Tradition was for many years the guiding principle. The Grammar-Translation Method reflected a time-honored and scholarly view of language and language study. At times, the practical realities of the classroom determined both goals and procedures, as with the determination of reading as the goal in American schools and colleges in the late 1920s. At other times, theories derived from linguistics, psychology, or a mixture of both were used to develop a both philosophical and practical basis for language teaching, as with the various reformist proposals of the nineteenth century. As the study of teaching methods and procedures in language teaching assumed a more central role within applied linguistics from the 1940s on, various attempts have been made to conceptualize the nature of methods and to explore more systematically the relationship between theory and practice within a method. In this chapter we will clarify the relationship between approach and method and present a model for the description, analysis, and comparison of methods.

### **Approach and method**

When linguists and language specialists sought to improve the quality of language teaching in the late nineteenth century, they often did so by referring to general principles and theories concerning how languages are learned, how knowledge of language is represented and organized in memory, or how language itself is structured. The early applied linguists, such as Henry Sweet (1845–1912), Otto Jespersen (1860–1943), and Harold Palmer (1877–1949) (see Chapter 3), elaborated principles and theoretically accountable approaches to the design of language teaching programs, courses, and materials, though many of the specific practical details were left to be worked out by others. They sought a rational answer to questions, such as those regarding principles for the selection and sequencing of vocabulary and grammar, though none of

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these applied linguists saw in any existing method the ideal embodiment of their ideas.

In describing methods, the difference between a philosophy of language teaching at the level of theory and principles, and a set of derived procedures for teaching a language, is central. In an attempt to clarify this difference, a scheme was proposed by the American applied linguist Edward Anthony in 1963. He identified three levels of conceptualization and organization, which he termed *approach*, *method*, and *technique*.

The arrangement is hierarchical. The organizational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach...

... An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught...

... Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural.

Within one approach, there can be many methods...

... A technique is implementational – that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, strategem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. (Anthony 1963:63–7)

According to Anthony's model, approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; 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; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described.

Anthony's model serves as a useful way of distinguishing between different degrees of abstraction and specificity found in different language teaching proposals. Thus we can see that the proposals of the Reform Movement were at the level of approach and that the Direct Method is one method derived from this approach. The so-called Reading Method, which evolved as a result of the Coleman Report (see Chapter 1) should really be described in the plural – reading methods – since a number of different ways of implementing a reading approach have been developed.

A number of other ways of conceptualizing approaches and methods in language teaching have been proposed. Mackey, in his book *Language Teaching Analysis* (1965), elaborated perhaps the most well-known model of the 1960s, one that focuses primarily on the levels of method and technique. Mackey's model of language teaching analysis concentrates on the dimensions of selection, gradation, presentation, and repetition underlying a method. In fact, despite the title of Mackey's book, his

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concern is primarily with the analysis of textbooks and their underlying principles of organization. His model fails to address the level of approach, nor does it deal with the actual classroom behaviors of teachers and learners, except as these are represented in textbooks. Hence it cannot really serve as a basis for comprehensive analysis of either approaches or methods.

Although Anthony's original proposal has the advantage of simplicity and comprehensiveness and serves as a useful way of distinguishing the relationship between underlying theoretical principles and the practices derived from them, it fails to give sufficient attention to the nature of a method itself. Nothing is said about the roles of teachers and learners assumed in a method, for example, nor about the role of instructional materials or the form they are expected to take. It fails to account for how an approach may be realized in a method, or for how method and technique are related. In order to provide a more comprehensive model for the discussion and analysis of approaches and methods, we have revised and extended the original Anthony model. The primary areas needing further clarification are, using Anthony's terms, method and technique. We see approach and method treated at the level of design, that level in which objectives, syllabus, and content are determined, and in which the roles of teachers, learners, and instructional materials are specified. The implementation phase (the level of technique in Anthony's model) we refer to by the slightly more comprehensive term *procedure*. Thus, a method is theoretically related to an approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realized in procedure. In the remainder of this chapter we will elaborate on the relationship between approach, design, and procedure, using this framework to compare particular methods and approaches in language teaching. In the remaining chapters of the book we will use the model presented here as a basis for describing a number of widely used approaches and methods.

### **Approach**

Following Anthony, *approach* refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching. We will examine the linguistic and psycholinguistic aspects of approach in turn.

### *Theory of language*

At least three different theoretical views of language and the nature of language proficiency explicitly or implicitly inform current approaches

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and methods in language teaching. The first, and the most traditional of the three, is the *structural view*, the view that language is a system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning. The target of language learning is seen to be the mastery of elements of this system, which are generally defined in terms of phonological units (e.g., phonemes), grammatical units (e.g., clauses, phrases, sentences), grammatical operations (e.g., adding, shifting, joining, or transforming elements), and lexical items (e.g., function words and structure words). As we see in Chapter 4, the Audiolingual Method embodies this particular view of language, as do such contemporary methods as Total Physical Response (Chapter 6) and the Silent Way (Chapter 7).

The second view of language is the *functional view*, the view that language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning. The communicative movement in language teaching subscribes to this view of language (see Chapter 9). This theory emphasizes the semantic and communicative dimension rather than merely the grammatical characteristics of language, and leads to a specification and organization of language teaching content by categories of meaning and function rather than by elements of structure and grammar. Wilkins's *Notional Syllabuses* (1976) is an attempt to spell out the implications of this view of language for syllabus design. A notional syllabus would include not only elements of grammar and lexis but also specify the topics, notions, and concepts the learner needs to communicate about. The English for specific purposes (ESP) movement likewise begins not from a structural theory of language but from a functional account of learner needs (Robinson 1980.)

The third view of language can be called the *interactional view*. It sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals. Language is seen as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations. Areas of inquiry being drawn on in the development of interactional approaches to language teaching include interaction analysis, conversation analysis, and ethnomethodology. Interactional theories focus on the patterns of moves, acts, negotiation, and interaction found in conversational exchanges. Language teaching content, according to this view, may be specified and organized by patterns of exchange and interaction or may be left unspecified, to be shaped by the inclinations of learners as interactors.

Structural, functional, or interactional models of language (or variations on them) provide the axioms and theoretical framework that may motivate a particular teaching method, such as Audiolingualism. But in themselves they are incomplete and need to be complemented by theories of language learning. It is to this dimension that we now turn.

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### *Theory of language learning*

Although specific theories of the nature of language may provide the basis for a particular teaching method, other methods derive primarily from a theory of language learning. A learning theory underlying an approach or method responds to two questions: (a) What are the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning? and (b) What are the conditions that need to be met in order for these learning processes to be activated? Learning theories associated with a method at the level of approach may emphasize either one or both of these dimensions. Process-oriented theories build on learning processes, such as habit formation, induction, inferencing, hypothesis testing, and generalization. Condition-oriented theories emphasize the nature of the human and physical context in which language learning takes place.

Stephen D. Krashen's Monitor Model of second language development (1981) is an example of a learning theory on which a method (the Natural Approach) has been built (see Chapter 9). Monitor theory addresses both the process and the condition dimensions of learning. At the level of process, Krashen distinguishes between acquisition and learning. *Acquisition* refers to the natural assimilation of language rules through using language for communication. *Learning* refers to the formal study of language rules and is a conscious process. According to Krashen, however, learning is available only as a "monitor." The monitor is the repository of conscious grammatical knowledge about a language that is learned through formal instruction and that is called upon in the editing of utterances produced through the acquired system. Krashen's theory also addresses the conditions necessary for the process of "acquisition" to take place. Krashen describes these in terms of the type of "input" the learner receives. Input must be comprehensible, slightly above the learner's present level of competence, interesting or relevant, not grammatically sequenced, in sufficient quantity, and experienced in low-anxiety contexts.

Tracy D. Terrell's Natural Approach (1977) is an example of a method derived primarily from a learning theory rather than from a particular view of language. Although the Natural Approach is based on a learning theory that specifies both processes and conditions, the learning theory underlying such methods as Counseling-Learning and the Silent Way addresses primarily the conditions held to be necessary for learning to take place without specifying what the learning processes themselves are presumed to be (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Charles A. Curran in his writings on Counseling-Learning (1972), for example, focuses primarily on the conditions necessary for successful learning. He believes the atmosphere of the classroom is a crucial factor,

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and his method seeks to ameliorate the feelings of intimidation and insecurity that many learners experience. James Asher's Total Physical Response (Asher 1977) is likewise a method that derives primarily from learning theory rather than from a theory of the nature of language (see Chapter 6). Asher's learning theory addresses both the process and condition aspects of learning. It is based on the belief that child language learning is based on motor activity, on coordinating language with action, and that this should form the basis of adult foreign language teaching. Orchestrating language production and comprehension with body movement and physical actions is thought to provide the conditions for success in language learning. Caleb Gattegno's Silent Way (1972, 1976) is likewise built around a theory of the conditions necessary for successful learning to be realized. Gattegno's writings address learners' needs to feel secure about learning and to assume conscious control of learning. Many of the techniques used in the method are designed to train learners to consciously use their intelligence to heighten learning potential.

There often appear to be natural affinities between certain theories of language and theories of language learning; however, one can imagine different pairings of language theory and learning theory that might work as well as those we observe. The linking of structuralism (a linguistic theory) to behaviorism (a learning theory) produced Audiolingualism. That particular link was not inevitable, however. Cognitive-code proponents (see Chapter 4), for example, have attempted to link a more sophisticated model of structuralism to a more mentalistic and less behavioristic brand of learning theory.

At the level of approach, we are hence concerned with theoretical principles. With respect to language theory, we are concerned with a model of language competence and an account of the basic features of linguistic organization and language use. With respect to learning theory, we are concerned with an account of the central processes of learning and an account of the conditions believed to promote successful language learning. These principles may or may not lead to "a" method. Teachers may, for example, develop their own teaching procedures, informed by a particular view of language and a particular theory of learning. They may constantly revise, vary, and modify teaching/learning procedures on the basis of the performance of the learners and their reactions to instructional practice. A group of teachers holding similar beliefs about language and language learning (i.e., sharing a similar approach) may each implement these principles in different ways. Approach does not specify procedure. Theory does not dictate a particular set of teaching techniques and activities. What links theory with practice (or approach with procedure) is what we have called design.

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### **Design**

In order for an approach to lead to a method, it is necessary to develop a design for an instructional system. *Design* is the level of method analysis in which we consider (a) what the objectives of a method are; (b) how language content is selected and organized within the method, that is, the syllabus model the method incorporates; (c) the types of learning tasks and teaching activities the method advocates; (d) the roles of learners; (e) the roles of teachers; (f) the role of instructional materials.

### *Objectives*

Different theories of language and language learning influence the focus of a method; that is, they determine what a method sets out to achieve. The specification of particular learning objectives, however, is a product of design, not of approach. Some methods focus primarily on oral skills and say that reading and writing skills are secondary and derive from transfer of oral skills. Some methods set out to teach general communication skills and give greater priority to the ability to express oneself meaningfully and to make oneself understood than to grammatical accuracy or perfect pronunciation. Others place a greater emphasis on accurate grammar and pronunciation from the very beginning. Some methods set out to teach the basic grammar and vocabulary of a language. Others may define their objectives less in linguistic terms than in terms of learning behaviors, that is, in terms of the processes or abilities the learner is expected to acquire as a result of instruction. Gattegno writes, for example, "Learning is not seen as the means of accumulating knowledge but as the means of becoming a more proficient learner in whatever one is engaged in" (1972:89). This process-oriented objective may be offered in contrast to the linguistically oriented or product-oriented objectives of more traditional methods. The degree to which a method has process-oriented or product-oriented objectives may be revealed in how much emphasis is placed on vocabulary acquisition and grammatical proficiency and in how grammatical or pronunciation errors are treated in the method. Many methods that claim to be primarily process oriented in fact show overriding concerns with grammatical and lexical attainment and with accurate grammar and pronunciation.

### *Content choice and organization: the syllabus*

All methods of language teaching involve the use of the target language. All methods thus involve overt or covert decisions concerning the selection of language items (words, sentence patterns, tenses, construc-

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tions, functions, topics, etc.) that are to be used within a course or method. Decisions about the choice of language content relate both to subject matter and linguistic matter. In straightforward terms, one makes decisions about what to talk about (subject matter) and how to talk about it (linguistic matter). ESP courses, for example, are necessarily subject-matter focused. Structurally based methods, such as Situational Language Teaching and the Audiolingual Method, are necessarily linguistically focused. Methods typically differ in what they see as the relevant language and subject matter around which language teaching should be organized and the principles used in sequencing content within a course. Content issues involve the principles of selection (Mackey 1965) that ultimately shape the syllabus adopted in a course as well as the instructional materials that are used, together with the principles of gradation the method adopts. In grammar-based courses matters of sequencing and gradation are generally determined according to the difficulty of items or their frequency. In communicative or functionally oriented courses (e.g., in ESP programs) sequencing may be according to the learners' communicative needs.

Traditionally the term *syllabus* has been used to refer to the form in which linguistic content is specified in a course or method. Inevitably the term has been more closely associated with methods that are product centered rather than those that are process centered. Syllabuses and syllabus principles for Audiolingual, Structural-Situational, and notional-functional methods as well as in ESP approaches to language program design can be readily identified. The syllabus underlying the Situational and Audiolingual methods consists of a list of grammatical items and constructions, often together with an associated list of vocabulary items (Fries and Fries 1961; Alexander et al. 1975). Notional-functional syllabuses specify the communicative content of a course in terms of functions, notions, topics, grammar, and vocabulary. Such syllabuses are usually determined in advance of teaching and for this reason have been referred to as "a priori syllabuses."

The term *syllabus*, however, is less frequently used in process-based methods, in which considerations of language content are often secondary. Counseling-Learning, for example, has no language syllabus as such. Neither linguistic matter nor subject matter is specified in advance. Learners select content for themselves by choosing topics they want to talk about. These are then translated into the target language and used as the basis for interaction and language practice. To find out what linguistic content had in fact been generated and practiced during a course organized according to Counseling-Learning principles, it would be necessary to record the lessons and later determine what items of language had been covered. This would be an a posteriori approach to syllabus specification; that is, the syllabus would be determined from

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examining lesson protocols. With such methods as the Silent Way and Total Physical Response, an examination of lesson protocols, teacher's manuals, and texts derived from them reveals that the syllabuses underlying these methods are traditional lexico-grammatical syllabuses. In both there is a strong emphasis on grammar and grammatical accuracy.

### *Types of learning and teaching activities*

The objectives of a method, whether defined primarily in terms of product or process, are attained through the instructional process, through the organized and directed interaction of teachers, learners, and materials in the classroom. Differences among methods at the level of approach manifest themselves in the choice of different kinds of learning and teaching activities in the classroom. Teaching activities that focus on grammatical accuracy may be quite different from those that focus on communicative skills. Activities designed to focus on the development of specific psycholinguistic processes in language acquisition will differ from those directed toward mastery of particular features of grammar. The activity types that a method advocates – the third component in the level of design in method analysis – often serve to distinguish methods. Audiolingualism, for example, uses dialogue and pattern practice extensively. The Silent Way employs problem-solving activities that involve the use of special charts and colored rods. Communicative language teaching theoreticians have advocated the use of tasks that involve an “information gap” and “information transfer”; that is, learners work on the same task, but each learner has different information needed to complete the task.

Different philosophies at the level of approach may be reflected both in the use of different kinds of activities and in different uses for particular activity types. For example, interactive games are often used in audiolingual courses for motivation and to provide a change of pace from pattern-practice drills. In communicative language teaching the same games may be used to introduce or provide practice for particular types of interactive exchanges. Differences in activity types in methods may also involve different arrangements and groupings of learners. A method that stresses oral chorus drilling will require different groupings of learners in the classroom from a method that uses problem-solving/information-exchange activities involving pair work. Activity types in methods thus include the primary categories of learning and teaching activity the method advocates, such as dialogue, responding to commands, group problem solving, information-exchange activities, improvisations, question and answer, or drills.

Because of the different assumptions they make about learning processes, syllabuses, and learning activities, methods also attribute different

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roles and functions to teachers, learners, and instructional materials within the instructional process. These constitute the next three components of design in method analysis.

#### *Learner roles*

The design of an instructional system will be considerably influenced by how learners are regarded. A method reflects explicit or implicit responses to questions concerning the learners' contribution to the learning process. This is seen in the types of activities learners carry out, the degree of control learners have over the content of learning, the patterns of learner groupings adopted, the degree to which learners influence the learning of others, and the view of the learner as processor, performer, initiator, problem solver.

Much of the criticism of Audiolingualism came from the recognition of the very limited roles available to learners in audiolingual methodology. Learners were seen as stimulus-response mechanisms whose learning was a direct result of repetitive practice. Newer methodologies customarily exhibit more concern for learner roles and for variation among learners. Johnson and Paulston (1976) spell out learner roles in an individualized approach to language learning in the following terms: (a) Learners plan their own learning program and thus ultimately assume responsibility for what they do in the classroom. (b) Learners monitor and evaluate their own progress. (c) Learners are members of a group and learn by interacting with others. (d) Learners tutor other learners. (e) Learners learn from the teacher, from other students, and from other teaching sources. Counseling-Learning views learners as having roles that change developmentally, and Curran (1976) uses an ontogenetic metaphor to suggest this development. He divides the developmental process into five stages, extending from total dependency on the teacher in stage 1 to total independence in stage 5. These learner stages Curran sees as parallel to the growth of a child from embryo to independent adulthood passing through childhood and adolescence.

#### *Teacher roles*

Learner roles in an instructional system are closely linked to the teacher's status and function. Teacher roles are similarly related ultimately both to assumptions about language and language learning at the level of approach. Some methods are totally dependent on the teacher as a source of knowledge and direction; others see the teacher's role as catalyst, consultant, guide, and model for learning; still others try to "teacher-proof" the instructional system by limiting teacher initiative and by building instructional content and direction into texts or lesson plans.

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Teacher and learner roles define the type of interaction characteristic of classrooms in which a particular method is being used.

Teacher roles in methods are related to the following issues. (a) the types of functions teachers are expected to fulfill, whether that of practice director, counselor, or model, for example; (b) the degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place; (c) the degree to which the teacher is responsible for determining the content of what is taught; and (d) the interactional patterns that develop between teachers and learners. Methods typically depend critically on teacher roles and their realizations. In the classical Audiolingual Method, the teacher is regarded as the primary source of language and of language learning. But less teacher-directed learning may still demand very specific and sometimes even more demanding roles for the teacher. The role of the teacher in the Silent Way, for example, depends upon thorough training and methodological initiation. Only teachers who are thoroughly sure of their role and the concomitant learner's role will risk departure from the security of traditional textbook-oriented teaching.

For some methods, the role of the teacher has been specified in detail. Individualized approaches to learning define roles for the teacher that create specific patterns of interaction between teachers and learners in classrooms. These are designed to shift the responsibility for learning gradually from the teacher to the learner. Counseling-Learning sees the teacher's role as that of psychological counselor, the effectiveness of the teacher's role being a measure of counseling skills and attributes – warmth, sensitivity, and acceptance.

As these examples suggest, the potential role relationships of learner and teacher are many and varied. They may be asymmetrical relationships, such as those of conductor to orchestra member, therapist to patient, coach to player. Some contemporary methodologies have sought to establish more symmetrical kinds of learner-teacher relationships, such as friend to friend, colleague to colleague, teammate to teammate. The role of the teacher will ultimately reflect both the objectives of the method and the learning theory on which the method is predicated, since the success of a method may depend on the degree to which the teacher can provide the content or create the conditions for successful language learning.

### *The role of instructional materials*

The last component within the level of design concerns the role of instructional materials within the instructional system. What is specified with respect to objectives, content (i.e., the syllabus), learning activities, and learner and teacher roles suggests the function for materials within the system. The syllabus defines linguistic content in terms of language

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elements – structures, topics, notions, functions – or in some cases in terms of learning tasks (see Johnson 1982; Prabhu 1983). It also defines the goals for language learning in terms of speaking, listening, reading, or writing skills. The instructional materials in their turn further specify subject matter content, even where no syllabus exists, and define or suggest the intensity of coverage for syllabus items, allocating the amount of time, attention, and detail particular syllabus items or tasks require. Instructional materials also define or imply the day-to-day learning objectives that collectively constitute the goals of the syllabus. Materials designed on the assumption that learning is initiated and monitored by the teacher must meet quite different requirements from those designed for student self-instruction or for peer tutoring. Some methods require the instructional use of existing materials, found materials, and realia. Some assume teacher-proof materials that even poorly trained teachers with imperfect control of the target language can teach with. Some materials require specially trained teachers with near-native competence in the target language. Some are designed to replace the teacher, so that learning can take place independently. Some materials dictate various interactional patterns in the classroom; others inhibit classroom interaction; still others are noncommittal about interaction between teacher and learner and learner and learner.

The role of instructional materials within a method or instructional system will reflect decisions concerning the primary goal of materials (e.g., to present content, to practice content, to facilitate communication between learners, or to enable learners to practice content without the teacher's help), the form of materials (e.g., textbook, audiovisuals, computer software), the relation of materials to other sources of input (i.e., whether they serve as the major source of input or only as a minor component of it), and the abilities of teachers (e.g., their competence in the language or degree of training and experience.)

A particular design for an instructional system may imply a particular set of roles for materials in support of the syllabus and the teachers and learners. For example, the role of instructional materials within a functional/communicative methodology might be specified in the following terms:

1. Materials will focus on the communicative abilities of interpretation, expression, and negotiation.
2. Materials will focus on understandable, relevant, and interesting exchanges of information, rather than on the presentation of grammatical form.
3. Materials will involve different kinds of texts and different media, which the learners can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks.

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By comparison, the role of instructional materials within an individualized instructional system might include the following specifications:

1. Materials will allow learners to progress at their own rates of learning.
2. Materials will allow for different styles of learning.
3. Materials will provide opportunities for independent study and use.
4. Materials will provide opportunities for self-evaluation and progress in learning.

The content of a method such as Counseling-Learning is assumed to be a product of the interests of the learners, since learners generate their own subject matter. In that sense it would appear that no linguistic content or materials are specified within the method. On the other hand, Counseling-Learning acknowledges the need for learner mastery of certain linguistic mechanics, such as the mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Counseling-Learning sees these issues as falling outside the teacher's central role as counselor. Thus Counseling-Learning has proposed the use of teaching machines and other programmed materials to support the learning of some of the more mechanical aspects of language so as to free the teacher to function increasingly as a learning counselor.

### **Procedure**

The last level of conceptualization and organization within a method is what we will refer to as *procedure*. This encompasses the actual moment-to-moment techniques, practices, and behaviors that operate in teaching a language according to a particular method. It is the level at which we describe how a method realizes its approach and design in classroom behavior. At the level of design we saw that a method will advocate the use of certain types of teaching activities as a consequence of its theoretical assumptions about language and learning. At the level of procedure we are concerned with how these tasks and activities are integrated into lessons and used as the basis for teaching and learning. There are three dimensions to a method at the level of procedure: (a) the use of teaching activities (drills, dialogues, information-gap activities, etc.) to present new language and to clarify and demonstrate formal, communicative, or other aspects of the target language; (b) the ways in which particular teaching activities are used for practicing language; and (c) the procedures and techniques used in giving feedback to learners concerning the form or content of their utterances or sentences.

Essentially, then, procedure focuses on the way a method handles the presentation, practice, and feedback phases of teaching. Here, for ex-

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ample, is a description of the procedural aspects of a beginning Silent Way course based on Stevick (1980: 44–5):

1. The teacher points at meaningless symbols on a wall chart. The symbols represent the syllables of the spoken language. The students read the sounds aloud, first in chorus and then individually.
2. After the students can pronounce the sounds, the teacher moves to a second set of charts containing words frequently used in the language, including numbers. The teacher leads the students to pronounce long numbers.
3. The teacher uses colored rods together with charts and gestures to lead the students into producing the words and basic grammatical structures needed.

Of error treatment in the Silent Way Stevick notes:

When the students respond correctly to the teacher's initiative, she usually does not react with any overt confirmation that what they did was right. If a student's response is wrong, on the other hand, she indicates that the student needs to do further work on the word or phrase; if she thinks it necessary, she actually shows the student exactly where the additional work is to be done. (1980: 45)

Finnocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) illustrate how the procedural phases of instruction are handled in what they call a notional-functional approach.

1. Presentation of a brief dialogue or several mini-dialogues.
2. Oral practice of each utterance in the dialogue.
3. Questions and answers based on the topic and situation in the dialogue.
4. Questions and answers related to the student's personal experience but centered on the theme of the dialogue.
5. Study of the basic communicative expressions used in the dialogue or one of the structures that exemplify the function.
6. Learner discovery of generalizations or rules underlying the functional expression of structure.
7. Oral recognition, interpretative procedures.
8. Oral production activities, proceeding from guided to freer communication

We expect methods to be most obviously idiosyncratic at the level of procedure, though classroom observations often reveal that teachers do not necessarily follow the procedures a method prescribes (see Chapter 11).

The elements and subelements that constitute a method and that we have described under the rubrics of approach, design, and procedure are summarized in Figure 2.1.

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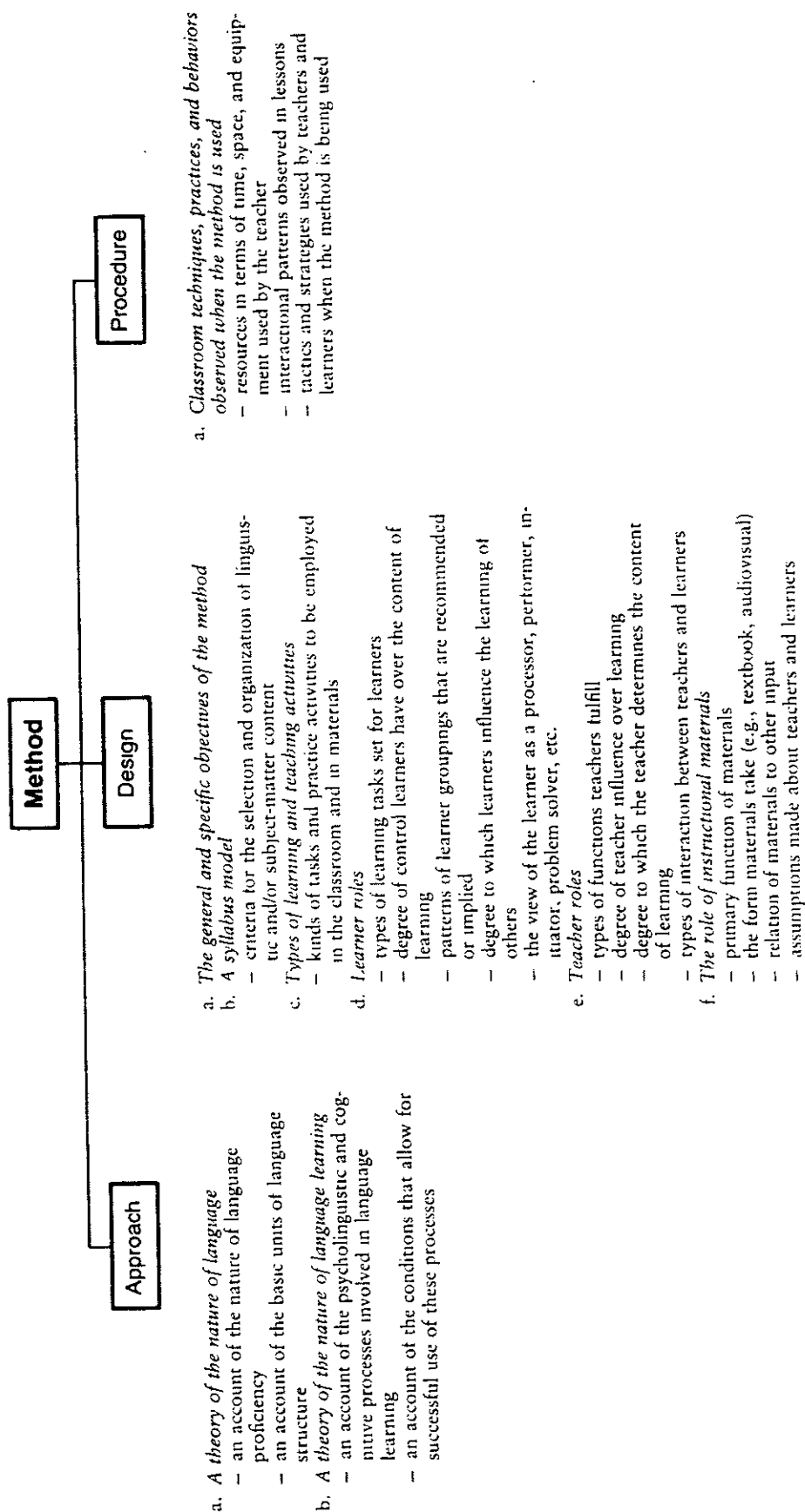


Figure 2.1 Summary of elements and subelements that constitute a method

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### **Conclusion**

The model presented in this chapter demonstrates that any language teaching method can be described in terms of the issues identified here at the levels of approach, design, and procedure. Very few methods are explicit with respect to all of these dimensions, however. In the remaining chapters of this book we will attempt to make each of these features of approach, design, and procedure explicit with reference to the major language teaching approaches and methods in use today. In so doing, we will often have to infer from what method developers have written in order to determine precisely what criteria are being used for teaching activities, what claims are being made about learning theory, what type of syllabus is being employed, and so on.

The model presented here is not intended to imply that methodological development proceeds neatly from approach, through design, to procedure. It is not clear whether such a developmental formula is possible, and our model certainly does not describe the typical case. Methods can develop out of any of the three categories. One can, for example, stumble on or invent a set of teaching procedures that appear to be successful and then later develop a design and theoretical approach that explain or justify the procedures. Some methodologists would resist calling their proposals a method, although if descriptions are possible at each of the levels described here, we would argue that what is advocated has, in fact, the status of a method. Let us now turn to the major approaches and teaching methods that are in use today and examine them according to how they reflect specific decisions at the levels of approach, design, and procedure.

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