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978-0-521-00843-3 - Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, Second Edition

Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers

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Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching

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Contents

Preface vii

Part I Major language trends in twentieth-century language teaching 1

- 1 A brief history of language teaching 3
- 2 The nature of approaches and methods in language teaching 18
- 3 The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching 36
- 4 The Audiolingual Method 50

Part II Alternative approaches and methods 71

- 5 Total Physical Response 73
- 6 The Silent Way 81
- 7 Community Language Learning 90
- 8 Suggestopedia 100
- 9 Whole Language 108
- 10 Multiple Intelligences 115
- 11 Neurolinguistic Programming 125
- 12 The lexical approach 132
- 13 Competency-Based Language Teaching 141

Part III Current communicative approaches 151

- 14 Communicative Language Teaching 153

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-00843-3 - Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, Second Edition
Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

15	The Natural Approach	178
16	Cooperative Language Learning	192
17	Content-Based Instruction	204
18	Task-Based Language Teaching	223
19	The post-methods era	244
	Author index	257
	Subject index	261

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

This is a revised and reorganized version of the first edition, originally published in 1986. More than half of the contents of this new edition has been specially written for this edition. Since the first edition was published, it has become one of the most widely referred to books on teaching methods. Since then, however, a great deal has happened in language teaching. In planning this new edition, we have therefore made a number of substantial changes.

We have divided the book into three main parts:

Part I deals with major trends in twentieth-century language teaching. The chapters in this section are substantially the same as those in the first edition but include an updated list of references.

Part II deals with alternative approaches and methods. This section describes approaches and methods that have attracted support at different times and in different places throughout the last 30 or so years, but have generally not been widely accepted or, in some cases, have not maintained substantial followings. The chapters on Total Physical Response, the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, and Sugestopedia are shorter versions of chapters from the first edition. Additional and more recent references have been added to these chapters. Because these methods are no longer widely used, a shorter treatment seemed appropriate. Readers requiring fuller discussion of these methods should consult the first edition. New chapters on Whole Language, Multiple Intelligences, Neurolinguistic Programming, the lexical approach, and Competency-Based Language Teaching complete Part II. Although these latter approaches share some features with communicative approaches in Part III, we feel that they are sufficiently distinct to be grouped with the other approaches discussed in Part II.

Part III deals with current communicative approaches. It includes two chapters from the first edition – Communicative Language Teaching and the Natural Approach – and new chapters on Cooperative Language Learning, Content-Based Instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching, and the post-methods era. New material has been added to the final sections of the chapter on Communicative Language Teaching, and additional references have been added to this chapter and to the one on the Natural Approach.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

The history of language teaching has been characterized by a search for more effective ways of teaching second or foreign languages. For more than a hundred years, debate and discussion within the teaching profession have often centered on issues such as the role of grammar in the language curriculum, the development of accuracy and fluency in teaching, the choice of syllabus frameworks in course design, the role of vocabulary in language learning, teaching productive and receptive skills, learning theories and their application in teaching, memorization and learning, motivating learners, effective learning strategies, techniques for teaching the four skills, and the role of materials and technology. Although much has been done to clarify these and other important questions in language teaching, the teaching profession is continually exploring new options for addressing these and other basic issues and the effectiveness of different instructional strategies and methods in the classroom.

The teaching of any subject matter is usually based on an analysis of the nature of the subject itself and the application of teaching and learning principles drawn from research and theory in educational psychology. The result is generally referred to as a teaching method or approach, by which we refer to a set of core teaching and learning principles together with a body of classroom practices that are derived from them. The same is true in language teaching, and the field of teaching methods has been a very active one in language teaching since the 1900s. New approaches and methods proliferated throughout the twentieth century. Some achieved wide levels of acceptance and popularity at different times but were then replaced by methods based on newer or more appealing ideas and theories. Examples of this kind include the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, and the Situational Approach. Some, such as Communicative Language Teaching, were adopted almost universally and achieved the status of methodological orthodoxy. At the same time, alternatives to mainstream approaches have always found some level of support within language teaching, though often this has not led to wider acceptance or use. Methods in this category include those from the 1970s such as the Silent Way, Counseling-Learning, Suggestopedia, and Total Physical Response, as well as more recent alternative methods and approaches such as Multiple Intelligences, Neurolinguistic Programming, and the Lexical Approach.

Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching seeks to provide a comprehensive and comprehensible account of major and minor trends in language teaching methods from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present. To highlight the similarities and differences between approaches and methods, the same descriptive framework is used throughout. This model is presented in Chapter 2 and is used in subsequent chapters. It describes approaches and methods according to their

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

underlying theories of language and language learning; the learning objectives; the syllabus model used; the roles of teachers, learners, and materials within the method or approach; and the classroom procedures and techniques that the method uses. Where a method or approach has extensive and acknowledged links to a particular tradition in second or foreign language teaching, this historical background is treated in the first section of each chapter. In other cases we have attempted to establish links between the method or approach and more general linguistic, psychological, or educational traditions.

Within each chapter, our aim has been to present an objective and comprehensive picture of a particular approach or method. We have avoided personal evaluation, preferring to let the method speak for itself and allow readers to make their own appraisals. The book is not intended to popularize or promote particular approaches or methods, nor is it an attempt to train teachers in the use of the methods described. Rather, it is designed to give the teacher or teacher trainee a straightforward introduction to commonly and less commonly used methods, and a set of criteria by which to critically read, observe, analyze, and question approaches and methods.

We have included several references to articles that are available on or through the Internet through the ERIC databases and ERIC Digests. In order to see abstracts of the ERIC references cited or to order copies of the full articles in hard copy or microfiche or to read the complete texts of the ERIC Digests, consult the ERIC Web site(s) and follow the search procedures listed there.

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