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**Проблемный метод и коммуникативный
подход в обучении иностранного языка**

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**Using the problem method and communicative
approach in teaching foreign language**

В этой статье мы рассмотрели главные методы FLT в использовании в высших школах и представили теорию языка и изучения, их главные характеристики, действий и методов, их фонда и снижения, а также общей оценки

Ключевые слова: обучение иностранного языка, проблемный метод, инновации, подход

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In this article, we have considered the main FLT methods still in use at higher schools and presented the theory of language and learning, their main features, activities and techniques, their foundation and decline, as well as a general assessment of all of them

Key words: foreign language teaching, problem method, innovation, approach

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The main purpose of this article is to provide a critical assessment of the role played by problem methods in the educational process, though there is also an account of the main different methods of foreign language teaching (FLT) that use today. A knowledge of the different methods gives foreign language teachers a good background reference to their own stand on pedagogical matters and classroom practice, and in addition helps them understand the process that FLT has undergone, particularly through this century. To consider FLT as a process means that teaching is not static but changing to respond to new needs and demands as teachers, applied linguists and educationists can prove. This article deals with the differences between approaches, methods and techniques, as well as the three major issues which are recurrent in FLT. Then, the main characteristics, the psychological bases and the pedagogical features of the principal FLT methods are considered chronologically, presenting the contributions and imitations of the different approaches and methods. Finally, as a conclusion, a connection is established between FLT methods, innovation and classroom research, as a way of teacher development and of learning improvement.

Problem methods as part of a paradigm each of the main FLT methods that we present here was not superseded by a subsequent one as soon as it appeared but, rather, it went on living, the new one superimposing on the former. We can even say that the appearance of a new method corresponds with a loss of expectation of the former one along with the progressions of theory, research and the experience of school practice. There is not, broadly speaking, a marked line between different methods, but often an eclectic mixture between methods is present. In this sense methods are considered representations of language knowledge for pedagogical purposes and are part of a paradigm (a unit of theory, research and practice), which means a predominant way of building up theories, doing research and carrying out classroom activities. In fact, FLT methods have appeared as a result of the application of the new theoretical findings. Problem methods are also conditioned by educational philosophy, approaches about language nature and how it can be taught and learnt, and conceptions about classroom interaction. All this pervaded by those values concerning society and human relationships. When these aspects start to change it can be said that a shift of model is taking place.

The structuralize methods the different methods analyzed in this section share a common conception of how to learn a foreign language as a process of acquiring the structures or patterns of it through habit formation. We will examine the approach as well as the origins and the subsequent development of these methods: Situational and theory Approach and Problem Method.

Approach: theory of language and learning The theory of language underlying these methods is structural linguistics, and though there are some differences between British and American structuralism, both movements saw language as "a system of

structurally related elements for the encoding of meaning, the elements being phonemes, morphemes, words, structures, and sentence types" (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 49). Grammar no longer consists of a collection of rules, but a list of structures. Consequently, learning a language means mastering all these building blocks of the language and the rules to combine them. One of its main features is the importance given to the oral aspects of language, breaking with the relevance of the written language. In fact, these conceptions appeared to offer a scientific basis for FLT, which claimed to have transformed teaching from an art into a science. They are summarised in the following five ideas:

- Language is speech.
- A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say.
- Languages are different.
- A language is a set of habits.
- Teach the language, not about the language.
- All things based their theory of learning in behavior habit-forming conceptions.

Activities and techniques of the Communicative Approach. Communicative approaches make use of a variety of materials which are selected and viewed as a way of improving classroom interaction and a communicative use of the language. Some criteria in which these materials are based -and some activities and techniques derived from them are the following (Johnson 1982 and Larsen-Freennan 1986).

The Information transfer principle which refers to the ability to understand and produce language making transferences from one medium of the language to another. Activities based on the Information transfer can be: write some purposeful notes from a listening comprehension, write sentences from diagrams, give a personal opinion about some pictures.

The Information gap principle takes account of the different levels of Information between people when communicating, which allows to do a good number of exercises: students have different pieces of Information and have to exchange them through questions and answers; students can choose different answers, which means negotiation when taking.

The correction for content principle means more emphasis on the communicative content expressed than on grammatical accuracy. Errors and mistakes, therefore, receive a very different treatment than in the preceding methods.

The use of authentic materials exposes the students to real uncontrived language, so that the learner is faced with language as it is. Join scrambled sentences (or a conversation, a picture story) into their original order, a good way of dealing with cohesion and coherence and other aspects of discourse.

Language games are communicative as they have three features of communication: Information gap and feedback.

Role-plays allow students to be aware of the different social contexts and roles, attitudes, mood.

Problem-solving activities. Pair and group work are a procedure used very much. Some textbooks claiming to be communicative combine functions, situations

and topics. Many others have their units organized into a functional basis as the example in the figure below:

Figure 1. Functional basis

As we see from figure 1, four points of developing communicative features of communication.

Some assessment of the Communicative Approach It is difficult to assess the Communicative Approach as it is not a totally defined method and has been subject to several interpretations -as we have seen above-, specially at the levels of design and procedures. It has had a strong impact on language teaching and the importance of its contribution is shown in this summary (McDonough and Shaw 1993):

1. Increasing concern with the meaning potential of language.
2. The relationship between language form and function is of a rather complex character.
3. The concept of communication goes beyond the sentence to texts and conversations.
4. It provides realistic and motivating language practice.
5. The concept communicative is applied to all four language skills.
6. It can use learner's knowledge and experience with their mother tongue. But, on the other hand, it is evident that there are still some unresolved problems with the Communicative Approach:

Again, not all the teachers whose mother tongue is not English are confident enough to work with this approach. In fact, some of the proposals imply a new selection of language through functions, as the structuralizes did with structures.

Its advocacy of a meaningful use of the language is not always clear, as the activities or tasks to be undertaken are not always really meaningful.

In conclusion, we have considered the main approaches and methods of FLT as models or paradigms of theory, research and school practice. Some of them may be considered obsolete from a scientific point of view, some others seem to be more current, but in fact all of them have introduced innovations at a given moment, superimposing in an eclectic way.

However, problem methods have at least two things in common:

- 1) their belief to be the best one
- 2) a set of prescriptions that teachers have to follow necessarily.

We do not suggest then from the assumptions in this article that teaching should be approached following a particular method as a set of prescriptions, but on the contrary as a dynamic and reflective process, which means a permanent interaction among the curriculum, teachers, students, activities. What actually happens in the classroom, alongside careful planning and evaluation, becomes the most important

thing teachers have to reflect on and then relate to theory or to other experiences. We propose, therefore, an active role for teachers, who design her or his own content and tasks, classroom interaction, materials, methodology, evaluation, etc., instead of a passive role which means dependence on other people's designs and methods.

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