TRANSFORMING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: FROM TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION TO THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract: *This article traces the historical development of major teaching methods from the Grammar-Translation method through the Direct method, Audio Lingual method and Communicative language teaching. By examining the theoretical foundations, practical applications, strength and limitations of each approach, this article illuminates how pedagogical innovation has been driven by shifting linguistic theories, psychological insights and societal needs.*

Key words*: historical development, methodology, English language, pedagogical approaches, techniques, evolution, teaching methods, Grammar-Translation Method, Direct method, Audio-lingual method, Communicative Language Teaching, English language teaching methodology.*

ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ОБУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ: ОТ ТРАДИЦИОННОГО ГРАММАТИКО-ПЕРЕВОДА К КОММУНИКАТИВНОМУ ПОДХОДУ

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Аннотация: *В данной статье прослеживается историческое развитие основных методов обучения – от грамматико-переводного метода через прямой метод, аудиолингвальный метод и коммуникативное обучение. Анализируя теоретические основы, практическое применение, сильные стороны и ограничения каждого подхода, статья показывает, как педагогические инновации формировались под влиянием изменений в лингвистической теории, психологических исследованиях и общественных потребностях.*

Ключевые слова: *историческое развитие, методология, английский язык, педагогические подходы, техники, эволюция, методы обучения, грамматико-переводный метод, прямой метод, аудиолингвальный метод, коммуникативное обучение, методика преподавания английского языка.*

Introduction: The history of English language teaching is a narrative of continuous evolution, shaped by theoretical breakthroughs, practical necessities and changing educational philosophies. From the classical halls of 19th century Europe to today's technology-enhanced classrooms, language educators have sought the most effective ways to help learners acquire communicative competence in English. Each major methodological shift has reflected broader intellectual movements-from humanistic literary traditions to behaviorist psychology, cognitive science and sociolinguistic theory. This articles examines five pivotal methods that have defined English language pedagogy, exploring their origins, principles, classroom implementations and the transitional factors that led from one to the next.

1. Grammar-translation method: The Grammar-Translation method emerged from the long-established tradition of teaching classical languages such as Latin and Greek. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, modern languages-English, French, German- were incorporated into school curricula primarily for intellectual training and reading ability. Speaking and Listening were not valued outcomes because classroom instructors rarely needed learners to converse in these languages.

Strengths and Shortcomings: The Grammar Translation Method built strong reading and grammatical skills, which benefited learners in academic and translation-based professions. However, it proved ineffective for oral communication. Learners exposed only to GTM often struggled to use English spontaneously, lacked fluency, and viewed the language as an intellectual puzzle rather than a vehicle for real-world interaction.

2. Direct method: By the late 19th century, linguists and educators began advocating for a natural style of language teaching that mirrored how children acquire their first language. Scholars such as Wilhelm Viëtor and Henry Sweet argued that languages should be taught through speech, pronunciation training, and intuitive understanding instead of translation and memorization. These principles developed into what later became known as the Direct Method, also referred to as the Natural Method in some contexts.

Strengths and shortcomings:
- The Direct Method made considerable contributions:
- It emphasized oral proficiency.
- It encouraged thinking directly in English rather than translating.
- It provided more engaging, meaningful lessons.

However, it also had limitations: It required small classes and highly proficient teachers. It was difficult to implement in public schools with limited resources. Some learners and educators found the lack of explicit grammar instruction challenging.

3. Audio-Lingual method: The Audio-lingual Method, also known as the Audio-lingual Method or the Army Method, emerged as a prominent language teaching approach in the mid-20th century. It gained popularity during the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the United States. The method was heavily influenced by structural linguistics and behaviorist psychology, emphasizing the development of oral skills through repetitive drills, dialogues and pattern practice.

Strengths and shortcomings: ALM proved efficient in developing pronunciation, listening comprehension, and automaticity. It was systematic and well-suited to controlled training environments.

However, ALM also faced criticism: Learners often produced correct forms in drills but struggled to transfer these skills to spontaneous communication. Overemphasis on accuracy and repetition limited creativity and expression. Behaviorism did not account for cognitive processes involved in language acquisition.

4. Communicative language teaching method: The 1970s saw a major paradigm shift in applied linguistics. Scholars such as Dell Hymes challenged the structuralist view of language, arguing that learners need communicative competence, not just linguistic accuracy. Communicative competence includes: Grammatical competence, Sociolinguistic competence, Discourse competence, Strategic competence. This broader view of language use, combined with the inadequacies of earlier methods, led to the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Core Principles of CLT:

1. Language as Communication – English is seen as a tool for expressing meaning, not a set of forms to memorize.

2. Use of Authentic, Real-World Tasks – Activities include role-plays, simulations, interviews, group projects, surveys, problem-solving, and discussions.

3. Learner-Centered Approach – Students actively participate in pair and group work, reducing teacher talking time and increasing student talking time.

4. Integration of Skills – Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are practiced together in meaningful contexts.

5. Tolerant Attitude Toward Errors – Errors are viewed as natural learning steps, and correction is often delayed to maintain communicative flow.

Conclusion: The evolution of English language teaching reflects broader developments in linguistic theory, educational psychology, and societal needs. The Grammar Translation Method, rooted in classical education, prioritized grammatical knowledge and reading skills but neglected oral communication. The Direct Method shifted attention to speech and intuitive learning, while the Audiolingual Method offered structured, behaviorist-inspired training designed to build accurate habits

through repetition. Ultimately, these approaches paved the way for Communicative Language Teaching, which places meaningful interaction, learner participation, and authentic use of language at the heart of instruction.

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