

The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching

Time: 1930s - 60s by British applied linguists

Shaped the design of EFL/ESL textbooks and courses

Eg: Streamline English (Hartley and Vinay 1979)

prominent figures: Harold Palmer & A. S. Hornby

Vocabulary Control

Palmer: Vocabulary was one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning
2nd emphasis - Reading Skills The goal of foreign language study
Michael West: Vocabulary as an essential component of reading proficiency
principles of vocabulary control Frequency of use
Harold Palmer, Michael West: The Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection, based on frequency and other criteria

Revised by Michael West 1953 "A General Service List of English Words"

Grammar Control

Pittman

Known for teaching materials "Situational English"

Main characteristics

1. Language teaching begins with the spoken language. Material is taught orally before it is presented in written form.
2. The target language is the language of the classroom.
3. New language points are introduced and practised situationally.
4. Vocabulary selection procedures are followed to ensure that an essential general service vocabulary is covered.
5. Items of grammar are graded following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones.
6. Reading and writing are introduced once a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established.

Theory of language

"Structuralism"
speech basis of language
Structure heart of speaking ability
Palmer, Hornby: prepared pedagogical descriptions of the basic grammatical structures of English.
Word order, Structural words, the few inflexions of English, and Content words to form teaching material
the notion of "Situation" The oral practice of controlled sentence patterns
Structure + Situation
J. R. Firth & M. A. K. Halliday = Meaning, Context and Situation

Theory of learning

Behaviorist habit-learning theory
Language learning as habit formation (French)
inductive approach to teach grammar Process of language learning
No explanation for meaning words or structures Meaning from Situation

Objectives

to teach a practical command of the four basic skills of language, through Structure
Accuracy in both pronunciation and grammar
Errors to be avoided
Automatic control of basic structures and sentence patterns through speech

Teacher roles

Three fold function

Presentation

Serves as model, setting up situations = to create new structure and repeat
a skillful manipulator = using questions, commands and other cues to elicit correct sentences

Lessons= teacher directed

lookout for grammatical and structural errors

1. Timing

2. Oral practice, to support the textbook structures

3. Revision

4. Adjustment to special needs of individuals

5. Testing

6. Developing language activities other than those arising from the textbook

Teacher is essential to the success of the method

Learner roles

First stage: Listen and repeat what the teacher says

Respond to questions and commands of the teacher

has no control over the content of learning

More active participation is encouraged

Types of learning and teaching activities

To presenting new sentence patterns

A drill-based manner of practicing

"Situation" controlled to teach new language material

New words and sentence patterns- demonstrated with examples

Not through grammatical explanation or description

Meaning - not conveyed through translation

Meaning - made clear visually (objects, pictures, action and mime)

Practice: guided repetition and substitution activities, chorus repetition, dictation, drills, and controlled oral-based reading and writing tasks.

Oral-practice: pair practice and group work

The Syllabus

Structural Syllabus

A list of the basic structures and sentence patterns of English

Eg This is... Structures - sentences

Eg book, pencil, ruler Vocabulary - suitable for that structure

Procedure

Aim to move from controlled to free practice of structures
from oral use of sentence patterns to their automatic use in speech, reading, and writing

The role of instruction materials

Dependent upon both a textbook and visual aids

Organized lessons planned around different grammatical structures

Charts, flashcards, pictures, stick figures, and so on Visual aids

Textbook - only as guide to the learning process.

Teacher - master of textbook