

COMPREHENSION APPROACH (Total Physical Response)

1. Meaning in the target language can often be conveyed through actions.
2. Retention is enhanced when learners respond physically.
3. Feelings of success and low anxiety facilitate learning.
4. Listening comprehension comes first. Students will speak when they are ready.

Learners' feelings are also given importance in the next method we will see demonstrated. Psychologist James Asher's method, Total Physical Response, is being offered as an example of a general approach called the Comprehension Approach. The Comprehension Approach, as the name suggests, places value on students' understanding the target language, and thus emphasizes the listening skill. Other examples of this approach are Krashen and Terrell's the Natural Approach, and Winitz' materials "The Learnables." Asher bases his method on the observation that a baby spends many months listening to the people around it long before it ever says a word. The child has the time to try to make sense out of the sounds it hears. No one tells the baby that it must speak. The child chooses to speak when it is ready. Moreover, according to Asher, much of the linguistic input directed to the child contains commands.

The teacher's commands do increase in complexity but it's important that she not move too quickly. Students should feel successful as feelings of success and low anxiety facilitate learning. Also, when the students do make an error, correction should be carried out in a nonthreatening manner, perhaps by just repeating the command, and giving students an opportunity to selfcorrect. From time to time the teacher changes the order in which she issues commands so students do not memorize fixed routines. She also gives commands which combine previous imperatives in unexpected ways as students need to understand more than the

commands used in the training. Besides, novelty is also motivating and can be fun. Language learning is more effective when it's fun. In the lesson we saw, the students did not do much speaking. They will later, however, when they are ready to do so. They, too, will begin by giving commands. Students are expected to make errors when they first begin speaking. Teachers should be tolerant of them. Work on the fine details of the language should be postponed until students have become somewhat proficient. This discussion of the Comprehension Approach ends the first videotape of this twovideotape series. On the second videotape, you will see demonstrations of Suggestopedia, the Silent Way and the Communicative Approach. Before viewing those demonstrations, however, it might be useful to return to the questions I posted at the outset of this tape: 1. Which techniques or principles, if any, did you find useful? 2. How will you adapt them to your own teaching situation? It is you, after all, who have to make the connection to your own teaching. I wish you well. 55 VIDEO II: • Suggestopedia • Silent Way • Communicative Approach Introduction Hello and welcome back! My name is Diane LarsenFreeman and I'm a teacher educator at the School for International Training. This is the second tape in a twotape video series brought to you through the courtesy of the USIA. On this tape you will see demonstrations of three language teaching methods: Suggestopedia, the Silent Way and the Communicative Approach. The instructors, all experienced language teachers and teacher educators at SIT, have designed their lessons for Intermediatelevel ESL students. They have chosen the theme of a house. The lessons you will see are somewhat shorter than the originals; they are meant only to introduce you to these methods. All of the methods have a richer repertoire of principles and techniques than can be fully portrayed here. If you are interested in learning more, other typical lessons can be found in my book, Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching, published by Oxford University Press. As you view the tape, try to

remain open to what you see. For example, don't dismiss something because you are observing an English as a second language class with students from a number of different countries and you teach in an English as a foreign language situation where the students are more homogeneous. Ask yourself instead: "Is there anything valuable here which I can adapt to my own circumstances?" 56

SUGGESTOPEDIA 1. Learning is facilitated in a pleasant, comfortable environment. 2. The more confident the students feel, the better they will learn. 3. Communication takes place on two planes. When there is a unity between them, learning is enhanced. 4. The means of activating the material should be varied and playful. Suggestopedia, the first lesson you will see on this videotape, has been developed by Georgi Lozanov. Lozanov believes that we set up psychological barriers to learning: we fear that we will be unable to perform, that we will be limited in our ability to learn, or that we will fall. One result is that we do not use the full mental powers that we have. In order to make better use of our mental reserves, the limitations we think we have need to be "desuggested."

Suggestopedia, the application of the study of suggestion to pedagogy, has been developed to help students believe that they can be successful and, thus, to help them overcome the barriers to learning. Watch how direct and indirect suggestions are made in the lesson. Suggestopedia will be demonstrated by my colleague, Lise Sparrow. (LESSON) The first thing you may have noticed in the demonstration is the atmosphere the teacher sought to create with the music, the posters, and the plants. This is done because learning is facilitated in a pleasant, comfortable environment. The teacher also speaks in a reassuring tone of voice, suggesting implicitly that learning the target language will be relaxing and enjoyable. The more confident the students feel, the better they will learn. With the words she uses, she also seeks to activate the learners' imagination, which will also aid their learning. A major step in the learning is the "concert" phase during which the

teacher acts out the reading with a musical accompaniment. This step is in keeping with Lozanov's observation that communication takes place on "two planes": on the one, the linguistic message — the narrative — is encoded; and on the other are factors which complement the linguistic message, for example, the teacher's actions and the music. When there is a unity between the two planes, learning is enhanced. A pseudo passive state, such as the state one experiences when listening to a concert, is ideal for overcoming psychological barriers and for taking advantage of learning potential. The material the students are learning needs to be activated as well, however. The means of doing this should be varied so as to avoid as much repetition as possible. Dramatization is one way of doing this and a particularly valuable way of playfully activating the material. Fantasy reduces barriers to learning. Other means of activating the material used by the teacher were the game with the ball, and dictation. The game helped to create a playful atmosphere, thus indirectly suggesting that learning can be fun.

SILENT WAY

1. Teaching should be subordinate to learning.
2. Language is not learned by repeating after a model; students need to develop their own "inner criteria" for correctness.
3. Errors are important and necessary to learning.
4. It is the students who should be practicing the language, not the teacher. Caleb Gattegno was another methodologist who believed that language learning could occur at a much faster rate than normally transpires. What often happens, however, is that teaching interferes with learning. To prevent this from occurring, the central

principle of Gattegno's Silent Way is that "teaching should be subordinated to learning." This means, in part, that the teacher bases his lesson on what the students are learning in the moment, not what he wants to teach them. Watch how this principle is put into practice in the demonstration of the Silent Way which follows, taught by my colleague, Donald Freeman. After the teacher greets the students, we skip to where the teacher is reviewing some of the words the students will use that day by pointing to them on a "Fidel," a colorcoded word chart on which each English sound is assigned a distinctive color. He focuses on the differences in pronunciation between thee and the. (LESSON) By beginning the lesson with the Fidel chart, something with which the students are familiar, the teacher can build from the known to the unknown. The teacher next constructs a floor plan with Cuisenaire rods. He elicits from the students the relevant vocabulary. He has the basic structure in mind, but he lets the students take responsibility for guiding the construction of the floor plan. The teacher respects the intelligence of his students and gives only what help is necessary. Gattegno believed that language is not learned by repeating after a model. Students need to develop their own "inner criteria" for correctness — to trust and to be responsible for their own production in the target language. In fact, he was fond of saying "the teacher works with the students while the students work on the language." You may have noticed that the teacher spent a lot of time working with the students' errors. Errors are important and necessary to learning. They show the teacher how the students understand what he is teaching and specifically where things are unclear. The teacher used a variety of tools (hand gestures, charts, the blackboard, and other students) to get the students to self correct. If students are simply given answers, rather than being allowed to find the corrections themselves, they won't retain them. However, at the beginning, the teacher expects students to progress, not perform perfectly. 58 The teacher was silent in that he did not model the

language, but rather, directed the students in using it. It is the students who should be practicing the language, not the teacher. Because the teacher does not supply a model, the students learn to give their full attention to the teacher's cues. They are also encouraged to learn from one another. Indeed, we saw that the students standing in the back were learning from those seated at the table. By listening to the sentences the students wrote towards the end of the lesson, the teacher can verify what particular students have learned that day. This same sort of information was obtained when the teacher asked the students directly what they had learned. Both sources of student feedback help to inform the teacher about what to work on next. Students, in turn, learn to accept responsibility for their own learning.

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

1. The primary goal of language teaching is enabling students to use the language to communicate. Communication involves using language functions as well as grammar structures.
2. Language is used in a social context and should be appropriate to setting, topic, and participants.
3. Students should be given an opportunity to negotiate meaning, i.e., to make themselves understood.
4. Students should be able to express their opinions and share their idea and feelings; i.e., learn to communicate by communicating. You may have noticed that originators of the methods demonstrated on these videotapes take as their primary goal, student communicating in the target language. Many of these same methodologists emphasize the acquisition of linguistic structures or vocabulary. In the last method we will observe, the Communicative Approach, it is acknowledged that structures and vocabulary are important. However, adherents of the

Communicative Approach feel that students must master the functions or purposes to which it is put before they will be able to truly use the language. Watch how this view of language influences the way the teacher designs the lesson. The Communicative Approach will be demonstrated by my colleague, Alex Silverman.

(LESSON) In the lesson we just observed, we saw the students learning to make a case. The vehicle the teacher used to have students practice making their cases was a role play. This gives the language they are to use a social context, a characteristic of all communicative events. It also gives the communication a purpose. Moreover, the role play gives the students an opportunity to practice using language forms that are not only linguistically accurate, but sociolinguistically appropriate as well, appropriate to the settings, topics, and participants. By working in small groups, communicative interaction and cooperative relationships are encouraged. Such occasions give students an opportunity to work on negotiating meaning or trying to make themselves understood. They thus learn to communicate by communicating. As the students role play, the teacher moves from group to group acting as an advisor or a facilitator, instead of as a director. During the last activity, the “parents” are given the opportunity to report their decision. Students are thus given an opportunity to express their opinions and to share their ideas on a regular basis. When they do so, errors of form are tolerated by the teacher and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. The teacher may choose to draw attention to common errors in subsequent lessons, but for now the focus is on fluency and reinforcing the message that communication is primary.