
Chapter 3

Methods for Teaching Younger Learners

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Outline

Introduction	34
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	34
• Principles of CLT	35
The Audiolingual Method (ALM)	37
• Characteristics of ALM	37
• Teaching Techniques of ALM	37
Suggestopedia	39
• Posters	40
• Visualization	41
Total Physical Response (TPR)	41
• Using Commands to Direct Actions	42
• Role Reversal	42
• Action Sequence	43
Activity-Based Approach	43
• Sample Activity-Based Sequences	44
Conclusion	45
Key Terminology	45
Understanding Check	47
Resources	47
Summary Handout for Chapter 3	49

Introduction

The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.

Sir Winston Churchill, 1953

The above quotation certainly illustrates the great responsibility that we, as educators, have in shaping and developing the learning abilities of our students. Our responsibility lies in providing our students with ample opportunities to become active and responsible learners. We saw in Chapter 2 that students have a wide range of learning styles and intelligences. In order to cater to these diverse needs and abilities, teachers must use a wide variety of instructional methodologies and techniques. At present, the teaching profession provides us with a number of useful approaches to help us teach our subject matter while we also help students perform to the best of their ability.

In this chapter we will review briefly some of the methods of teaching that have a significant impact on teaching young learners. We will also look at applications of these methodologies in lessons from the Egyptian primary textbooks, Hello! 1 and Hello! 2.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

"Information is pretty thin stuff unless mixed with experience."

Clarence Day (1920)

Vocabulary and structures are important as tools for enhancing learners' communicative proficiency rather than as isolated concepts to be learned. Learners need to know that different language forms can be used to perform a variety of functions. They should be able to choose the most appropriate forms in a given social context, to manage the process of negotiating meaning. In other words, it is not enough for students to produce accurate language forms; these forms must also be appropriate to the social context and be acceptable to the persons they are addressing. Canale and Swain (1980) mention four dimensions of communicative competence.

1. The grammatical or linguistic competence refers to students' accurate and effective use of grammatical elements such as grammatical word order and word endings to express the intended message.
2. Sociolinguistic competence refers to students' understanding of the social context in which communication takes place. For example, it is considered impolite in England or the United States to ask people how much money they earn.
3. Discourse competence refers to what language actually means in the context. For example, when someone says, "The phone is ringing," depending on the context, the listener might understand that it means, "Please answer the phone."
4. Strategic competence refers to the strategies that communicators use to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication. For example, a young learner might turn to a peer and say, "What do you think?" to involve them in the conversation.

In CLT we are moving beyond grammatical elements in communication and extending to the social and cultural features of language. This is our challenge: to create "real life" communication in the classroom.

The next section will address the main principles of CLT (Larsen-Freeman 1986, pp. 129-130) and provide some examples of CLT activities from Hello! 1 and Hello! 2.

Principles of CLT

1. Whenever possible, use authentic language – language as it is used in a real context. Many of the dialogues and games in Hello! provide examples of this.
2. Teach language as a means of communication not just the object of study. Think of activities that involve real communication. Many activities in Hello! provide examples of CLT, e.g. the "Is Ali Running?" information gap activity in Hello 1, Unit 25A, or "Ali and Heba are in Giza," (Hello 1, Unit 23D). They provide activities for carrying out meaningful tasks,

e.g. a tourist asking someone to show him the way.

3. Be tolerant of errors. See them as a natural result of the development of communications skills. Fluency is more important than accuracy, especially at the beginning stages. The major emphasis is on getting the message across, not using error-free language.
4. Give students opportunities to express their ideas and opinions. There are many examples in Hello! where students are given the chance to express themselves using the vocabulary and language they have been taught. For example, in Hello! 1, the dialogues and role-play activities are the first steps toward free expression. In Hello! 2, Unit 17, the two activities "Telling Time", and "What people do at different times of the day," ask students to talk about themselves. Note: These are successful communicative activities if conducted with students in pairs or small groups. There are many exercises and activities in Hello! in which group and pair work are appropriate. After you have introduced the language students will need, group work and pair work are excellent ways to get the whole class interacting using authentic language. (See Chapter 22: Cooperative Learning in Language Classrooms for more ideas.)
5. Include Games. Games are very important in CLT because they have certain features that are shared with real communicative events. In a game, there is real purpose for the exchange between speakers, often through an information gap. The speakers have choices regarding what to say and how to say it, and they receive immediate feedback from the listeners on whether or not they have successfully communicated. These three features: information gap, choices, and feedback are essential to any classroom communicative event. There are several examples of simple games that could easily take place in class in the Hello! series. You can also create your own games that you know your class will respond to and enjoy. (Chapter 5: Games for Language Learning, gives you many ideas for games to use in class.)
6. Act as an advisor and facilitator during communicative activities. Encourage and help students in any way that motivates them to use the language in authentic ways.
7. During group work activities encourage cooperative relationships among students. This is an opportunity for students to develop language as they negotiate meaning with one another. Help them to interact with one another through pair and group work, orally and in writing.

In recent years, the Egyptian Ministry of Education has moved towards the use of communicative language teaching in primary, prep and secondary education. Many teachers have been trained in the use of communicative techniques and the Hello! textbooks are firmly based on the Communicative Approach.

The Audiolingual Method (ALM)

"Children have more need of models than of critics."

Joseph Joubert (1754-1824)

This Audiolingual Method of teaching has enjoyed many years of popularity, and even today, adaptations of it are found in contemporary methodologies. The Audiolingual Method is directly associated with B. F. Skinner and the theory of Behaviorism (Skinner, 1957).

Characteristics of ALM

These are the characteristics of ALM:

1. New material (vocabulary or patterns) is presented in dialogue form.
2. Learners mimic and memorize set phrases and patterns.
3. Structures are sequenced and taught by inductive analogy one at a time i.e. examples are shown and rules are guessed or inferred from them.
4. Vocabulary is strictly limited and taught in context.
5. Great emphasis is placed on pronunciation.
6. Successful responses are immediately reinforced.
7. There is a great effort to get learners to produce error-free utterances.

Teaching Techniques of ALM

Use these techniques in conducting ALM lessons:

1. Base learning on dialogues with emphasis on the language as it is spoken in everyday situations. ALM dialogues contain common expressions and basic structures of high frequency. Model the dialogue and have the students repeat it after you many times.
2. After your students have learned a dialogue, make adaptations linked to learners' interests to provide further consolidation of learning.
3. After learners have mastered sections of the work orally, introduce them to the reading of printed script. The learners can now read what they have memorized and practiced orally in class.
4. Introduce writing first as imitative, copying of words and dialogue sentences from the book. Later, students can create their own written texts.

Young learners, particularly in Egypt where there is a tradition of rote learning,

often respond well to this method because of the great amount of student involvement. They cooperate in following the teacher's model when repeating dialogues or structures, though they do need frequent changes in activities. Teachers of young learners can successfully use several of the ALM teaching techniques. Repetition of certain structures develops language habits and ensures that the learners can swiftly and automatically respond when they are required to. (Ways to make repetition of structures fun and interesting are included in Chapter 4: Songs, Chants and Rhymes.)

Following are some of the most useful ALM techniques:

Backchaining. Backchaining is a technique that teachers usually use when a long line of dialogue or structure is giving the learners trouble. The teacher breaks down the line into several meaningful units and the students repeat the last part first, adding additional parts in further repetitions (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, pp. 45-46). This procedure helps students keep the correct intonation. The pitch movement at the end of the sentence is important for meaning in English (Lewis & Hill 1992, pp.72-73). The following example is taken from Hello! 1, Unit 18. In this exercise, students are to ask and answer questions. If the children have trouble with the question, you might help them in the following way:

Example: What time\ does Ali\ do\ his homework?

Teacher: his homework?

Class: his homework?

Teacher: do his homework?

Class: do his homework?

Teacher: does Ali do his homework?

Class: does Ali do his homework?

Teacher: What time does Ali do his homework?

Class: What time does Ali do his homework?

Chain Drill. To conduct a chain drill, follow these procedures:

1. Begin the chain of conversation by greeting individual students or asking them questions, e.g. "Hello, my name is Mr. Yasser. What's yours?"
2. After the first student responds he or she turns to Student #2, sitting next to him or her, and offers a greeting or asks a question.
3. Student #2 responds.
4. Then Student #2 turns to Student #3 and asks a question or offers a greeting.

This chain drill provides controlled communication. It also gives the teacher an opportunity to check students' pronunciation and responses. There are

several question/answer Exercises in Hello! where this activity could be used, for example, "What are they doing?" in Hello! 2, Unit 2, Exercises A and D, "Whose T-shirt is this?," Unit 4 Exercise D, and "Can Dick Ride a Horse?" in Unit 6, Exercise B.

Another way of conducting a chain drill that is effective in large classes is suggested by Lewis and Hill (1992), who call it "Beehives". This name comes from the idea that bees in a hive all work at the same time. With a simple two-line dialogue, all the students in the first row of the class turn around and ask the question to the students behind them in the second row. The students in the second row answer the question, then turn around and ask the question to the students in the third row; this continues until the students in the last row have completed the dialogue. This way each student has a chance to ask and answer and has ample practice opportunities.



Suggestopedia

"The teacher is one who makes two ideas grow where only one grew before."

Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915)

Georgi Lozanov (Lozanov & Gateva, 1988) developed the Suggestopedia method for language teaching. It claims that the human mind can process great amounts of information, a process he named "superlearning." Superlearning happens if the mind is given the right conditions for learning. According to Lozanov, these conditions include a state of complete mental relaxation and giving over control to the teacher. Krashen (1987) also suggests that a positive effect is important in language acquisition. In Suggestopedia this mental state is achieved by playing music to create the "relaxed concentration" that leads to maximum learning.

Posters

One of the notable contributions of Suggestopedia is the use of posters. The belief is that we notice and perceive much more in our environment than that to which we consciously attend (Larsen-Freeman 1986, p. 84). This means that students can learn from what is present in the environment, even if their attention is not directed to it. Lozanov calls this type of learning "peripheral learning."

We can use posters to encourage students to read or to review vocabulary and language structures. For example, Egyptian learners often have trouble with telling time in English. Unit 18 in Hello! 1 and Unit 17 of Hello! 2 both address this topic. Look at figure 3 and think how effective such a poster would be in making students get used to telling the time in English.

Poster on Telling Time

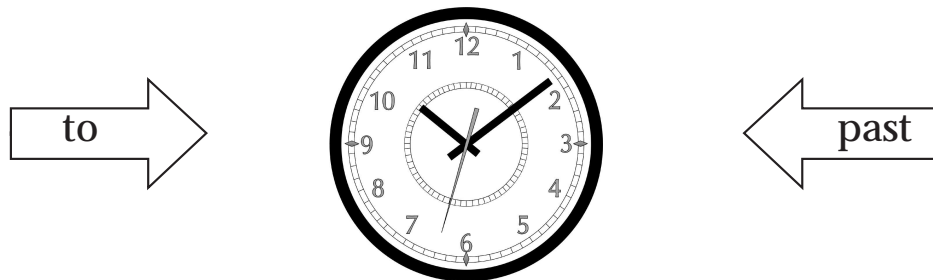
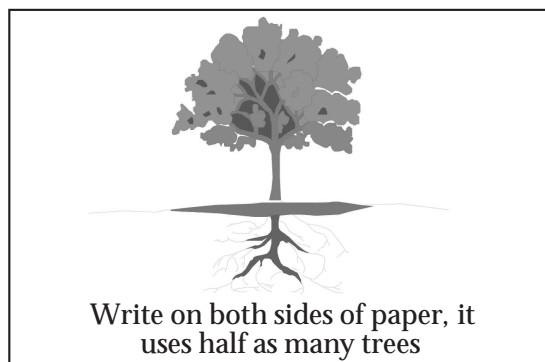


Figure 3

Posters in the classroom or the school can be used to serve several purposes. They can:

1. provide or reinforce grammatical information, e.g. verbs in the 3rd person singular
2. introduce or review new vocabulary items with attractive illustrations
3. provide instructions or comments about points of widespread interest, like the conservation poster below:



The following points are hints about the use of posters in your schools. The posters should:

- be made by children as cooperative activities.
- contain specific messages.
- expose the students to unconscious (peripheral) learning.
- be clear and attractive.
- be changed regularly.

New posters arouse interest; good posters can be used repeatedly at different times throughout the academic year. (See Chapter 10 on Literacy Development and Chapter 18 on Low-Tech Teaching Aids for more ideas on using posters and other classroom displays.)

Visualization

This technique can be used to provide students with positive suggestions or just to relax them in preparation for language learning. Ask your students to close their eyes and concentrate on their breathing. Speaking in a quiet voice, describe something, tell a story, or read a rhyme. Then ask the students to open their eyes slowly and return to the present. Some teachers then ask students to perform an activity related to what was being said.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

"There are times when silence has the loudest voice."

Leroy Brownlow



James Asher (1977) believed that the language classroom was the focus of too much student anxiety. He wanted to develop a method that was as stress-free as possible and to promote classrooms where learners would be relaxed and not self-conscious. The TPR method, because of its simplicity, has become one of the most popular methods of teaching young children. Classrooms that use this method are more stress-free.

In the methods that we have discussed previously, learners were encouraged to speak in English from the first lesson. TPR centers on comprehension and begins with focus on listening and understanding, but not speaking. The reason for this comes from observations of how children acquire their mother tongue. Babies spend a long time listening to their caregivers. The children understand most of what is said to them, but they only start to speak when they are ready. Asher thought that foreign language learners, too, would benefit from a period of developing comprehension by listening alone. Another important element that Asher included in his method is the association of language with physical activity. In the TPR classroom, young children do a lot of listening and acting in response to what they hear.

According to Asher (1977), the role of the teacher is very important in coordinating and planning the lesson or performance. "The instructor is the director of a stage play in which the students are the actors" (p. 43).

Using Commands to Direct Behavior

In the TPR method the teacher's use of commands is the most important teaching technique.

1. First, plan a series of commands to introduce in your lesson.
2. Then give the commands to your learners as you demonstrate their meaning with actions.
3. Then have students respond to the commands. It is the action itself, says Asher, which makes the meaning of the command clear and helps children acquire the language. Teachers' instructions to open the book or close it or to point to something are simple examples of TPR that you and your students can perform together from the beginning.
4. After learners are very comfortable with this series of commands, introduce the written text and teach activities.

There are several examples in the Hello! texts where such an activity could be used. For example, in Hello! 1, Unit 3 Exercise E, the teacher gives the commands:

Open your book.
Turn to page 9.
Look at Exercise F.

Role Reversal

For this TPR activity, a student or a group of students gives the commands for the teacher and other classmates perform the action. At first, do not insist

that all students speak. Keep providing invitations and offering them opportunities. They will eventually join in when they are comfortable.

Action Sequence

As your students progress in their command of English give them longer series of connected commands to perform. Hello! 1, Unit 9 Exercise B includes commands about helping around the house that can be included in a longer series. Hello! 2, Unit 16, Exercise B, which treats the use of prepositions, can be adapted if you make up a few commands. For example:

Mona, stand up.

Mona, sit next to Heba.

Aly, pick up the book.

Put the book between your copybook and your calculator.

Alaa, stand opposite Marwa.

(Chapter 7: TPR, Drama, and Role-Playing, has further discussion of TPR and sample activities.)

The Activity-Based Approach

"The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more."

Jonas Salk (1914-1995)

The activity-based approach to language teaching is based on an understanding of how children actually learn. Vale and Feunteun (1995) state that young learners do not learn language by mastering one structure or five new words at a time; rather, "They are able to learn language as part of a whole learning experience" (p.28).

In the Activity-Based Approach, children are encouraged to be active participants in the classroom by performing practical tasks. Children learn best when their work is valued and they are highly engaged. They feel ownership of their work and have the opportunities to experience and experiment for themselves. They are not pressured into speaking before they are confident and ready to do so. The focus is on the successful completion of a task in English:

Since the focus is initially on the practical task, children can be encouraged to work out for themselves what they want to say about their own work at their own level. They can be allowed to make language mistakes without the fear of failure. Most children will speak well when they are ready to speak.

(Vale & Feunteun 1995, p. 33)

Sample Activity-Based Sequences

Hello! 1, Unit 13, Exercise A, C and E, which deal with articles of clothing, are suited to the following activity-based sequence:

1. Divide the class into groups of 5 students. Ask students to find two items they are wearing or carrying (e.g., pencil, shirt, chalk, shoes) and have each student name the items to the group along with their colors, e.g., I have a blue pencil and black shoes.
2. Ask each group to record their items in a table like the one below. First, demonstrate with a chart on the board. Then have the learners make their own charts and record the information.

Items	COLORS						
	blue	green	black	orange	purple	red	white
Shirt						*	*
Pencil							
Shoes							
Shorts	*						

3. Have the children report their information to you, and as they do, record the information on a class chart like the following.

Items	COLORS						
	blue	green	black	orange	purple	red	white
Shirt						4	3
Pencil	12						
Shoes			10				
Shorts							
Dress	7						

4. Encourage the students to describe the results with sentences like, "There are 4 red shirts in our class," or "Group 1 has 2 of the 4 red shirts in our class." Ask the students to write a few sentences based on the work done.

The above activity has a well-defined teaching framework. It starts with the students interacting with the key language needed for the main activity, i.e., I've got a blue shirt. This interaction and the fact that students are talking

among themselves will create a feeling of confidence and motivates the learners to do the task. Next, students follow the teachers' instructions and fill in the chart. The cooperation required to fill in the chart is a learning experience that actively engages the children. The final phase is the follow-up and consolidation that includes speaking and writing.

While children are doing tasks like the above, they are exposed to a wide range of language input in the form of instructions, comments and explanation from the teacher and peers. The language is absorbed by children at their own pace. (Vale & Feunteun, 1995, p. 29).

Conclusion

Every method, including those discussed in this chapter, has its advantages and drawbacks. Experienced teachers should take from each method whatever suits their classes at their particular stage of language learning and of the lesson. For example, repetition is very important at the presentation stage, but too much repetition can lead to student boredom. If repetition is accompanied by action, as in TPR, it helps students maintain attention and to understand and remember meanings. At the freer stage of the lesson, you can set up the situation for your students to practice language items in pairs, groups or both. Information-gap activities and task-based activities are also very useful at this stage. Teachers must consider many ways of teaching so that they can make the best choices to help their students learn.

Key Terminology

Backchaining or Backward Build Up

In this technique, a sentence is divided up into meaningful units. The students repeat the last unit several times with correct stress and intonation. Then, they repeat the last but one unit with the last unit. Finally they repeat the whole sentence.

Chain Drill

In a chain drill, which is a game like language practice activity, students repeat all the responses prior to their own and add their own pieces of information. An example of a chain drill from Hello! 2, Unit 3, p. 7:

S1: Can you see a hen in the picture?

S2: Yes, I can.

S3: Can you see a hen and a bird in the picture?

S4: Yes, I can.

S5: Can you see a hen, a bird and a hippo in the picture?

Information Gap Activity

This activity is done by two or more students. Each one has the same text, or picture, etc... with different information. They have to communicate through speaking to close the gap.

Communicative Language Teaching

This language teaching approach focuses on developing learners' ability to use the language effectively in authentic situations.

Audiolingual Method

This language teaching method focuses on developing accurate language use through memorization of dialogues.

Suggestopedia

This language teaching approach focuses on providing a relaxed atmosphere and giving opportunities for peripheral learning.

Total Physical Response

In this language teaching method, teachers present language through a series of commands accompanied by actions. Learners acquire language as they perform the commands.

Activity-Based Approach

In this approach, language, after initial introduction, is practiced and developed through engaging, multi-faceted tasks.

Negotiate Meaning

When students try to understand the meaning of a text and try to understand what another person is saying, they are negotiating meaning. To do this, they use all the means at their disposal, often asking questions, rephrasing what others say and asking for clarification as well as using non-verbal language.

Approach

A general view of the way language should be learned that informs but does not necessarily prescribe the manner of teaching.

Method

A systematic description of classroom teaching procedures based on a view of how language is learned.

Technique

A specific teaching tool or procedure that can be used with a variety of content. Specific techniques may be associated with certain methods or approaches.

Understanding Check

Understanding Check		
Check either T or F for the following:	T	F
1. The main goal of CLT is to enable students to speak fluently.		
2. In using CLT students' accuracy is of secondary importance.		
3. ALM advocates accuracy over fluency.		
4. ALM thinks of repetition after the teacher as unnecessary.		
5. Suggestopedia cannot be used in Egyptian classrooms.		
6. TPR is a very suitable method for young children who like movement and get bored quickly.		
7. TPR can be used very early in any language course.		
8. The activity-based approach depends on children performing a practical task in class, either orally or in writing.		

Resources

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Summary Handout for Chapter 3:

Methods for Teaching English to Younger Learners

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Four dimensions of communicative competence

1. Grammatical or linguistic competence
2. Sociolinguistic competence
3. Discourse competence
4. Strategic competence

Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

1. Authentic language is used.
2. Language is taught as a means of communication.
3. Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural result of the development of communications skills.
4. Students should be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.
5. Activities should include information-gaps, choices, and immediate feedback.
6. The teacher acts as an advisor and facilitator.
7. Children engage in cooperative activities to practice language.

Audio Lingual Method (ALM)

Characteristics of ALM

In what follows, you will find some general characteristics of the ALM:

1. New material (vocabulary or patterns) is presented in dialogue form.
2. Learners imitate and memorize set phrases and patterns.
3. Structures are sequenced and taught by inductive analogy one at a time.
4. Vocabulary is strictly limited and taught in context.
5. Great importance is attached to pronunciation.
6. Successful responses are immediately reinforced.
7. There is a great effort to get learners to produce error-free utterances.

Teaching Techniques of ALM

1. Learning is based on dialogues that teachers model and students repeat and memorize with emphasis on the language as it is spoken in everyday situations.
2. After students have learned a dialogue, the teacher provides adaptations of the dialogue linked to their personal experiences to provide further consolidation of learning.
3. After students learn the sections of the work orally, they complete activities using the printed script.
4. Writing is at first imitative, usually copying of words and dialogue sentences from the book.
5. Strategies include Backchaining and Chain Drills.

Suggestopedia

1. Superlearning happens if the mind is given the right conditions for learning.
2. Teachers create a relaxed state for learning with music.
3. Posters help focus learners' attention on key concepts.
4. Teachers use visualization to relax students and focus their attention on learning.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

1. Teachers use commands and demonstrate to direct behavior.
2. Students follow commands in repetitions and variations.
3. When they are ready, students do follow-up activities with the written text.
4. Strategies include Role Reversal and Action Sequence.

Activity-Based Approach

1. Children learn language by using it to accomplish purposeful tasks.
2. Children are encouraged to be active participants in the classroom.
3. The focus is on the successful completion of a task in English.