

## **PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**Khaydarova Momokiz Ruzidayevna**

Senior Lecturer, Department of Uzbek

Language and Literature,

Termez State University of Engineering

and Agricultural Technology

[momokiz1010@gmail.com](mailto:momokiz1010@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

The article is devoted to the methodology of teaching foreign languages as a field of pedagogical science. The concept of a teaching method is examined, and the main approaches are analyzed: the grammar-translation method, the natural method, the direct method, and neo-direct methods. Particular attention is paid to their features, as well as to the development of the communicative approach aimed at forming practical language skills.

**Keywords:** teaching methodology, foreign languages, teaching methods, grammar-translation method, natural method, direct method, neo-direct methods, communicative approach, pedagogical process, language competence, didactics.

Teaching methodology is a specialized field within pedagogical science, representing a particular theory of the educational process. Its focus is on teaching a specific academic subject. The main objectives of methodology are to investigate the patterns that govern the learning process and, based on these patterns, to formulate normative guidelines for pedagogical practice. The scope of methodology includes the analysis of goal-setting, content, organizational forms, didactic methods, and instructional tools used within a particular subject area. In the field of foreign language teaching, the term “method” is understood as a strategy for achieving educational objectives. However, this term is used both to describe general approaches and more narrowly defined teaching techniques.

A method in foreign language teaching is understood as a fundamental approach determined by specific objectives, instructional material, and underlying principles. Examples of such methods include the grammar-translation method and the direct method. In particular, the grammar-translation method was aimed at developing logical thinking as well as reading and translation skills. The main emphasis was placed on the study of grammatical rules as an essential means of mastering a foreign language, especially in reading. When applying the direct method in foreign language teaching, the key priority was the development of learners’ active command of the language. This included the development of competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The term “method” in this context implies a structured approach to teaching that forms part of a broader pedagogical direction and reflects a particular authorial concept. Examples include the method of François Gouin and the method of Palmer, which in turn can be considered part of the direct method as a general approach. The word “method” refers to a path—a way of organizing the interconnected activities of teachers and learners within a given system. It denotes a technological operation that ensures interaction between the teaching and learning sides and serves as a component of instructional technology, directly



related to the question of how to teach. This is based on the understanding that the organization and implementation of the pedagogical process occur through teaching methods realized in methodological techniques; with the help of various teaching aids; through the use of different organizational forms of student work; and with consideration of learners' age, their level of foreign language proficiency and overall development, the degree of learning achieved, the instructional material, and the time allocated for its study.

**The Grammar-Translation Method.** Its fundamental principle is that true knowledge of a language is reduced to mastering its grammatical rules and vocabulary. The development of language skills in this context is viewed as the *последовательное* (progressive) acquisition and application of various grammatical structures. Thus, a teacher planning a course within this method first determines which grammatical patterns should be covered. Then, texts are selected to illustrate these structures, from which individual sentences are extracted, and the process concludes with translation exercises—first from the foreign language into the native language, and then vice versa. As for the texts, they are usually so-called artificial texts, in which little attention is paid to meaning: what is said is less important than how it is said. Some proponents of this method (e.g., H. Ollendorff) believed that textbook texts should even be selected in such a way that their content discourages rather than engages students, since the primary goal of language learning is the acquisition of grammar, while the text merely serves as its illustration. The main drawback of this method is that it creates ideal conditions for the emergence of the so-called language barrier. In the process of learning, a person ceases to express themselves and instead begins not to speak, but simply to combine words according to certain rules. This approach to foreign language learning dominated until the late 1950s and was practically the only method used to teach learners.

**The Natural Method.** The fundamental principle of the natural method was to reproduce the conditions and mechanisms inherent in a child's intuitive acquisition of their native language and apply them to the learning of a foreign language. It is precisely this analogy with natural language acquisition that gave the method its name—"natural." The main goal of instruction within the natural method is to teach learners to speak a foreign language. Proponents of this method assumed that once students learned to speak, they would be able to read and write in the target language, even without explicit instruction in reading and writing techniques.

The history of foreign language teaching methodology includes numerous and varied attempts to find the most effective method of instruction. The oldest of these was the natural method, which did not differ from the way a child learns their native language. A foreign language was acquired through imitation of ready-made patterns, repeated practice, and reproduction of new material by analogy with what had already been learned. The natural method, which pursued purely practical goals—primarily teaching learners to speak and read simple texts—long satisfied the needs of a society in which productive command of a foreign language was a privilege of the upper classes. With the emergence of schools and the introduction of foreign languages as a general education subject, attempts were initially made to teach languages using the natural method; however, it was soon replaced by the grammar-translation method.

**The Direct Method.** The direct method of foreign language teaching developed on the basis of the natural method. Its primary goal, like that of the natural method, is to teach learners to speak a foreign language. Proponents of this approach assumed that once students acquired speaking skills, they would also be able to read and write in the target language. The creators of the direct method strongly recommended the use of induction—that is, observing language material and enabling learners to independently infer grammatical rules, which would later be systematized. The main contribution of the representatives of the direct method lies in their focus on living, spoken language; in the development of methods for teaching oral communication; in the creation of a system of phonetic exercises that facilitates effective mastery of the sound system of a language; and in the use of visual aids as a means of conveying the meaning of foreign-language material.

**Neo-Direct Methods.** Neo-direct methods of foreign language teaching are based on carefully selected linguistic material. From this perspective, each method can be seen as continuing and refining the work of material selection initiated within earlier approaches.

Several key principles underlie neo-direct methods:

1. **Frequency** — the frequency of use of a lexical unit compared to others; different meanings of the same word are considered separately.
2. **Structural combinability (ergonic value)** — the ability of a lexical unit, as an element of a sentence, to combine with other elements.
3. **Concreteness** — lexical units denoting concrete concepts should be included first, as they can be explained using visual aids.
4. **Proportionality** — different parts of speech should be represented in the minimum vocabulary in proportions similar to those found in the natural language.
5. **Expediency** — even if a lexical unit does not fully meet the above criteria, it may still be included if it belongs to the same semantic group as already selected items (for example, alongside numerals such as “one,” “two,” and “three,” the word “million” may also be included, despite its lower frequency).

This method represents a set of techniques aimed at developing effective communication in a language environment. Most of these techniques are familiar from classroom practice. The key feature is the simulation of real-life situations in order to encourage learners to speak more. It is important that the topics discussed are relevant and connected to students’ everyday lives and concerns. In lessons conducted according to communicative methodology, the course of the lesson largely depends on the learners themselves—their responses and reactions. Since communication is meaningful and based on purposeful topics, speaking occupies the central place, although reading and writing are also taught. Teachers primarily act as facilitators: they listen and guide the flow of the lesson rather than dominate it.

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