Approaches to English Language Teaching

An Historic Overview of Language Teaching Approaches

Why do we need to know the history of language teaching?

- Key to the understanding of the way things are and why they are that way.

- Teachers may better comprehend the forces that influence their profession.

An historic overview of language teaching approaches

- Pre- 20th Century Trends
- Popular approaches in 20th Century
- Teachers' choice of best approaches, materials and techniques for students

Pre-20th Century Trends

- Greek and Rome Period
- Renaissance
- 1631-1658
- 19th Century
- The end of 19th Century
- Early 20th century

Greek and Rome Period

- Foreign Language learning
- Aural-oral techniques:
  informal and direct approaches
  - Greek
  - Latin

Classical Period (17th , 18th & 19th centuries)

- Education as an arm of theocracy:
  - Purpose of education to teach religious orthodoxy and good moral character

- Foreign language learning associated with the learning of Greek and Latin:
 - Purpose of learning a foreign language to promote speakers' intellectuality
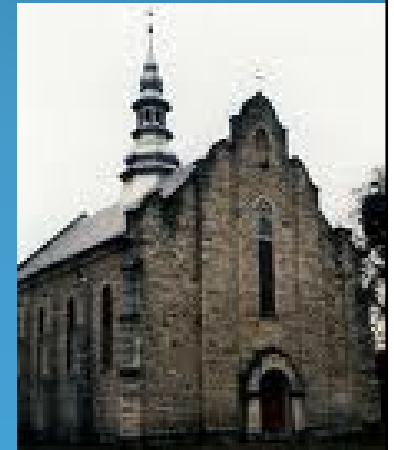
Renaissance

- Formal study of grammars of Greek and Latin
  - Invention of printing press
  - Mass production of books
- Classical grammar in school instruction
- Latin being used in everyday purposes

Johann Amos Comenius (1631-1658)

- Books about teaching techniques
- To teach usage not analysis of language
  - Imitation instead of rules
  - Repetition
  - Practice reading and speaking
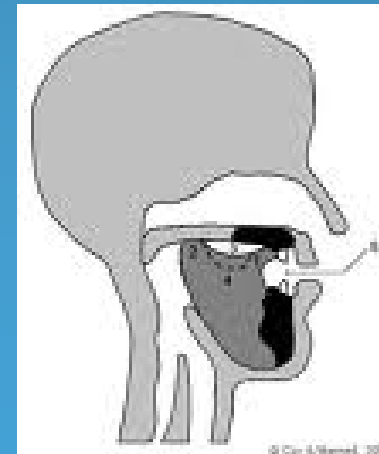 - Meaningful pictures
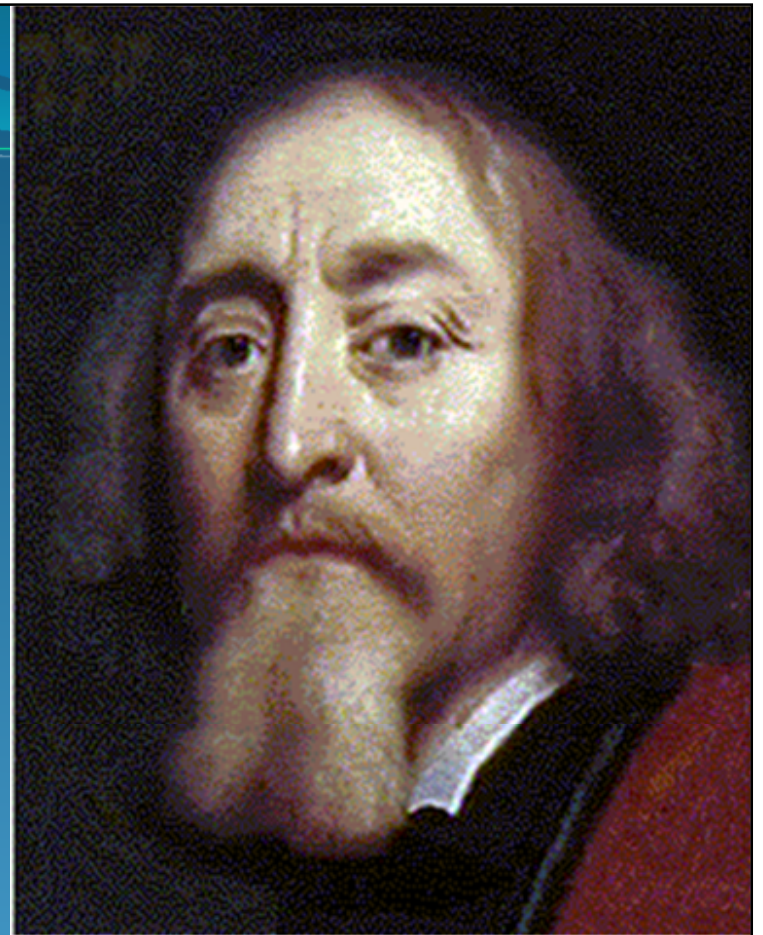
Beginning of 19th Century

- Systematic study of the grammar of classical Latin and text were taken over
- Analytical Grammar-Translation approach
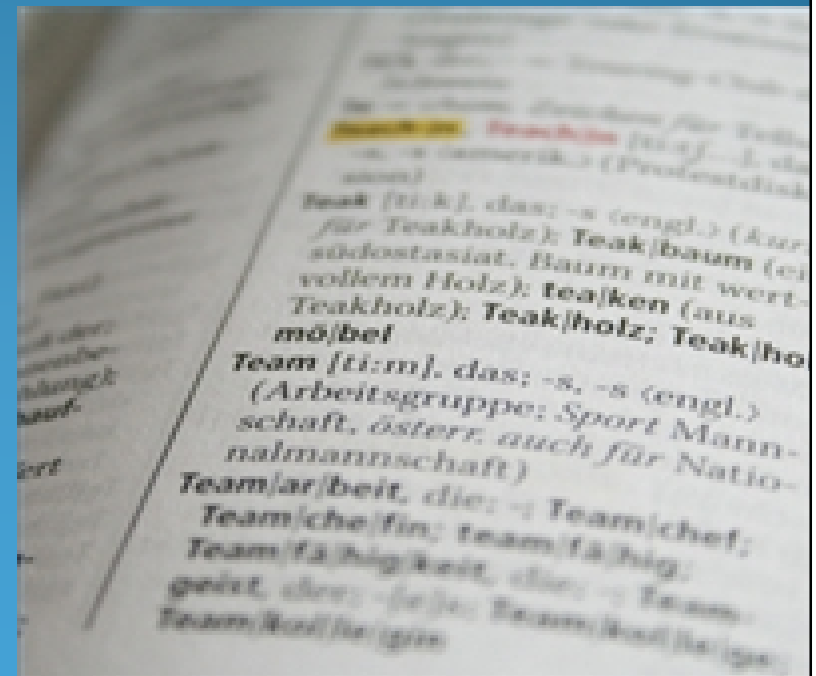
Other approaches

- Reading approach (1941 in U.S.)
- Audiolingual Approach
- Oral Situational Approach (Britain)

The end of 19th Century

- **Direct Method:** to use rather then to analyze a language
  - France, Germany, Europe
  - Spoken form taught first
  - Solid training in phonetic
  - Pronunciation and oral skills

Direct Instruction
Structured Overview
Explicit Teaching
Mastery Lecture
Drill and Practice
Compare and Contrast
Didactic Questions
Demonstrations
Guides for Reading,
Listening, Viewing
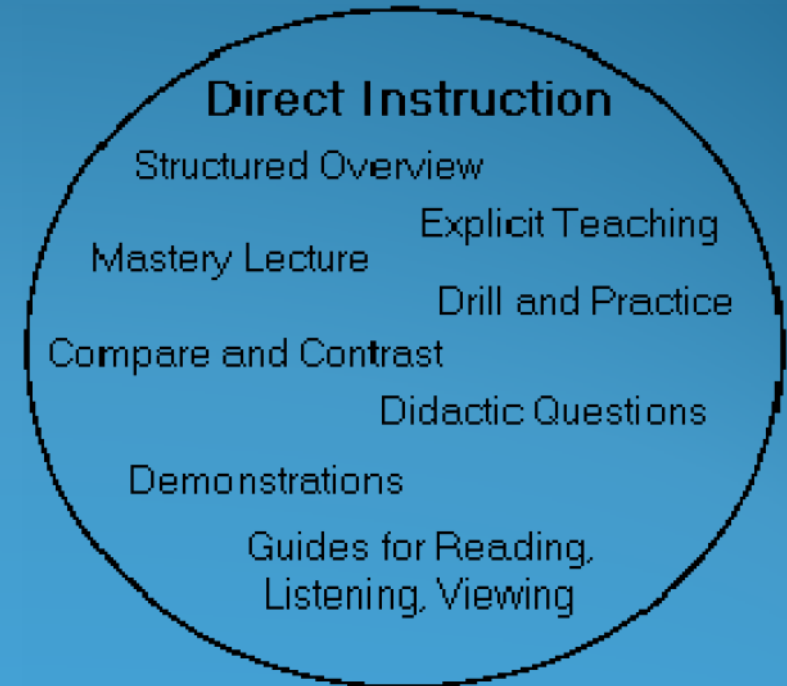
Early Mid-20th Century

- Demand for ability to speak a FL
- Reformers reconsidering the nature of language and learning
- Three Reformers (the way children learned languages was relevant to how adults learned languages)
  - C. Marcel
    - Emphasized the importance of understanding meaning in language learning
  - T. Pendergast
    - Proposed the first structural syllabus (arranging grammatical structures so that the easiest was taught first)
  - F. Gouin
    - French teacher of Latin

F. Gouin
(French teacher of Latin)

- Painful experience in learning German
  - Tried to memorize a German grammar book and a list of 248 irregular German verbs
- Observed his three-year old nephew
- Came up with the following insights
  - Children use language to represent their conceptions.
  - Language is a means of thinking, of representing the world to oneself.

20th Century: 9 Approaches

- Grammar-Translation
- Direct
- Reading
- Audio-lingualism (U.S.)
- Oral-Situational (Britain)
- Cognitive
- Affective-Humanistic
- Comprehension-Based
- Communicative

Grammar Translation (1850's to 1950's)

- Medium of instruction: L1
- Grammatical parsing: forms and inflection
- Translate sentences
- Not for communication
- Emphasis on learning to read & write
- Focus on grammatical rules, syntactic structures, rote memorization of vocabulary and translation of literary texts
- Vocabulary: in the form of lists of isolated words.
- Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
- No provision for the oral use of language
- Speaking and listening were mediated via 'conversation classes'

Direct Approach (Charles Berlitz)

- L2 learning is similar to L1 learning
- Classroom instruction: in FL
- No use of L1
- Dialogues, actions, picture
- Grammar & target culture: inductive teaching
- Only everyday vocabulary was taught
- Concrete vocabulary: through pictures and objects
- Abstract vocabulary: by association of ideas
- Emphasis on
  - oral interaction
  - spontaneous use of language
  - no translation
  - little if any analysis of grammatical rules and structures
- Required native speakers as teachers

Reading Approach

- Grammar for reading
- Vocabulary is controlled, then expanded
- Translation
- Reading comprehension emphasized

Audiolingualism

- Outbreak of the World War II
  - Need to become orally proficient
  - **The Army Method:**
    an oral-based approach
  - Charles Fries & Leonard Bloomfield:
    structural linguists
    - Identify grammatical structures and basic sentence patterns
    - Practice patterns: pronunciation & oral drilling
- New material is presented in dialogue form
- Mimicry, memorization, and overlearning.
- Little/No grammar: inductive grammar teaching
- Very little use of L1.
- Great effort to produce error-free utterances.

Oral Situational Approach

- Spoken language
- All material is practice orally
- TL used
- New items presented situational
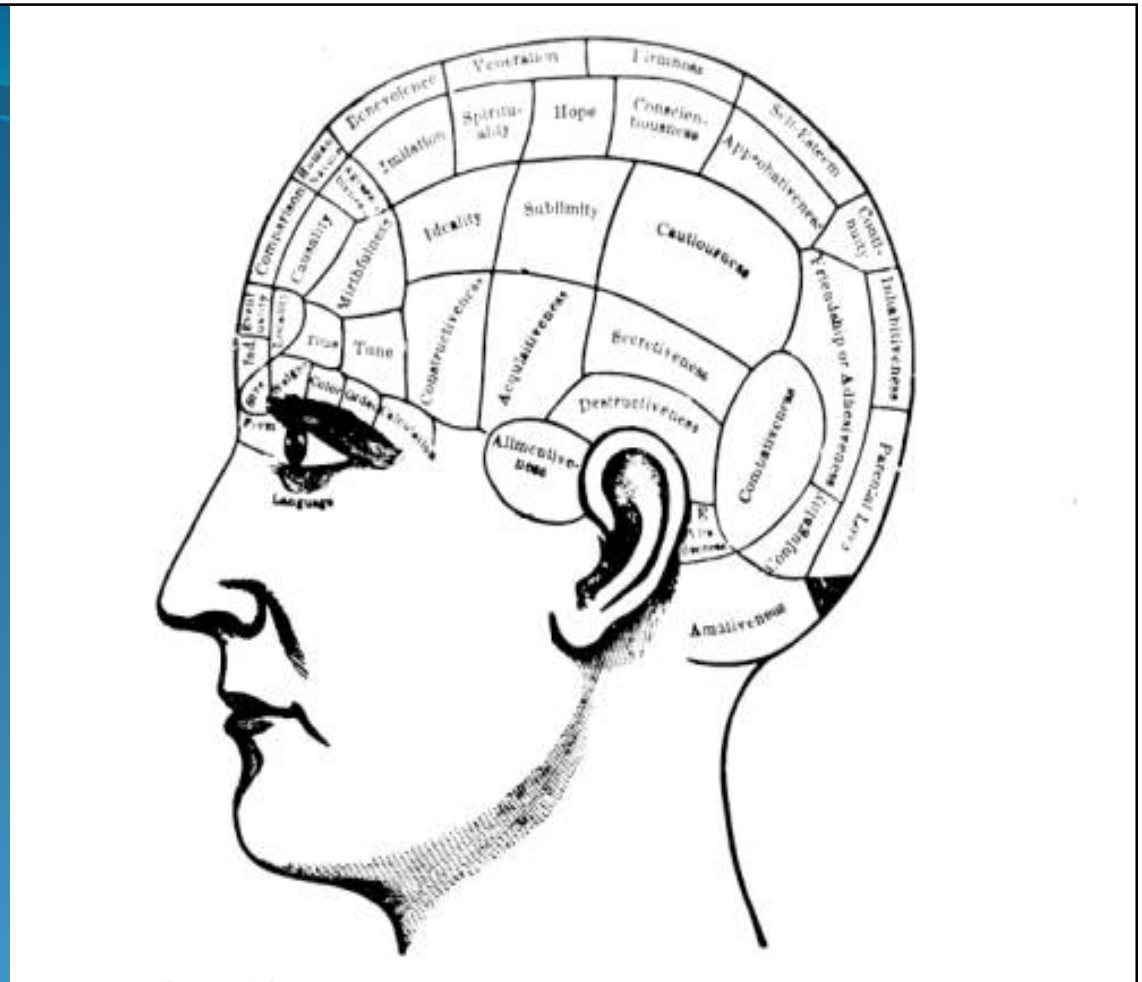 - in the bank,
  - at the dinner, etc.

Pronunciation Guide for All Levels

You Too Can Speak
English
an oral
approach

Cognitive Approach

- Individualized instruction
- Grammar: rule first, practice later
- Pronunciation de-emphasized
- Reading, writing and vocabulary instruction are important

Affective Humanistic Approach

- Pair, small group and individual feelings
- Communication
- Self-realization experience
- Class atmosphere, peer support and interaction

Comprehension based Approach

- Listening comprehension
- Exposed to meaningful input
- Error correction: not necessary
- Authentic materials: audio and video tapes

Communicative Approach

- Communicate in FL
- Group or pair works
- Role play and drama
- Authentic real-life material
- Integrated skills
- **The goal:** Authentic and meaningful communication
- Fluency is important
- Communication: integration of different language skills
- **Learning:** process of creative construction, involves trial & error

Spin-off approaches of CLT

- Same principles of CLT, but instructional practices different

  - The Natural Approach
  - Cooperative Language Teaching
  - Content- Based Language Teaching
  - Task-Based Language Teaching

Choice of approaches

- Assess student needs
- Instructional constraints
- Attitudes and learning styles
- Text types, activities, discourse genres
- Students' language learning purpose and assessment

Definition of language

- A system of communicating with other people using sounds, symbols and words in expressing a meaning, idea or thought.

- Your understanding of what language is and how the learner learns will determine to a large extent,
  - your philosophy of education, and
  - how you teach English:
    - your teaching style,
    - your approach,
    - methods, and
    - classroom technique.