

Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language: A Comparative Study of Traditional and Modern Approaches*

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Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language contributes to the growing body of language instruction. The book supplies excellent resource materials for not only enlightening young language teachers about the worth and effectiveness of numerous teaching methods, but also for leading them to a wise decision in the selection and use of an appropriate method. Asghar bases the book on the assumption that there is no particular teaching method which works effectively for any language learner in all language teaching settings. Asghar's purpose in writing this book is to set forth a comprehensive study of traditional, conventional and modern approaches. Specially, his focus is to spell out points of similarity and dissimilarity that one may come across during the study of fourteen EFL/ESL teaching approaches. Though "it is not the first attempt of this kind" (p. 6) as the author himself agrees, it is significant and unique in the sense that it reviews all the fourteen widely known EFL/ESL approaches objectively under one cover.

The book is divided into three parts. Each of the three parts outlines and discusses the teaching methods in terms of their background, principles, salient features, procedures, strengths, weaknesses, critique and author's own comments.

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Part 1, traditional approaches, overviews four language teaching methods: the grammar-translation method, the direct method, West's new method and the reading approach. Part 2, conventional approaches, explores four EFL/ESL approaches, i.e., the audio-lingual approach, the structural approach, situational language teaching approach, and the cognitive-code-learning approach. Part 3, innovative approaches, provides a comprehensive overview of the six modern approaches: the communicative approach, total physical response, the natural approach, the silent way, suggestopedia, and community language learning. Each part follows the same format systematically.

In the discussion of the background and principles of a teaching method, a list of annotated bibliography concludes each part. Asghar looks into its basis in linguistics and educational theories, its learning hypotheses, its origin and date of origination, its aim, central idea, and significance. In the section dealing with salient features, Asghar addresses a teaching method in terms of its instructional objects, skill emphasis, type of teaching activities and learning strategies, drills and exercises, error correction, evaluation, the role of instructional materials, learner roles and teacher roles. In the section devoted to procedure, the author provides (a) practical suggestions for the teaching method, use of a wide range of activities and techniques; (b) a standard form for the lesson to be taught by a particular method; and (c) a framework for the phases and stages in using a teaching method. In the section which discusses strengths and weaknesses, the author distinctively compares and contrasts the features of the teaching method, spelling out the merits and demerits of each. In the critique section, Asghar bases his review of EFL approaches on observations and remarks of TEFL/TESL experts. However, in "Author's Comments," Asghar states his own observations and opinions objectively without taking any sides. He tends to put forth his reactions and views based on the principal features of methods, sources of history and theory of teaching.

I strongly believe that the book would be an excellent addition to the field of TEFL/TESL methodology both at preservice and inservice teacher training levels. The book is highly recommended for foreign/second language teachers, researchers and students.