CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED

OBJECTIVES After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand what a typical English language lesson "looks" like
- identify transitions from one component to another in a language class
- observe a language class yourself and have some idea of what to look for
- ask questions about the choices that teachers must make, minute by minute, when delivering planned lessons

So you've decided to be a language teacher! Welcome to a profession that will guarantee you more than your fair share of challenges, growth, joy, and fulfillment. Challenges await you at every turn in your professional path because the discipline of language teaching has only begun to solve some of the perplexing questions about how people learn foreign languages successfully. Opportunities for growth abound because, for as long as you continue to teach, you will never run out of new questions, new possibilities, new ways of looking at your students, and new ways of looking at yourself. The joy of teaching lies in witnessing your students' attainment of broader and broader vistas of linguistic proficiency and in experiencing the communal bond that you have been instrumental in creating in your classroom. And, ultimately, few professions can offer the fulfillment of knowing that your seemingly insignificant work really can make a difference in a world in need of communication that transcends national borders and interests.

At present, all those lofty ideals notwithstanding, you may be a little apprehensive about what sort of a teacher you are going to be: What will it be like to be in front of a classroom full of expectant ears and eyes, hanging on my every word and action, ready and waiting to pounce on me if I make a false move? How will I develop the composure and poise that I've seen modeled by "master" teachers? Will I be able to take the sea of theoretical information about second language acquisition that I have studied and by some miracle transform it into practical classroom applications? How do I plan a lesson? What do I do if my lesson plan falls apart? Where do I begin?

Before you ask anymore questions, which might at this stage overwhelm you, sit back for a moment and tell yourself that you can indeed become a teacher who will fully meet the challenges ahead and who will grow in professional expertise, thereby opening the doors of joy and fulfillment. This textbook is designed to help you take that developmental journey one step at a time.

The first step in that journey is to come with me into a language classroom and observe what happens. As the lesson unfolds, take special note of each choice that the teacher makes: choices about how to begin the lesson, which activity will come next, how long to continue an activity, whom to call on, whether to correct a student, and so on. Everything a teacher says and does in the classroom is the result of conscious or subconscious choices among many alternatives. Many of these choices are—or should be—the result of a careful consideration of a host of underlying principles of second language learning and teaching.

A CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

The classroom we are about to enter is in a private language school in Seoul, Korea. Inside the classroom, a course in English as a Second Language (ESL)* is taking place. The 15 students in the course are young adults, most of whom are recent college graduates and now are working in businesses in Seoul. This is an intermediate level class; most of the students "graduated" into the class after completing the beginner's level. The goal of the course is for students to be able to use English in their local context (television, movies, pop culture, Internet) and for international travel. A few might eventually use English in job-related duties.

The course focuses on integrative skills (combining the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing). The main textbook being used is *Top Notch: English for Today's World,* Level 2 (Saslow & Ascher, 2006). At this stage, two weeks into the course, the students are still not completely confident in their speaking ability but they can engage in simple social conversations and make some practical requests. Their listening ability varies but the course material seems to be appropriately pitched at their level. They are quite good readers, having had English in their university studies. Their writing is fairly accurate at the sentence level using basic grammar, but rhetorical factors involved in composing an essay remain a challenge.

The lesson we are about to observe covers Lesson 2 of Unit 2 of *Top Notch,* on the topic of "movies and entertainment." The functional focus of the lesson is to discuss preferences, likes, and dislikes. The formal objectives of the lesson are for students to comprehend and produce ***would rather*** in meaningful sentences and to use a number of terms to categorize types of movies.

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* *ESL* is used in this book in two ways: (a) as a generic acronym to refer to instruction of English to speakers of other languages in any country under any circumstance, and (b) to refer to English as a Second Language taught in countries (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, or India) where English is a major language of commerce and education, a language that students often hear outside the walls of their classroom. Most instances of reference in this book to "ESL" are in the generic sense. *EFL* (English as a Foreign Language) always refers specifically to English taught in countries (such as China, Korea, or Brazil) where English is not a major language of commerce and education. See Chapter 8 for important pedagogical and curricular implications of each type of English language teaching.

The teacher, Ms. Lee, a native of Seoul, has about five years of teaching experience, and she holds a certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from a local university in Seoul. Her English is excellent, partly the result of spending two years in Canada as a high school student while her father was assigned work there for his electronics company. She is confident and poised, and shows a great deal of empathy for her students. They seem to appreciate her warmth.

The lesson is reasonably well planned and executed, and characteristic of current communicative language-teaching methodology. However, it is not necessarily "perfect" (are there ever any perfect lessons?), so what you are about to see may have a few elements that you or others could take issue with. Please remember this as you read on and, if you wish, take note of aspects of the lesson that you might question; then compare these notes with the comments following the lesson description.

We take our seats in the rear of the classroom and observe the following sequence of activities.

1. Ms. Lee (hereafter "T") begins the 50-minute class hour on this Monday evening with some small talk with the students (hereafter "Ss"), commenting on the weather, her own weekend's activity hosting a family friend from Canada, and a movie that several Ss saw (in English) over the weekend.
2. As she engages them in small talk, she marks attendance in her class roster.
3. She then asks the Ss to think of some movies they have seen recently, either in English or subtitled. She asks them *not* to name any movies that have been dubbed (into Korean). Ss volunteer names, somewhat hesitantly at first, but come up with a list that the T puts on the board:

Harry Potter
Pride and Prejudice
March of the Penguins
Mrs. Henderson Presents
Pink Panther
Chicago
Ice Age
Good Night and Good Luck
War of the Worlds
Da Vinci Code

4. At this point the T stops and writes "Categories" on the board and then writes the following movie types, or categories, on the board:

Action
Comedy
Animated
Documentary
Drama
Mystery
Nature
Musical

5. She then asks Ss to volunteer what each word means. One by one, Ss slowly venture "definitions" for *animated, comedy,* and *documentary* with synonyms such as "cartoon, Nemo, Disney" for the first, "funny, comic, makes me laugh" for the second, and "news, history" for the third. They seem hard-pressed to define others. One S says "Tom Cruise" for *action.* Ss eventually fall into silence.
6. Seeing that definitions may be too difficult for Ss to create, the T takes a different tack. She provides her own definitions verbally, and as some Ss nod their heads in apparent understanding, she says, "Okay, now, does everyone understand the meaning of each of these categories?" A few more heads nod, and the T moves on.
7. The T then says, "Now, take out a sheet of paper and write down the names of all the movies that are up on the board, and then with a partner, decide what kind of movie each one is and write the category beside the name of the movie." She quickly pairs up Ss, with one group of three. Ss write the movies down, and proceed to engage in the pair work. The T walks around listening and checking on the pairs.
8. Next, the T asks Ss to report the movie categories. There is a little disagreement among pairs in that some movies are thought to be in two or more categories (*Harry Potter,* for example, was thought to be action, drama, and mystery).
9. The T now says, "I want you to turn to page 18 in your books and listen to a dialogue on my CD player. Just listen this first time." The following dialogue is then presented on the CD:

A: What would you rather see—a comedy or a musical?
B: It doesn't matter to me.
A: Well, what do you think of Madonna?
B: Actually, not much.
A: For real? She's my favorite star.
B: Not mine.
A: Well, that's what makes the world go 'round.

10. Next, T asks Ss to listen again and repeat each line chorally in the pause provided on the CD. This procedure is repeated for a second time.
11. The T then asks Ss to turn to page 19 of their textbook, where examples are given for the grammatical construction *would rather* in both statements and questions:

Statements

I'd rather rent a movie than go to the theater.
He'd rather not see a comedy tonight.

Questions

Would you rather see, *Star Wars* or *Frida?*
Which would they rather see—a comedy or a drama?
Would you like to rent a movie?

12. The T engages in some explanation of the structure, pointing out, for example, that the phrase *would rather* is similar to saying "prefer." She also provides a rough Korean translation of the construction and gives a brief explanation in Korean before reverting back to English. Ss remain attentive but silent.
13. Next, the T says, "Now I want all of you to take your lists of the movies that we discussed (the ones on the board) and make a grid like this."

Movie	**Category**	**Would you rather see it?**
		YES
Harry Potter		
Pride and Prejudice		
March of the Penguins		
Mrs. Henderson Presents		
Pink Panther		
Chicago		
Ice Age		
Good Night & Good Luck		
War of the Worlds		
Da Vinci Code		

14. The T then directs Ss to write in the category or categories of each movie. Next she says, "Now, everyone stand up and move around the room and talk to as many people as you can. Choose two movies each time to compare, and ask them, 'Would you rather see _____ , or _____?' Then, write the name of the person you talk to in the 'yes' box beside the movie they would rather see. Okay? Make sure your partner answers you in a complete sentence! So, your partner must say 'Yes, I'd rather see _____' or something like 'Actually, I don't care.' Does everyone understand?" Ss look a little confused, so T translates the directions into Korean and then models in English as follows:

    Student A: Would you rather see *Harry Potter* or *Chicago?*

    Student B: I'd rather see *Harry Potter.*

    Student A then writes the name of Student B in the box by *Harry Potter.*

    Then Student B asks Student A a similar question and writes the answer down. Then you move on to a new partner.

    But, listen carefully! If you don't have a preference, just answer, "It doesn't matter to me." And in that case pick another pair of movies to compare until your partner gives you a definite preference.

    Okay, do you understand now?

15. Ss nod in agreement, and the T tells them to start their multiple interviews. This exercise lasts for about 15 minutes as Ss quite enthusiastically engage in the task.
16. When the T calls them back together, she tallies the number of students who responded affirmatively to each movie and in an unscientific poll, announces what appears to be their favorite movie. It's a tie between *Harry Potter* and *War of the Worlds*!
17. With the time that's left (about 5 minutes) T asks Ss to complete the exercise on page 19 in which they write responses to six questions or statements, such as "I'd love to see a movie tonight" and "Would you like to see a comedy?" Their responses range from "I'd rather not" and "It doesn't matter to me" to "Actually, I'd rather see an action movie."
18. As time runs out and students gather papers together to exit the classroom, the T tells Ss to complete their written exercise as homework, and to try to see an English movie sometime before the next class (on Wednesday evening).

ANALYZING THE LESSON

You've just observed a relatively effective class hour in which the teacher competently planned a lesson around a textbook lesson, managed most segments of the hour without major problems, and carried out the activities with some warmth and enthusiasm. Easy, right? Well, maybe not. What you have just witnessed is the product of a teacher's experience and intuition grounded in reasonably sound theoretical principles of learning and teaching. For every tiny moment of that classroom hour, certain choices were made, choices that can for the most part be justified by our collective knowledge of second language acquisition and teaching. Think about those choices as you contemplate the numerous pedagogical questions that arise out of each numbered "statement" that follows.

1. Why the small talk (versus just getting straight to the lesson)? What teaching principle justifies such an opening? How long should such chatter continue?
2. Why did the T mark attendance while engaging in the small talk? It apparently didn't interfere with the small talk—how did the T manage to do two things at once?
3. The textbook began with the dialogue (see #9) that this T chose to insert later. Why do you suppose she didn't start with that dialogue? Was her choice a better segue from the initial small talk that began the class? What purpose was served by asking Ss to come up with names of movies themselves at the outset? Why didn't the T just provide a list of her own? And if she simply wants names of movies, why restrict the list to movies in English? What purpose did that serve? She chose to write the names of movies on the board—what purpose did that list serve?
4. Here she initiated the names of the categories. Should she have asked the Ss to create that list? What you don't know is that the textbook referred to "genres" of movies—why did the T not use that same term?
5. Why did the T ask Ss for definitions? Wouldn't it be more efficient for the T to provide them? What purpose was served by forcing them to struggle with definitions? When Ss had some difficulty with defining, they tended to become more silent. Why was that?
6. At this point it was apparent that T felt the task was over Ss' heads—what led her to that determination? Was it a good idea to switch to providing definitions herself at that point? She then asked if everyone understood and seeing some heads nodding affirmatively, she assumed they understood. Is such a question appropriate in this situation? Are you sure the Ss understood? What alternatives might she have employed to carry out that informal assessment?

Before you move on, notice, that each question implies that a choice was exercised by the teacher. Among dozens of possibilities for teaching this lesson on movies, categories, and the ***would rather*** construction, Ms. Lee has chosen, either consciously or subconsciously, a particular set of activities, a particular order, and a particular tone for each. A relatively straightforward lesson is supported by a plethora of principles of learning and teaching. To further complicate matters, some of those principles are disputable. For example, the issue of when to simply give information to Ss (#6) and when to push for "discovery learning" by the Ss is not always clearly dictated by the context.

7. She now sets in motion some pair work for Ss. This exercise did not come from the textbook; it was her own innovation, only distantly resembling one in the textbook. Why didn't she just follow the book here? Were her pair work directions clear? Some teacher guidelines suggest modeling such pair work—why didn't she do so? What do you suppose she was listening for as she walked around the classroom during this pair work?
8. Why did the T have Ss report their results of such a noncontroversial exercise? What purpose did the reporting and processing serve?
9. The T chose at this point to play the opening dialogue for the lesson. Did the background of the first 10–15 minutes of class provide enough context and interest for the Ss? What advantages and disadvantages do professionally recorded audio sound bites offer in a classroom in this context? The dialogue isn't terribly exciting; is that okay for the purposes of this lesson?
10. Choral drilling is a commonly used technique in language teaching. Was it appropriate and useful here? How do you think the T mentally justified its use? Why didn't the drill continue for several more repetitions?
11. This is one of the moments in the lesson that the T turns Ss' focus to form—that is, grammatical structure. Does the textbook segment sufficiently explain the structure?
12. Is the T's explanation justified at this point? Or should Ss just intuitively get a "feel" for the *would rather* structure? And what do you think about providing some explanation, as the T did, in Korean? Why did she choose to do so then, and was the language switch justified? She seemed to be "lecturing" to Ss here. Should she have asked explicitly for some kind of response from the Ss? Or should they have had some more choral or quasi-communicative practice at this point?
13. The grid is an adaptation of a similar one in the textbook, but the T added the feature of using it in face-to-face interviews. Why did she choose to have another communicative activity here instead of following the textbook's suggestion of having Ss listen to some movie reviews on the CD and write in their recommendations?
14. The whole-class mingling activity seems simple enough, but Ss had a little difficulty figuring out the process. Were the T's directions sufficient and clear, once she was able to follow up after the looks of confusion? What could she have done to make this stage of the activity clearer?

15. What is the objective of this activity? It's clear what Ss are being asked to do: frame questions, respond to them, and record the responses. They seemed enthusiastic about the activity—why? Why was an activity with fairly routine grammatical practice met with enthusiasm? Were those 15 minutes put to good purpose?

16. Did the informal tally serve the objectives of the activity or simply offer a modicum of interest?

17. It's possible that this last activity was squeezed into too short a time frame. Was that okay? When a T runs out of time at the end of a lesson, should he or she hurry through an activity like this? Or provide an alternative wrap-up? What purpose did a writing activity (as opposed to the other three skills) serve here?

18. Sometimes these last-second comments are lost in the shuffle of Ss getting ready to leave the classroom. Was some purpose nevertheless accomplished? If they are being asked to see an English movie as "homework," would it help to give them some more advice on what to *do* while seeing the movie?

A final question: As you look back over the lesson you've just observed, do you think the initial objectives were accomplished? Is there anything you think you might have done differently? Remember, you're dropping in on a class that is ongoing, so it may not be possible to completely judge the effectiveness of this lesson without the context of preceding and following lessons.

You've now skimmed through some of the many questions that one could ask about why certain choices were made about how to teach this lesson. Some of the answers are relatively standard, with few disagreements. Other answers would find even the best of teachers arguing the merits and demerits of the teacher's choices. But the answers to all these questions can be found, in one form or another, in the huge stockpile of second language acquisition research and collective experience of language teachers around the world. And many of those answers will appear in the chapters ahead of you in this book.

* * * * *

As you continue this journey, your job is to make the connections between research/theory/principles on the one hand, and classrooms/teaching/practice on the other. By making those connections as you learn to teach, you will perhaps avoid some of the pitfalls of haphazard guesswork and instead engage in teaching that is enlightened by research and theory, or put another way, teaching by principles.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION, AND RESEARCH

[Note: (I) Individual work; (G) group or pair work; (C) whole-class discussion.]

1. (G) A good activity for the beginning of a course on teaching methodology is to ask the members of small groups of three or four to talk about who was the "best" teacher they ever had. In the process, each should specify *why* that teacher was the best. As each group reports back to the whole class, make a chalkboard list of such reasons, which should reveal some attributes for all to emulate. (This activity also serves the purpose of (a) getting students to talk early on and (b) giving students in the class a chance to get to know each other. To that end, group reports could include brief introductions of group members.)
2. (G/C) On page 3, it was noted that teachers are constantly making *choices* in the course of a class hour. Assign to pairs one or two of the numbered items through #18. They should talk about (a) what the teacher chose to do, (b) why she made that choice, and (c) what alternative choices she could have made. Make sure they refer to the second matched set of items in which certain questions were posed, and try to answer the questions. Pairs can then report their conclusions to the whole class. All should then begin to appreciate the complexity of teaching.
3. (I) As soon as possible, arrange to observe an ESL (or EFL) class somewhere near you. At this stage, don't go in with a checklist or agenda. Just try to sit back and get a feel for the dynamics of the classroom. As you observe, jot down any questions that occur to you about why the teacher made certain choices, and discuss them later in a small group or as a whole class.
4. (I/G) On your own or with a partner, find some currently popular textbooks in ESL and spend some time leafing through them without a specific agenda—just noting things that you like and don't like about each. Share those ideas later with the rest of the class.

FOR YOUR FURTHER READING

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

This book (PLLT) *provides a comprehensive survey of issues in second language acquisition as they apply to language teaching. In* PLLT *you will find fuller explanations of the principles that are described in Chapter 4 of the present book* (TBP). *If you have not already read* PLLT, *it is recommended that you read it along with* TBP.

Harmer, J. (2001). ***The practice of English language teaching*** (3rd ed.). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

For a second perspective on language-teaching methodology, you may find it useful to consult Harmer's book. Many of the same topics are covered there, but with different supporting details and information.

Nunan, D. (Ed.). (2003). ***Practical English language teaching.*** New York: McGraw-Hill Contemporary.

Another source of summary information, this anthology features separate articles by a number of luminaries in the field. Kathleen Bailey, Neil Anderson, John Murphy, Michael McCarthy, Donna Brinton, Kathleen Graves, Mary Ann Christison, and David Nunan himself offer state-of-the-art summaries of subfields such as the four skills, form-focused instruction, content-based instruction, and computer-assisted language learning.

Richards, J. (Ed.). (1998). ***Teaching in action: Case studies from second language classrooms.*** Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

This book offers 76 classroom scenarios: techniques, tasks, and innovative procedures (written by teachers around the world) of actual classes of various levels and skill areas. Each description is followed by a very brief commentary from an expert in the field. These scenarios provide glimpses of actual classroom activity with comments on why certain things worked or didn't work, thereby offering a bridge between theory and practice.

CHAPTER 2

A "METHODICAL" HISTORY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

OBJECTIVES After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- develop a historical understanding of language-teaching methodology
- explain differences between approaches and methods
- understand how teaching methods borrow from and contribute to theoretical trends in linguistics, psychology, education, and other fields
- summarize major characteristics of a number of methods
- appreciate your need as a teacher to be cautiously eclectic in deriving insights about your classroom practices

The first step toward developing a principled approach to language teaching will be to turn back the clock about a century to learn from the historical cycles and trends that have brought us to the present day. After all, it is difficult to completely analyze the class session you just observed (Chapter 1) without the backdrop of history. In this chapter we focus on methods as the identifying characteristics of a century of "modern" language-teaching efforts. What do we mean by the term "method" by which we tend to characterize that history? How do methods reflect various trends of disciplinary thought? How does current research on language learning and teaching help us to distinguish, in our history, between passing fads and "the good stuff"? These are some of the questions we will address in this chapter.

In the next chapter, this historical overview culminates in a close look at the current state of the art in language teaching. Above all, you will come to see how our profession is now more aptly characterized by a relatively unified, comprehensive "approach" rather than by competing, restricted methods. That general approach will be described in detail, along with some of the current professional jargon associated with it.

As you read on, you will encounter references to concepts, constructs, issues, and models that are normally covered in a course in second language acquisition (SLA). I am assuming that you have already taken or are currently taking such a course. If not, may I recommend that you consult my *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Fifth Edition (Brown, 2007), or a book like Mitchell and Myles's (2004) *Second Language Learning Theories* that summarizes current topics and issues in SLA. Throughout this book I will refer to specific chapters of my *Principles* book (*PLLT*) for background review or reading, should you need it.

APPROACH, METHOD, AND TECHNIQUE

For the century spanning the mid-1880s to the mid-1980s, the language-teaching profession may be aptly characterized by a series of methods that rose and declined in popularity. It appears that some practitioners in this time period hoped to define the ultimate method, one that would be generalizable across widely varying audiences, contexts, and languages. Historical accounts of the profession tend to describe a succession of methods, each of which was more or less discarded as a new method took its place (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). We will turn to that "methodical" history of language teaching in a moment, but first, we should try to understand what we mean by **method**.

What is a method? About four decades ago Edward Anthony (1963) gave us a definition that has admirably withstood the test of time. His concept of "method" was the second of three hierarchical elements, namely approach, method, and technique. An **approach**, according to Anthony, was a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching. **Method** was described as an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based upon a selected approach. **Techniques** were the specific activities manifested in the classroom that were consistent with a method and therefore were in harmony with an approach as well.

To this day, for better or worse, Anthony's terms are still in common use among language teachers. For example, at the approach level, a teacher may affirm the ultimate importance of learning in a relaxed state of mental awareness just above the threshold of consciousness. The method that follows might resemble, say, Suggestopedia (a description follows in this chapter). Techniques could include playing baroque music while reading a passage in the foreign language, getting students to sit in a yoga position while listening to a list of words, or having learners adopt a new name in the classroom and role-play that new person.

A couple of decades later, Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers (1982) proposed a reformulation of the concept of "method." Anthony's approach, method, and technique were renamed, respectively, **approach**, **design**, and **procedure**, with a superordinate term to describe this three-step process, now called "method." A method, according to Richards and Rodgers, was "an umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice"(1982, p. 154). An approach defines assumptions, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and language learning. Designs specify the relationship of those theories to classroom materials and activities. Procedures are the techniques and practices that are derived from one's approach and design.

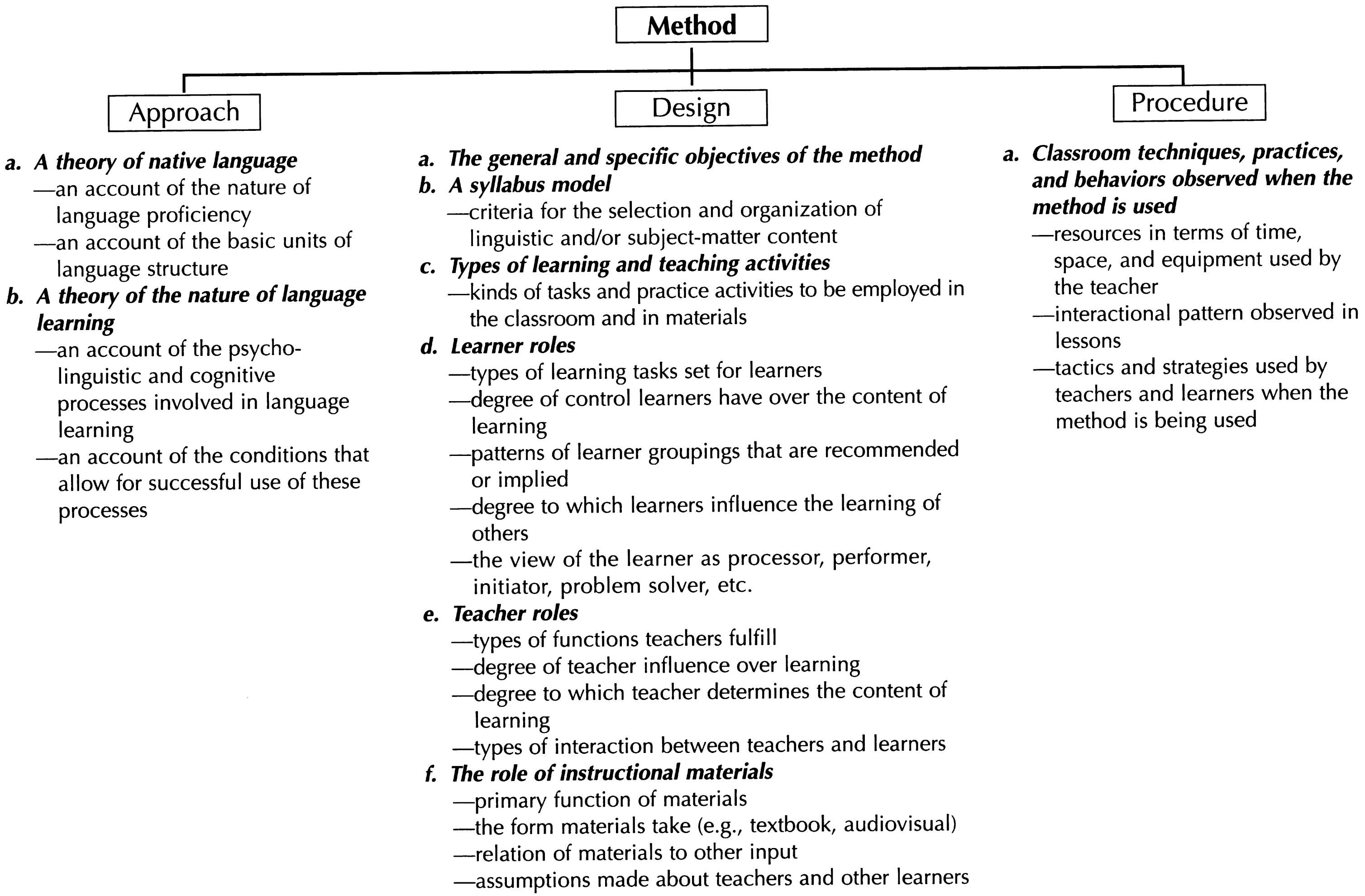
Through their reformulation, Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001) made two principal contributions to our understanding of the concept of method:

1. They specified the necessary elements of language-teaching designs that had heretofore been left somewhat vague. Their schematic representation of method (see Figure 2.1) described six important features of designs: objectives, syllabus (criteria for selection and organization of linguistic and subject-matter content), activities, learner roles, teacher roles, and the role of instructional materials. The latter three features have occupied a significant proportion of our collective attention in the profession for the last decade or so. Already in this book you may have noted how, for example, learner roles (styles, individual preferences for group or individual learning, student input in determining curricular content, etc.) are important considerations in your teaching.
2. Richards and Rodgers nudged us into relinquishing the notion that separate, definable, discrete methods are the essential building blocks of methodology. By helping us to think in terms of an approach that undergirds our language designs (curricula), which are realized by various procedures (techniques), we could see that method, as the term was historically understood over the last century, is a concept that is too restrictive, too preprogrammed, and too "prepackaged." Many of the methods that form our historical milestones make the oversimplified assumption that what teachers "do" in the classroom can be conventionalized into a set of procedures that fit all contexts. We are now all too aware that such is clearly not the case.

Richards and Rodgers's reformulation of the concept of method was soundly conceived. However, their attempt to give new meaning to an old term did not catch on in the pedagogical literature. What they wanted us to call "method" is more comfortably referred to, I think, as "methodology" in order to avoid confusion with what we will no doubt always think of as those separate entities (like the Audiolingual Method or Suggestopedia) that are no longer at the center of our teaching philosophy.

Another terminological problem lies in the use of the term **design**; instead, we more comfortably refer to **curriculum** or **syllabus** when we refer to design features of a language program.

What are we left with in this lexicographic confusion? It's interesting that the terminology of the pedagogical literature in the field appears to be more in line with Anthony's original terms, but with some important additions and refinements. Following is a set of definitions that as closely as possible reflect what appears to be a consensus on current usage (Harmer, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2006b; Richards & Renandya, 2002).



Method

Approach

- ***a. A theory of native language***
  - —an account of the nature of language proficiency
  - —an account of the basic units of language structure
- ***b. A theory of the nature of language learning***
  - —an account of the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning
  - —an account of the conditions that allow for successful use of these processes

Design

- ***a. The general and specific objectives of the method***
- ***b. A syllabus model***
  - —criteria for the selection and organization of linguistic and/or subject-matter content
- ***c. Types of learning and teaching activities***
  - —kinds of tasks and practice activities to be employed in the classroom and in materials
- ***d. Learner roles***
  - —types of learning tasks set for learners
  - —degree of control learners have over the content of learning
  - —patterns of learner groupings that are recommended or implied
  - —degree to which learners influence the learning of others
  - —the view of the learner as processor, performer, initiator, problem solver, etc.
- ***e. Teacher roles***
  - —types of functions teachers fulfill
  - —degree of teacher influence over learning
  - —degree to which teacher determines the content of learning
  - —types of interaction between teachers and learners
- ***f. The role of instructional materials***
  - —primary function of materials
  - —the form materials take (e.g., textbook, audiovisual)
  - —relation of materials to other input
  - —assumptions made about teachers and other learners

Procedure

- ***a. Classroom techniques, practices, and behaviors observed when the method is used***
  - —resources in terms of time, space, and equipment used by the teacher
  - —interactional pattern observed in lessons
  - —tactics and strategies used by teachers and learners when the method is being used

Figure 2.1 Components of method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 33)

Methodology: Pedagogical practices in general (including theoretical underpinnings and related research). Whatever considerations are involved in "how to teach" are methodological.

Approach: Theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings.

Method: A generalized set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic objectives. Methods tend to be concerned primarily with teacher and student roles and behaviors and secondarily with such features as linguistic and subject-matter objectives, sequencing, and materials. They are sometimes—but not always—thought of as being broadly applicable to a variety of audiences in a variety of contexts.

Curriculum/syllabus: Specifications—or in Richards and Rodgers's terminology, "designs"—for carrying out a particular language program. Features include a primary concern with the specification of linguistic and subject-matter objectives, sequencing, and materials to meet the needs of a designated group of learners in a defined context. (The term "syllabus" is used more customarily in the United Kingdom to refer to what is commonly called a "curriculum" in the United States.)

Technique (also commonly referred to by other terms*): Any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives.

CHANGING WINDS AND SHIFTING SANDS

A glance through the past century or so of language teaching will give an interesting picture of how varied the interpretations have been of the best way to teach a foreign language. As disciplinary schools of thought—psychology, linguistics, and education, for example—have come and gone, so have language-teaching methods waxed and waned in popularity. Teaching methods, as "approaches in action," are of course the practical application of theoretical findings and positions. In a field such as ours that is relatively young, it should come as no surprise to discover a wide

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*There is currently quite an intermingling of such terms as "technique," "task," "procedure," "activity," and "exercise." They are often used in somewhat free variation across the profession. Of these terms, *task* has received the most concerted attention, viewed by such scholars as Nunan (2004) and Ellis (2003) as incorporating specific communicative and pedagogical principles. Tasks, according to specialists in task-based instruction, should be thought of as a special kind of technique and, in fact, may actually include more than one technique. See Chapter 3 for a more thorough explanation.

variety of these applications over the last hundred years, some in total philosophical opposition to others.

Albert Marckwardt (1972, p. 5) saw these "changing winds and shifting sands" as a cyclical pattern in which a new method emerged about every quarter of a century. Each new method broke from the old but took with it some of the positive aspects of the previous practices. A good example of this cyclical nature of methods is found in the "revolutionary" Audiolingual Method (ALM) (a description follows) of the mid-twentieth century. The ALM borrowed tenets from its predecessor the Direct Method by almost half a century while breaking away entirely from the Grammar Translation Method. Within a short time, however, ALM critics were advocating more attention to thinking, to cognition, and to rule learning, which to some smacked of a return to Grammar Translation!

What follows is a sketch of the changing winds and shifting sands of language teaching over the years.

THE GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD

A historical sketch of the last hundred years of language teaching must be set in the context of a prevailing, customary language-teaching "tradition." For centuries, there were few if any theoretical foundations of language learning upon which to base teaching methodology. In the Western world, "foreign" language learning in schools was synonymous with the learning of Latin or Greek. Latin, thought to promote intellectuality through "mental gymnastics," was until relatively recently held to be indispensable to an adequate higher education. Latin was taught by means of what has been called the **Classical Method:** focus on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations, translations of texts, written exercises.

As other languages began to be taught in educational institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Classical Method was adopted as the chief means for teaching foreign languages. Little thought was given to teaching someone how to speak the language; after all, languages were not being taught primarily to learn oral/aural communication, but to learn for the sake of being "scholarly" or, in some instances, for gaining a reading proficiency in a foreign language. Since there was little if any theoretical research on second language acquisition in general or on the acquisition of reading proficiency, foreign languages were taught as any other skill was taught.

In the nineteenth century the Classical Method came to be known as the **Grammar Translation Method**. There was little to distinguish Grammar Translation from what had gone on in foreign language classrooms for centuries beyond a focus on grammatical rules as the basis for translating from the second to the native language. Remarkably, the Grammar Translation Method withstood attempts at the turn of the twentieth century to "reform" language-teaching methodology (see Gouin's Series Method and the Direct Method, which follow), and to this day it is practiced in too many educational contexts. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979, p. 3) listed the major characteristics of Grammar Translation:

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
7. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

It's ironic that this method has until very recently been so stalwart among many competing models. It does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language. It is "remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 6).

On the other hand, one can understand why Grammar Translation remains so popular. It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations, and rote exercises. And it is sometimes successful in leading a student toward a reading knowledge of a second language. But, as Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 7) pointed out, "it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory." As you continue to examine language-teaching methodology in this book, I think you will understand more fully the "theorylessness" of the Grammar Translation Method.

GOUIN AND THE SERIES METHOD

The history of "modern" foreign language teaching may be said to have begun in the late 1800s with François Gouin, a French teacher of Latin with remarkable insights. History doesn't normally credit Gouin as a founder of language-teaching methodology because, at the time, his influence was overshadowed by that of Maximillian Berlitz, the popular German founder of the Direct Method.

Some attention to Gouin's unusually perceptive observations about language teaching helps us to set the stage for the development of language-teaching methods for the century following the publication of his book, *The Art of Learning and Studying Languages,* in 1880.

Gouin had to go through a painful set of experiences to derive his insights. Having decided in midlife to learn German, he took up residency in Hamburg for one year. But rather than attempting to converse with the natives, he engaged in a rather bizarre sequence of attempts to "master" the language. Upon arrival in Hamburg, he felt he should *memorize* a German grammar book and a table of the 248 irregular German verbs! He did this in a matter of only 10 days, and hurried to "the academy" (the university) to test his new knowledge. "But alas!" he wrote, "I could not understand a single word, not a single word!" (Gouin, 1880, p. 11). Gouin was undaunted. He returned to the isolation of his room, this time to memorize the German roots and to rememorize the grammar book and irregular verbs. Again he emerged with expectations of success. "But alas . . ." the result was the same as before. In the course of the year in Germany, Gouin memorized books, translated Goethe and Schiller, and even memorized 30,000 words in a German dictionary, all in the isolation of his room, only to be crushed by his failure to understand German afterward. Only once did he try to "make conversation" as a method, but this caused people to laugh at him, and he was too embarrassed to continue that method. At the end of the year Gouin, having reduced the Classical Method to absurdity, was forced to return home, a failure.

But there was a happy ending. After returning home, Gouin discovered that his three-year-old nephew had, during that year, gone through the wonderful stage of child language acquisition in which he went from saying virtually nothing at all to becoming a veritable chatterbox of French. How was it that this little child succeeded so easily, in a first language, in a task that Gouin, in a second language, had found impossible? The child must hold the secret to learning a language! So Gouin spent a great deal of time observing his nephew and other children and came to the following conclusions: Language learning is primarily a matter of transforming perceptions into conceptions. Children use language to represent their conceptions. Language is a means of thinking, of representing the world to oneself (see *PLLT,* Chapter 2). These insights, remember, were formed by a language teacher more than a century ago!

So Gouin set about devising a teaching method based on these insights. And thus the **Series Method** was created, a method that taught learners *directly* (without translation) and conceptually (without grammatical rules and explanations) a "series" of connected sentences that are easy to perceive. The first lesson of a foreign language would thus teach the following series of 15 sentences:

> I walk toward the door. I draw near to the door. I draw nearer to the door. I get to the door. I stop at the door.

(continued)

> I stretch out my arm. I take hold of the handle. I turn the handle. I open the door. I pull the door.
>
> The door moves. The door turns on its hinges. The door turns and turns. I open the door wide. I let go of the handle.

The 15 sentences have an unconventionally large number of grammatical properties, vocabulary items, word orders, and complexity. This is no simple *Voici la table* lesson! Yet Gouin was successful with such lessons because the language was so easily understood, stored, recalled, and related to reality. Yet he was a man unfortunately ahead of his time, and his insights were largely lost in the shuffle of Berlitz's popular Direct Method. But as we look back now over more than a century of language-teaching history, we can appreciate the insights of this most unusual language teacher.

THE DIRECT METHOD

The "naturalistic"—simulating the "natural" way in which children learn first languages—approaches of Gouin and a few of his contemporaries did not take hold immediately. A generation later, applied linguistics finally established the credibility of such approaches. Thus it was that at the turn of the century, the **Direct Method** became quite widely known and practiced.

The basic premise of the Direct Method was similar to that of Gouin's Series Method, namely, that second language learning should be more like first language learning—lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 12) summarized the principles of the Direct Method:

1. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
2. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
3. Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully traded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
4. Grammar was taught inductively.
5. New teaching points were taught through modeling and practice.
6. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.
7. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.
8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.