

Table 2.1. Approaches and methods—an overview (adapted from Nunan 1989)

	Theory of language	Theory of learning	Objectives	Syllabus	Activity types	Learner roles	Teacher roles	Roles of materials
Audiolingual	Language is a system of rule-governed structures hierarchically arranged.	Habit formation; skills are learned more effectively if oral precedes written; analogy, not analysis.	Control of structures of sound, form, and order, mastery over symbols of the language; goal: native-speaker mastery.	Graded syllabus of phonology, morphology, and syntax. Contrastive analysis.	Dialogues and drills, repetition and memorization, pattern practice.	Organisms that can be directed by skilled training techniques to produce correct responses.	Central and active teacher-dominated method. Provides model, controls direction and pace.	Primarily teacher-oriented. Tapes and visuals, language lab often used.
Total Physical Response	Basically a structuralist, grammar-based view of language.	L2 learning is the same as L1 learning; comprehension before production, is “imprinted” through carrying out commands (right-brain functioning); reduction of stress.	Teach oral proficiency to produce learners who can communicate uninhibitedly and intelligibly with native speakers.	Sentence-based syllabus with grammatical and lexical criteria being primary, but focus on meaning, not form.	Imperative drills to elicit physical actions.	Listener and performer, little influence over the content of learning.	Active and direct role; “the director of a stage play” with students as actors.	No basic text; materials and media have an important role later. Initially voice, action, and gestures are sufficient.
The Silent Way	Each language is composed of elements that give it a unique rhythm and spirit. Functional vocabulary and core structure are key to the spirit of the language.	Processes of learning a second language are fundamentally different from L1 learning. L2 learning is an intellectual, cognitive process. Surrender to the music of the language, silent awareness then active trial.	Near-native fluency, correct pronunciation, basic practical knowledge of the grammar of the L2. Learner learns <i>how</i> to learn a language.	Basically structural lessons planned around grammatical items and related vocabulary. Items are introduced according to their grammatical complexity.	Learner responses to commands, questions, and visual cues. Activities encourage and shape oral responses without grammatical explanation or modeling by teacher.	Learning is a process of personal growth. Learners are responsible for their own learning and must develop independence, autonomy, and responsibility.	Teachers must (a) teach (b) test (c) get out of the way. Remain impassive. Resist temptation to model, remodel, assist, direct, exhort.	Unique materials: colored rods, color-coded pronunciation and vocabulary charts.
Community Language Learning	Language is more than a system for communication. It involves whole person, culture, educational, developmental communicative processes.	Learning involves the whole person. It is a social process of growth from childlike dependence to self-direction and independence.	No specific objectives. Near-native mastery is the goal.	No set syllabus. Course progression is topic-based; learners provide the topics. Syllabus emerges from learners’ intention and the teacher’s reformulations.	Combination of innovative and conventional. Translation, group work, recording, transcription, reflection and observation, listening, free conversation.	Learners are members of a community. Learning is not viewed as an individual accomplishment, but something that is achieved collaboratively.	Counseling/parental analogy. Teacher provides a safe environment in which students can learn and grow.	No textbook, which would inhibit growth. Materials are developed as course progresses.
The Natural Approach	The essence of language is meaning. Vocabulary, not grammar, is the heart of language.	There are two ways of L2 language development: “acquisition”—a natural subconscious process, and “learning”—a conscious process. Learning cannot lead to acquisition.	Designed to give beginners and intermediate learners basic communicative skills. Four broad areas; basic personal communicative skills (oral/written); academic learning skills (oral/written).	Based on selection of communicative activities and topics derived from learner needs.	Activities allowing comprehensible input, about things in the here-and-now. Focus on meaning, not form.	Should not try to learn language in the usual sense, but should try to lose themselves in activities involving meaningful communication.	The teacher is the primary source of comprehensible input. Must create positive low-anxiety climate. Must choose and orchestrate a rich mixture of classroom activities.	Materials come from realia rather than textbooks. Primary aim is to promote comprehension and communication.
Suggestopedia	Rather conventional, although memorization of whole meaningful texts is recommended.	Learning occurs through suggestion, when learners are in a deeply relaxed state. Baroque music is used to induce this state.	To deliver advanced conversational competence quickly. Learners are required to master prodigious lists of vocabulary pairs, although the goal is understanding, not memorization.	Ten unit courses consisting of 1,200-word dialogues graded by vocabulary and grammar.	Initiatives, question and answer, role-play, listening exercises under deep relaxation.	Must maintain a passive state and allow the materials to work on them (rather than vice versa).	To create situations in which the learner is most suggestible and present material in a way most likely to encourage positive reception and retention. Must exude authority and confidence.	Consists of texts, tapes, classroom fixtures, and music. Texts should have force, literary quality, and interesting characters.
Communicative Language Teaching	Language is a system for the expression of meaning; primary function—interaction and communication.	Activities involving real communication; carrying out meaningful tasks; and using language which is meaningful to the learner promote learning.	Objectives will reflect the needs of the learner; they will include functional skills as well as linguistic objectives.	Will include some/all of the following: structures, functions, notions, themes, tasks. Ordering will be guided by learner needs.	Engage learners in communication, involve processes such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction.	Learner as negotiator, interactor, giving as well as taking.	Facilitator of the communication process, participants’ tasks, and texts; needs analyst, counselor, process manager.	Primary role in promoting communicative language use; task-based materials; authentic.