



Deseret Language and Linguistic Society Symposium

Volume 6 | Issue 1

Article 12

3-28-1980

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Martell, Clifford W. (1980) "Foreign Language Teacher Training Currently Used at the Missionary Training Center," *Deseret Language and Linguistic Society Symposium*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 1 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/dlls/vol6/iss1/12>

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING
CURRENTLY USED AT THE MISSIONARY TRAINING CENTER

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Language methodology at the Missionary Training Center is based on a notional-to-functional approach. This type of methodology incorporates two predominant approaches, a "grammatical" approach and a practical-usage or functional approach. The grammatical approach focuses upon basic principles of grammar in an effort to aid the students' understanding; or in other words, build a cognitive perception of the language principle being taught. The other approach is the practical-usage approach, or a design that tends towards communicative competence. This line of instruction lifts students beyond memorization of principles and single phrases or words to a generative skill in the language whereby they are able to generate syntactically sound language by themselves.

To facilitate the teacher's understanding and comprehension of the relationship between the conceptual and the communicative approaches, the teacher proceeds through the entire scale of language learning strategies, starting from individual vocabulary words, to cognitive perception, to pattern practice, and finally competence or language generative ability. (Please note the chart at the end of this paper.)

In order to demonstrate this methodology, Thai, an uncommon foreign language, has been selected as the model, using the conceptual and communicative principles. The following chart would appear in the textbook or would be rewritten on the chalkboard:

<u>S</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>O</u>
nîi - this	khǎu	tó? - table
nàn - that	"be"	paägkaa - pen
noòn - that over there		dinsǎy - pencil ?aray - what?

The teacher trainer begins by teaching vocabulary, following the suggested MTC methodology for vocabulary instruction. This consists of beginning with the first word listed on the board, *nîi* and giving a pronunciation model for the students to repeat until pronunciation is mastered. The teacher then gives a cue (a translation of the word being drilled--*this* in this example) or a non-verbal or other type of cue, and has the students continue repetition of the word being learned. As they repeat the new word, the teacher may erase it from the board. Each new

word is introduced by following this procedure. As progression through the vocabulary list is made, the teacher will call randomly for all previously introduced words.

After all of the words have been introduced and drilled by this process, the students are given a limited amount of time to study the vocabulary words individually, usually no more than two to three minutes, depending upon the length of the vocabulary list. Next, the teacher instructs the students to drill the vocabulary words with the person sitting next to him. This quizzing continues until all students have been able to quiz and to be quizzed. As reinforcement, the teacher may then again drill the words calling for group response.

The conclusion of the vocabulary drill is a mastery check, wherein the teacher instructs the students to close their books (when applicable) and erases the vocabulary drill from the chalkboard. He then gives an English word, pauses long enough to allow all students adequate time to formulate an answer, and then selects a student to respond. At this point, the teacher does not correct pronunciation nor does he ask for choral response. Instead, he moves through the entire list checking the students' recall and pronunciation. After the whole class has been checked, the teacher will go back to correct pronunciation or assist in other areas where the students may need help. Although no communicative competence is achieved at this point, the vocabulary words will play a significant role in the students' gaining competence in the grammar principle to be taught, shifting the words from short-term to long-term memory as fluency develops.

The students are ready for introduction to the grammar principle(s) to be learned. MTC methodology encourages the teacher to explain the grammar principle briefly and concisely in his own words, based on the information from the textbook. This is usually done in English at the first of the students MTC stay; but as listening comprehension increases, teachers are encouraged to use more of the language being learned. Teachers provide examples that illustrate the principle and are asked not to intellectualize about the language nor address exceptions to the principle being taught at this point.

A conceptual mastery check is then administered which allows the students to explain the principles in his own words to the person sitting next to him, giving examples in the target language. The conceptual mastery check is then concluded by having one or two students explain the principles to the class in their own words using their own examples.

Example

<u>S</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>O</u>
nîi this	khǎw is	tó? x table
nân that		paàgkaa x pen
nôon that over there		dinsǎw x pencil ?aray what?

Teacher: The basic sentence structure in Thai is similar to that of English, that is, subject-verb-object. In English we would say, "This is a table." In Thai, we would say, nîi khǎw tó? Or, "That is a pen," would be nân khǎw paàgkaa. Notice there are no articles such as "a", or "the" in Thai. This subject-verb-object pattern also applies to asking questions using the interrogative "what". For example, "What is this?" (or "This is what?" as the Thai would say) nîi khǎw ?aray. Now turn to the person sitting next to you and explain this principle to him or her.

Then one or two of the students would be called upon to explain the principles to the class. Having mastered the conceptual part of the language, the students are then ready to move into the practice and application part of learning. The teacher advances to the imitative part of instruction where through substitution and other pattern drills, students repeat after the teacher in order to gain practice at pronunciation and sentence formation. This is the beginning of the process to develop fluency among the students.

Example

Teacher: nîi khǎw paàgkaa.
 Class: nîi khǎw paàgkaa.
 Teacher: nân.
 Class: nân khǎw paàgkaa.
 Teacher: nôon.
 Class: nôon khǎw paàgkaa.
 Etc.

From the substitution or pattern drills, the learning progresses to the manipulation stage, where such drills as translation, question and answer, and controlled conversation are practiced. In teaching these drills, teachers are asked to incorporate the following guidelines: (1) The teacher provides a cue, (2) pauses long enough for all students to formulate an answer, and (3) selects an individual to respond. The teacher then repeats the cue and has the class respond chorally, after which he or she provides a new cue.

Examples

Translation Drill

Teacher: This is a pen. (Pause) Elder Long. (Teacher speaks English.)
 Elder Long: *nii khúú páakaa.*
 Teacher: *nii khúú paagkaa.*
 Class: *nii khúú paagkaa.*

Question and Answer Drill

Teacher: *nii khúú ?aray* (Pause) Elder Brown.
 Elder Brown: *nán khúú tó?*
 Teacher: *nán khúú tó?* (optional)
 Class: *nán khúú tó?*
 Teacher: *nii khúú ?aray* (Pause) Elder Long.
 Elder Long: *nii khúú dins*
 Teacher: *nii khúú dins* (optional)
 Class: *nii khúú dins*
 Etc.

Controlled Conversation

Teacher: Ask Elder Brown what this is. (Pause) Elder Smith.
 (This drill may be in the language or in English.)
 Elder Smith: *nii khúú ?aray.*
 Elder Brown: *nán khúú dins*
 Teacher: non-verbal or other cue
 Class: *nii khúú ?aray.*
 Class: *nán khúú dins*
 Teacher: Ask Elder Long what that is. (Pause) Elder Jones.
 Elder Jones: *nán khúú ?aray.*
 Elder Long: *nán khúú tó?*
 Teacher: non-verbal or other cue
 Class: *nán khúú ?aray*
 Class: *nán khúú tó?*

After lengthly drilling in the manipulative stage, students should be ready for some generative activities. Three types of generative activities which MTC teachers are encouraged to experiment with are games, role-plays, and open-ended conversation. Teachers are encouraged to be creative and produce participatory and exciting activities. Games should apply the grammar principle being learned, include every student, and should be fun and intense. Role-plays should be applicable to the principles being learned, and should continue until each student has had a chance to participate. The open-ended conversation activities may consist of applying the principle just learned to an appropriate topic of conversation in pairs, to small groups, to the whole group. The teacher should monitor the group or groups without providing help unless the students request it.

Example

Teacher: khǎ̃ hây raw thǎ̃am lǎ̃? tǎ̃b khamthǎ̃am dooy chay lǎ̃g thi
raw rian mǎ̃a kii nii -- thǎ̃am kiǎ̃w khǎ̃ng thi yuú nay hǎ̃ng. (Let's
pair off now and have you ask and answer questions about various
items in the room.)

Student A: nǎ̃n khǎ̃ng ?aray

Student B: nǎ̃n khǎ̃ng tó?

Student A: nǎ̃n khǎ̃ng ?aray

Student B: nii khǎ̃ng pǎ̃agkaa

Student A: nii khǎ̃ng ?aray

Student B: nii khǎ̃ng dinsǎ̃

After the MTC teachers proceed through the language scale in a language uncommon to them, they are assigned to prepare a particular lesson in the target language that they will be teaching and fit it to the teaching scale. The two subsequent days are structured to have the new language teachers apply the scale to their specific languages.

This methodology is obviously an eclectic approach to language teaching with a heavy emphasis in communicative competency. The pattern practice drills continue to play a vital role in establishing basic language skills. The ultimate goal is to train the teachers so that they might assist the missionaries in developing viable communication skills in the foreign language areas.

