Lecture 3 MFL

**Methods of Foreign Language Teaching and Its Relation to Other Sciences**

1. Relations of Foreign Language Method to Pedagogy.
2. Psychological prerequisites for foreign language teaching.
3. Methods of foreign language teaching is closely related to Physiology.
4. Relations of Methods of Foreign Language Teaching to Linguistics.

Methods of foreign language teaching are closely related (connected) to other sciences such as pedagogy, psychology, physiology, linguistics, and some others.

A) Relations of Foreign Language Method to Pedagogy.

Pedagogy is a science connected with the teaching and education of the younger generation. Since methods also deal with the problems of teaching and education, it is most closely related to pedagogy. To study foreign language teaching one must know pedagogy. One branch of pedagogy is called didactics. Didactics studies general ways of teaching in schools. Methods as compared to didactics, study the specific ways of teaching a definite subject. Thus it may be considered special didactics. Pedagogy is the science or general theory, of the bringing up and teaching of children and the young, in other terms, the science of education in the narrower sense and instruction or of education in the wider sense. It consists, accordingly, of two main divisions: educational pedagogy and instructional pedagogy, of which the latter is called didactics, otherwise method or methods.

In foreign language teaching, as well as in teaching of mathematics, history, and other subjects taught in school, general principles of didactics are applied and, in their tern, influence and enrich didactics. For example, the so-called “principle of visualization” was first introduced in teaching foreign languages. Now it has become one of the fundamental principles of didactics and is used in teaching all school subjects without exception.

Programmed instruction was first applied to teaching mathematics. Now through didactics it is used in teaching many subjects, including foreign languages.

It is the task of the specialist in methods of teaching foreign languages not only to seek for the best methods of imparting to the pupils knowledge and skills, and of training, them in good habits, but also to look out for the best means of educating the pupils through the subject with whose teaching he is concerned.

Pedagogy is an applied science. Both divisions of it, in all their parts, in particular, foreign language method, are applied psychology. In foreign language teaching the teacher forms and develops in pupils’ pronunciation habits, lexical habits and other habits. Since “habits” is the result of the repeated action in the same line pupils can acquire habits by constant steady drill. Therefore, the teacher should remember when organizing pupils learning that drill should be constant and accurate. This implies correct copy, clearly presented and easy for imitation and reproduction, given under motivating conditions which favors repetitions which will lead to skill. Since skill is the ability to do something well and in language learning skills are pupils ability to use the target language for communicative needs, the teacher should form and develop such language skills as listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing.

b) Psychological prerequisites for foreign language teaching.

Teaching a foreign language means first and foremost the formation and development of pupils’ habits and skills in hearing, speaking, reading and writing. We cannot expect to develop such habits and skills of our pupils effectively if we do not know and take into account the psychology of habits and skills, the ways of forming them, the influence of formerly acquired habits on the formation of new ones and many other necessary factors that psychology can supply us with it. If the teacher wants his pupils to speak English he must use all the opportunities he has to make them hear and speak. Furthermore, to master a second language is to acquire another code, another way of receiving and transmitting information. To create this new code in the most effective way one must take into consideration certain psychological factors. One cannot develop language skills (listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing) of our pupils effectively if we do not know and take into account the psychology of habits and skills, the ways of forming them, the influence of formerly acquired habits on the formation of new ones, and many other necessary factors that psychology can supply us with.

Since bringing up and teaching children are particular modes of combined physical and mental activity, it is clear that psychological principles must largely contribute to the theoretical foundation of pedagogy in general and of methods of teaching in particular.

Pedagogy and psychology may be said to overlap each other, or like two interesting circles, to have a common area, which do main bears the name of “educational psychology".

This relationship may be represented graphically as follows: Pedagogy - Educational Pedagogy - Psychology.

At present we have much material in the field of psychology which can be applied to teaching a foreign language. For example, N.I. Zinkin a prominent Soviet psychologist in his investigation of the mechanisms of speech came to the conclusion that words and rules of combining them are most probably dormant in the kinetic center of the brain. When the ear receives a signal it reaches the brain, its hearing center and then passes to the kinetic center. Thus, if a teacher wants his pupils to speak English he must use all the opportunities he has to make them hear or speak it. Furthermore, to master a second language is to acquire another code, another way of receiving and transmitting information. To create this new code in the most effective way one must take into consideration certain psychological factors.

Effective learning of a foreign language depends on to a great extent on the pupils’ memory. That is why a teacher must know how he can help his pupils to memorize successfully and retain in memory the language material they learn. P.K. Zinchenko, a Soviet psychologist, came to the conclusion that this memory is retentive. Consequently, in teaching a foreign language we should create favorable conditions for involuntary memorizing.

Experiments, done by the prominent scientists, show that psychology helps Methods to determine the role of the mother tongue in different stages of teaching:

- the amount of material for pupils to assimilate at every stage of instruction;

- the sequence and ways in which various habits and skills should be developed.

Methods and techniques which are more suitable for presenting the material and for insuring its retention by the pupils and so on.

Psychology allows the methodologists to determine the so-called psychological content of teaching i.e. in what habits and skills should be developed in pupils to acquire language proficiently.

Psychology also helps Methods in selecting techniques for teaching and learning, i.e. in how to teach in a most effective way, for example, under what conditions pupils can learn words, phrases, sentence-patterns more effectively, or how to ensure pupils memorizing new words in an easier way. Since progress in learning is made by the addition of new knowledge may be imparted in teaching a certain group of pupils, what psychological factors should be taken into consideration when imparting a new knowledge to pupils.

C) Methods of foreign language teaching has a definite relation to physiology of the higher nervous system.

According to Pavlov habits are conditioned reflexes, and a conditioned reflex is an action performed automatically in response to a definite stimulus as a result of previous frequent repetitions of the same action. If we thoroughly study the theory of conditioned reflexes we shall see that it explains and confirms the necessity for frequent repetitions and revision of material pupils study as one of the means of inculcating habits. Pavlov showed that man’s higher nervous activities – speaking and thinking – are the functions of a special system of organic structures within the nervous system. This system is developed only in man. It enables the brain to respond to inner stimuli as it responds to outer stimuli or signals perceived through the sense organs. Pavlov named this the second signalling system. Consequently one of the forms of human behaviour is language behaviour. i.e. speech response to different communication situations. Therefore in teaching a foreign language we must bear in mind that pupils should acquire the language they study as a behaviour as something that helps people to communicate with each other in various real situations of intercourse. Hence a foreign language should be taught through such situations.

D) Relations of Methods of Foreign Language Teaching to Linguistics.

While linguistics is a science, language as a subject of instruction is not a science, but an activity.

Methods of foreign language teaching is most closely related to linguistics deals with the problems which are of paramount importance to Methods, with language and thinking, grammar and vocabulary, the relationship between grammar and vocabulary and many others. Methods successfully use, for example, the results of linguistic investigation in the selection and arrangement of language material for teaching.

There can no doubt that all the branches of linguistics: phonetics, the two divisions of grammar-morphology and syntax, and the two-lexicology and semantics-can furnish useful data to foreign language method.

Many prominent linguists have not only developed the theory of linguistics, but also tried to apply it to language teaching. The following quotation may serve as a proof of this:

”It has occurred to the linguist as well as to the psychologist that the foreign language classroom should be an excellent laboratory in which to test new theories of language acquisition”.

Methods of Foreign Language Teaching like any other science have definite ways of investigating the problems which may arise. They are:

1) A critical study of the ways, foreign languages were taught in our country and abroad.

2) A through study and summing up of the experience of the best foreign language teachers in different types of schools.

3) Experimenting with the aim of confirming or refuting the working hypotheses that may arise during investigation.

Experimenting becomes more and more popular with methodologists. In experimenting, methodologists have to deal with different data that is why in arranging research work they use mathematics, statistics, and probability theory to interpret experimental results.

Literature

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