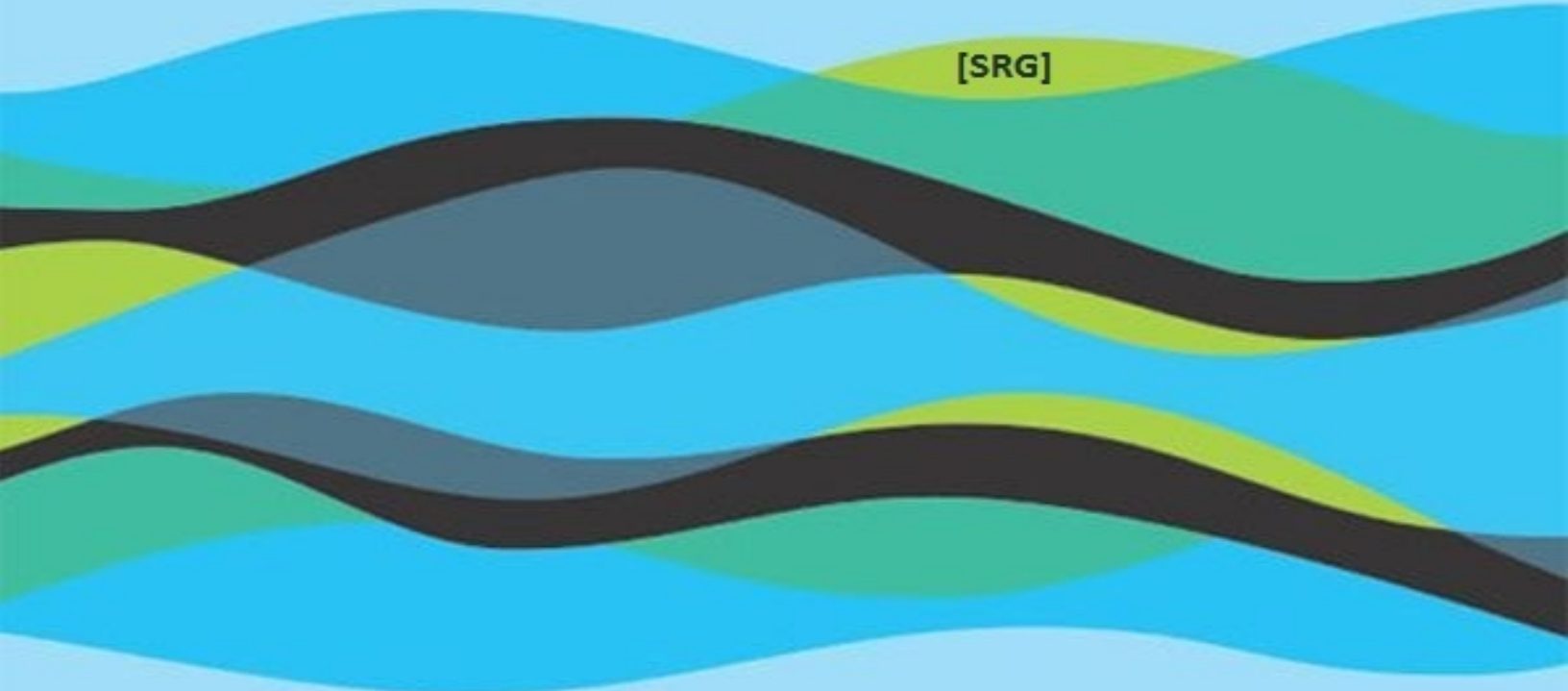


Third Edition

Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching

Diane Larsen-Freeman
and Marti Anderson

[SRG]



OXFORD

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Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching

**Diane Larsen-Freeman
and Marti Anderson**

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In memory of my parents, Elaine and Randolph Larsen, with heartfelt gratitude for their love and encouragement

DIANE LARSEN-FREEMAN

In memory of my mother, Mavis Anderson, and in honor of my father, Elmer Anderson, who both inspired me to be curious and compassionate

MARTI ANDERSON

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Acknowledgments

We thank the readers of the first and second editions of this book. Your invaluable feedback and input have helped to shape this third edition.

The approach we have used in this book, as in the previous two editions, is based on our experience in teaching the methods/approaches course at the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at the School for International Training. This book would not have been written in the first place if it had not been for the influence of colleagues and students there. We are indeed grateful for the time we spent in this wonderful community.

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List of Acronyms

ALM	Audio-Lingual Method
BNC	British National Corpus
CBI	Content-based Instruction
CLL	Community Language Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CALL	Computer-assisted Language Learning
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SAARRD	Security, Aggression, Attention, Reflection, Retention, and Discrimination
SIOP	Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol
TL	Target Language
TBLT	Task-based Language Teaching
WL	Whole Language
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

To the Teacher Educator

The Work of Language Teaching

The work of teaching is simultaneously mental and social. It is also physical, emotional, practical, behavioral, political, experiential, historical, cultural, spiritual, and personal. In short, teaching is very complex, influenced not only by these 12 dimensions and perhaps others, but also requiring their contingent orchestration in support of students' learning. When *language* teaching in particular is in focus, the complexity is even greater, shaped by teachers' views of the nature of language, of language teaching and learning in general, and by their knowledge of the particular sociocultural setting in which the teaching and learning take place (Adamson 2004). Indeed, research has shown that there is a degree of shared pedagogical knowledge among language teachers that is different from that of teachers of other subjects (Gatbonton 2000; Mullock 2006). Nonetheless, each teacher's own language learning history is also unique. The way that teachers have been taught during their own 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie 1975) is bound to be formative. There is also the level of complexity at the immediate local level, due to the specific and unique needs of the students themselves in a particular class at a particular time, and the fact that these needs change from moment to moment. Finally, the reality of educational contexts being what they are, teachers must not only attempt to meet their students' learning needs, but they must also juggle other competing demands on their time and attention.

Because of this complexity, although this is a book about the methods and methodological innovations of recent years, we do not seek to convince readers that one method is superior to another, or that there is or ever will be a perfect method (Prabhu 1990). The work of teaching suggests otherwise. As Brumfit observes:

A claim that we can predict closely what will happen in a situation as complex as [the classroom] can only be based on either the view that human beings are more mechanical in their learning responses than any recent discussion would allow, or the notion that we can measure and predict the quantities and qualities of all ... factors. Neither of these seems to be a sensible point of view to take.

(Brumfit 1984: 18–19)

After all, 'If it could be assumed that learners were 'simply' learners, that teachers were 'simply' teachers, and that one classroom was essentially the same as another, there would probably be little need for other than a technological approach to

language teaching' (Tudor 2003: 3), with adjustments being made for the age of the learners, specific goals, or class numbers, etc. However, the truth is that

Learners are not 'simply' learners any more than teachers are 'simply' teachers; teaching contexts, too, differ from one another in a significant number of ways. In other words, language teaching is far more complex than producing cars: we cannot therefore assume that the technology of language teaching will lead in a neat, deterministic manner to a predictable set of learning outcomes.

(Tudor 2003: 3).

Tudor goes on to observe that this is true even within a given culture. It cannot be assumed that all teachers will share the same conceptions of language, of learning, and of teaching.

Rather than the elegant realisation of one rationality, then, language teaching is likely to involve the meeting and interaction of different rationalities. Murray (1996) is therefore right in drawing attention to the 'tapestry of diversity' which makes our classrooms what they are.

(ibid. 2003: 7)

Language Teacher Learning

Recognizing the complex and diverse nature of the work of teaching has stimulated much discussion during the last 15 years around the question of how it is that language teachers learn to teach (Bailey and Nunan 1996; Bartels 2005; Burns and Richards 2009; Freeman and Richards 1996; Hawkins 2004; Johnson 2009; Tedick 2005). In addition, during this same time period, the journal *Language Teaching Research* began publication with Rod Ellis as its editor. Much of the research reported on in these sources can be summed up in what Johnson describes as her current understanding of language teacher learning:

L2 teacher learning [is] ... socially negotiated and contingent on knowledge of self, subject matter, curricula, and setting ... L2 teachers [are] ... users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how best to teach their L2 students within complex socially, culturally, and historically situated contexts.

(Johnson 2006: 239)

Such a view has radically transformed notions of teacher learning. As Richards (2008: 164) notes: 'While traditional views of teacher-learning often viewed the teachers' task as the application of theory to practice, more recent views see teacher-learning as the theorization of practice.' Rather than consumers of theory, then, teachers are seen to be both practitioners and theory builders (Prabhu 1992; Savignon 2007). Given this view of teachers as theory builders, teacher education must serve two functions: 'It

must teach the skills of reflectivity and it must provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience' (Freeman 2002: 11).

It is these two functions that we believe our study of methods is well-positioned to address. First of all, by observing classes in action and then analyzing the observations, we intend to help readers cultivate skills in reflectivity, important for their sense of self-efficacy (Akbari 2007). The point is to illustrate the thinking that goes on beneath the surface behavior enacted in the classroom in order to understand the rationale for some of the decisions that teachers make (Woods 1996; Borg 2006). A study of methods is also a means of socialization into professional thinking and discourse that language teachers require in order to 'rename their experience,' to participate in their profession, and to learn throughout their professional lives.

A Study of Methods

Thus, a study of methods is invaluable in teacher education in at least five ways:

- 1 Methods serve as a foil for reflection that can aid teachers in bringing to conscious awareness the thinking that underlies their actions. We know that teachers come to teacher training with ideas about the teaching/learning process formed from the years they themselves spent as students (Lortie 1975). A major purpose of teacher education is to help teachers make the tacit explicit (Shulman 1987). By exposing teachers to methods and asking them to reflect on the principles of those methods and actively engage with the techniques, teacher educators can help teachers become clearer about why they do what they do. They become aware of their own fundamental assumptions, values, and beliefs. In turn, reflective teachers can take positions on issues that result in the improvement of the society in which they live (Clarke 2007; Akbari 2007).
- 2 By becoming clear on where they stand (Clarke 2003), teachers can choose to teach differently from the way they were taught. They are able to see why they are attracted to certain methods and repelled by others. They are able to make choices that are informed, not conditioned. They may be able to resist, or at least argue against, the imposition of a particular method by authorities. In situations where a method is not being imposed, different methods offer teachers alternatives to what they currently think and do. It does not necessarily follow that they will choose to modify their current practice. The point is that they will have the understanding and the tools to do so, if they are able to and want to.
- 3 A knowledge of methods is part of the knowledge base of teaching. With it, teachers join a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). Being a community member involves learning the professional discourse that community members use so that professional dialogue can take place. Being part of a discourse community confers a professional identity and connects teachers with each other so they are

less isolated in their practice.

4 Conversely, by being members of a professional discourse community, teachers may find their own conceptions of how teaching leads to learning challenged.

Interacting with others' conceptions of practice helps to keep teachers' teaching alive and to prevent it from becoming stale and overly routinized (Prabhu 1990).

5 A knowledge of methods helps to expand a teacher's repertoire of techniques. This in itself provides a further avenue for professional growth, since some teachers find their way to new pedagogical positions by first trying out new techniques rather than by entertaining new principles. Moreover, effective teachers who are more experienced and expert have a large, diverse repertoire of best practices (Arends 2004), which presumably helps them deal more effectively with the unique qualities and idiosyncrasies of their students.

Criticisms of Methods

Despite these potential gains from a study of methods, it is important to acknowledge that a number of writers in our field have criticized the concept of language teaching methods. Some say that methods are prescriptions for classroom behavior, and that teachers are encouraged by textbook publishers and academics to implement them whether or not the methods are appropriate for a particular context (Pennycook 1989). Others have noted that the search for the best method is ill-advised (Prabhu 1990; Bartolome 1994); that teachers do not think about methods when planning their lessons (Long 1991); that methodological labels tell us little about what really goes on in classrooms (Katz 1996); and that teachers experience a certain fatigue concerning the constant coming and going of fashions in methods (Rajagopalan 2007). Hinkel (2006) also notes that the need for situationally relevant language pedagogy has brought about the decline of methods.

These criticisms deserve consideration. It is possible that a particular method may be imposed on teachers by others. However, these others are likely to be disappointed if they hope that mandating a particular method will lead to standardization. For we know that teaching is more than following a recipe. Any method is going to be shaped by a teacher's own understanding, beliefs, style, and level of experience. Teachers are not mere conveyor belts delivering language through inflexible prescribed and proscribed behaviors (Larsen-Freeman 1991); they are professionals who can, in the best of all worlds, make their own decisions—informed by their own experience, the findings from research, and the wisdom of practice accumulated by the profession (see, for example, Kumaravadivelu 1994).

Furthermore, a method is decontextualized. How a method is implemented in the classroom is not only going to be affected by who the teacher is, but also by who the students are, what they and the teacher expect as appropriate social roles, the

institutional constraints and demands, and factors connected to the wider sociocultural context in which the instruction takes place. Even the 'right' method will not compensate for inadequate conditions of learning, or overcome sociopolitical inequities. Further, decisions that teachers make are often affected by exigencies in the classroom rather than by methodological considerations. Thus, saying that a particular method is practiced certainly does not give us the whole picture of what is happening in the classroom. Since a method is more abstract than a teaching activity, it is not surprising that teachers think in terms of activities rather than methodological choices when they plan their lessons.

What critics of language teaching methods have to offer us is important. Admittedly, at this point in the evolution of our field, there is little empirical support for a particular method, although there may be some empirical support in second language acquisition research for methodological principles (Long 2009). Further, what some of the methods critics have done is to raise our awareness about the importance of critical pedagogy. As Akbari puts it:

By viewing education as an intrinsically political, power-related activity, supporters of critical pedagogy seek to expose its discriminatory foundations and take steps toward reforming it so that groups who are left out because of their gender, race, or social class are included and represented ... Critical pedagogy puts the classroom context into the wider social context with the belief that 'what happens in the classroom should end up making a difference outside of the classroom' (Baynham 2006).

(Akbari 2008: 644)

Larsen-Freeman and Freeman concur:

It is clear that universal solutions that are transposed acritically, and often accompanied by calls for increased standardization, and which ignore indigenous conditions, the diversity of learners, and the agency of teachers are immanent in a modernism that no longer applies, if it ever did. (Larsen-Freeman and Freeman 2008: 168)

Widdowson (2004) recognizes the inconclusive cycle of pedagogical fashion in teaching methods, and observes that what is needed is not a universal solution, but rather a 'shift to localization,' in which pedagogic practices are designed in relation to local contexts, needs, and objectives (Larsen-Freeman 2000; Bax 2003; Canagarajah 2005). Such a shift responds to the objections of some critical theorists (such as Pennycook 2001) to attempts to 'export' language teaching methods from developed to developing countries with the assumption that one size fits all. Treating localization of practices as a fundamental 'change in attitude,' Widdowson adds that 'local contexts of actual practice are to be seen not as constraints to be overcome but conditions to be satisfied' (2004: 369). Indeed, Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008)

suggest that one measure of a method should be its adaptability—the degree to which it can be adapted to satisfy different conditions.

In the end, then, which method is practiced is, or at least should be, a local decision. In this regard, teachers' voices must be heeded. And what teachers have to say about the value of methods is unequivocal:

Few teachers define methods in the narrow pejorative sense used by post-methodologists. Most teachers think of methods in terms of techniques which realize a set of principles or goals and they are open to any method that offers practical solutions to problems in their particular teaching context.

(Bell 2007: 141)

Continuing, Bell writes:

A knowledge of methods is equated with a set of options, which empowers teachers to respond meaningfully to particular classroom contexts. In this way, knowledge of methods is seen as crucial to teacher growth.

(ibid. 2007: 141–2)

As one teacher in a study conducted by Bell remarked:

'I think that teachers should be exposed to all methods and they themselves would 'build' their own methods or decide what principles they would use in their teaching. We cannot ignore methods and all the facts that were considered by those who 'created' or use them in their teaching. We need a basis for building our own teaching.'

(ibid. 2007: 143)

Thus, while the criticism of methods is helpful in some regards, we do not believe that a study of language teaching methods should be excluded from language teacher education. It is not methods, but how they are used that is at issue. A study of methods need not lead to the de-skilling of teachers but rather can serve a variety of useful functions when used appropriately in teacher education. Studying methods can help teachers articulate, and perhaps transform, their understanding of the teaching–learning process. It can strengthen their confidence in challenging authorities who mandate unacceptable educational policies. Methods can serve as models of the integration of theory and practice (see Introduction [Chapter 1](#), page 1). They can contribute to a discourse that becomes the lingua franca of a professional community, from which teachers can receive both support and challenge, and in which continuing education in the lifelong process of learning to teach can be encouraged (Larsen-Freeman 1998). Teachers and teacher educators should not be blinded by the criticisms of methods and thus fail to see their invaluable contribution to teacher education and continuing development. Key to doing so, though, is moving beyond ideology to inquiry, a movement to which we hope this book will contribute.

New to this Third Edition

Some modest revision has been made throughout the book, including a new discussion in [Chapter 13](#) of Howard Gardner's habits of mind, which he claims students need to develop in order to participate effectively in current and emerging cultural and work environments. Other chapters have remained relatively untouched. This is because these chapters describe methods that are more historical than contemporary, although they are all still being practiced somewhere in the world today. In any case, we believe that educators should have a sense of the history of the field, not only of contemporary practices. As we have already indicated, our goal in this book is to expose readers to the 'tapestry of diversity' that exists in human teaching and learning, not to convince readers of the value of any one method over the others.

There are also several major changes that have been made for this edition. First, three methodological innovations—Content-based, Task-based, and Participatory Approaches—which were dealt with in a single chapter in the previous edition, are each addressed in separate chapters in this edition. These three chapters allow for the more in-depth treatment that these enduring practices warrant. Content-based Instruction, or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), has seen widespread adoption, both in the education of English language learners in the USA and in language education in other countries, particularly in Europe, where it is increasingly common for governments to encourage the teaching of language and other subjects in tandem in state schools. It was also important to expand the discussion of Task-based Language Teaching, which a new chapter has allowed us to do, as it is the method that has received the most support from second language acquisition research. The third new chapter, the Participatory Approach, has enabled us to elaborate on the political dimensions of language teaching, including how language study can influence a language learner's sociopolitical identity.

In addition, we have added a new chapter on technology. Technological aids to language teaching have been around for some time, of course, but in our opinion, technology has reached a point where it should be considered not only as a supplement to teaching or a resource for teachers, but also as an opportunity for autonomous learning. A technological approach to language teaching rests on its own unique set of principles, including a new understanding of the nature of language.

Terminology

Two notes about terminology are also in order:

1 First, we are using the term 'method' here not to mean a formulaic prescription, but rather a coherent set of principles linked to certain techniques and procedures.

Anthony (1963: 64) has made the case for a tripartite hierarchy. As he put it: '...

techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach'. Following Anthony, in certain of the chapters we will introduce a particular method by showing how it is an example of a more general approach to language teaching. However, not all methods discussed in this book conveniently follow from a general approach. They all do, though, have both a conceptual and an operational component, fitting the definition in the *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (a method is 'a way of teaching a language which is based on systematic principles and procedures'), and thus justifying our use of the term. Admittedly, we have sometimes found it difficult to use the term 'method' with more recent innovations, such as learning strategies, cooperative learning, and technology. At such times, we have resorted to the term 'methodological innovations.'

2 We have used the term 'target language' to mean 'the language being taught' for three reasons. First, we intend for this book to be useful to teachers of all languages, not only English teachers. Second, we acknowledge that many teachers and students are multilingual or plurilingual (to use the Council of Europe's term) and so the use of the term 'second' language does not really apply. Third, we have avoided using the term 'foreign' language because this designation is relative to the speaker and mutable in the context. For instance, in the USA, Spanish has a heterogeneous identity: it could be considered as a 'foreign' language to those with little or no knowledge of it; as a 'second' language to those who use it in addition to their first language; or as a 'native' language to those for whom it is a home or heritage language (Larsen-Freeman and Freeman 2008). Although the term 'target language' is not without its problems, using this term seemed a reasonable compromise.

Finally, although we have made every effort toward a faithful rendering of each method and methodological innovation, there will undoubtedly be those who would not totally accept our rendition. This is understandable and probably inevitable. Our description is, as it must be, a product of our own experience.

It is our sincere hope that this book will both inform and stimulate its readers and that it will encourage them to reflect, inquire, and experiment. If it meets these goals, then it may help to restore faith in the appropriate use of teaching methods in language teacher education.

Brattleboro, Vermont and Ann Arbor, Michigan
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1

Introduction

Goals of this Book

One of the goals of this book is for you to learn about many different language teaching methods. We will use the term ‘method’ to mean a coherent set of links between the actions of a teacher in a classroom and the thoughts that underlie the actions. The actions are the techniques, and the thoughts are the principles in the title of this book: *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*.

A second goal is to help you uncover the thoughts that guide your own actions as a teacher. They may not be ones of which you are aware. Seeking to determine which principles of the methods you read about here are most [dis]harmonious with your own thinking will help you to uncover some of your implicit thoughts and beliefs about teaching.

A third goal is to introduce you to a variety of techniques, some of which will be new. Although certain techniques may require further training, others can be immediately implemented. Feel free to experiment and adapt those techniques to your teaching context.

Thought-in-Action Links

It is important to recognize that methods link thoughts and actions, because teaching is not entirely about one or the other. Of course this is as true about your own teaching as it is about any method you will read about in this book. As a teacher of language, you have thoughts¹ about your subject matter—what language is, what culture is—and about your students—who they are as learners and how it is they learn. You also have thoughts about yourself as a teacher and what you can do to help your students to learn. Many of your thoughts have been formed by your own experience as a language learner. It is very important for you to become aware of the thoughts that guide your actions in the classroom. With this awareness, you are able to examine why you do what you do and perhaps choose to think about or do things differently.

As an example, let us relate an anecdote about a teacher with whom Diane Larsen-Freeman was working some time ago. We will call her Heather, although that is not her real name. From her study of methods in Stevick (1980), Heather became interested in how to work with teacher control and student initiative in her teaching. Heather determined that during her student teaching internship, she would exercise less control of the lesson in order to encourage her students to take more initiative. She decided to narrow the goal down to having the students take the initiative in posing the questions in the classroom, recognizing that so often it is the teacher who asks all the questions, not the students.

Diane was Heather's teaching supervisor. When Diane came to observe her, Heather was very discouraged. She felt that the students were not taking the initiative that she was trying to get them to take, but she could not see what was wrong.

When Diane visited her class, she observed the following:

- HEATHER: Juan, ask Anna what she is wearing.
JUAN: What are you wearing?
ANNA: I am wearing a dress.
HEATHER: Anna, ask Muriel what she is writing.
ANNA: What are you writing?
MURIEL: I am writing a letter.

This pattern continued for some time. It was clear to see that Heather had successfully avoided the common problem of the teacher asking all the questions in the class. The teacher was not asking the questions—the students were. However, Heather had not achieved her goal of encouraging student initiative, since it was she who took the initiative by prompting the students to ask the questions. Heather and Diane discussed the matter in the postobservation conference.

Heather came to see that if she truly wanted students to take more initiative, then she would have to set up the situation in such a way that her participation in an

activity was not essential. Diane talked about several ways Heather might do this. During this discussion, Heather came to another important awareness. She realized that since she was a fairly inexperienced teacher, she felt insecure about having the students make the decisions about who says what to whom, and when. What if the students were to ask her questions that she was unable to answer? Having students take the initiative in the classroom was consonant with her values; however, Heather realized that she needed to think further about what level of student initiative would be comfortable for her at this stage in her career as a teacher. The point was that it was not necessarily simply a matter of Heather improving her technique; she could see that that was one possibility. Another was to rethink the way in which she thought about her teaching (Larsen-Freeman 1993).

The links between thought and action were very important in Heather's teaching. She came to realize that when something was not going as she had intended, she could change her thought or she could change her action. Heather had an idea of what she wanted to accomplish—but the action she chose to carry it out did not achieve her purpose. When she examined her intentions more clearly, she saw that she was not yet ready to have her students take complete initiative in the lesson. So for now, the thinking underlying her approach had to change.

A Coherent Set

Returning to the methods in this book, we will see that it is the link between thoughts and actions that is common to them all. But there is another way in which links are made in methods, and that is the connection between one thought-in-action link and another. A method is a coherent set of such links. Methods are coherent in the sense that there should be some theoretical or philosophical compatibility among the links. It would make little sense, for example, for a methodologist who believes that language is made up of a set of fixed patterns to characterize language acquisition as a creative process, and to employ discovery learning techniques to help learners discover the abstract rules underlying a language in order to enable them to create novel sentences.

To say there is **coherence** among the links does not mean, however, that the techniques of one method can not be used with another. The techniques may look very different in practice, though, if the thoughts behind them differ. For example, Stevick (1993) has shown that the simple technique of using a picture to provide a context for a dialogue that the students are supposed to learn can lead to very different conclusions about teaching and learning depending on how the technique is managed. If the students first look at the picture, close their eyes while the teacher reads the dialogue, and then repeat the dialogue bit by bit after the teacher, repeating until they have learned it fluently and flawlessly, the students could infer that it is the teacher who is the provider of all language and its meaning in the classroom. They could further infer that they should use that ‘part of their brains that copies but not the part that creates’ (1993: 432).

If, on the other hand, before they listen to or read the dialogue, the students look at the picture and describe it using words and phrases they can supply, and then guess what the people in the picture might be saying to each other before they hear the dialogue, they might infer that their initiative is welcomed, and that it is all right to be wrong. Further, if they then practice the dialogue in pairs without striving for perfect recall, they might also infer that they should ‘use the part of their brains that creates’ and that guessing and approximation are acceptable (1993: 432). We can see from this example how a technique might look very different and might lead students to very different inferences about their learning, depending on the thoughts and beliefs of the teacher.

Which Method is Best?

It is not our purpose in this book to promote one method over another. Thus, from our perspective, it is not a question of choosing between intact methods; nor should the presence of any method in this book be construed as an endorsement by us. Our agnostic stance will no doubt irritate some of our readers. However, like Prabhu (1990), we do not believe that there is a single best method. Further, it is not our purpose to have you sift through the methods presented here in order to choose the one with which you feel the most philosophically in tune. Instead, it is intended that you will use what is here as a way to make explicit your own beliefs about the teaching–learning process, beliefs based upon your experience and your professional training, including the research you know about. Unless you become clear about your beliefs, you will continue to make decisions that are conditioned rather than conscious. Engaging with the professional beliefs of others in an ongoing manner is also important for keeping your teaching practice alive. Furthermore, ‘if the teacher engages in classroom activity with a sense of intellectual excitement, there is at least a fair probability that learners will begin to participate in the excitement and to perceive classroom lessons mainly as learning events—as experiences of growth for themselves’ (Prabhu 1992: 239).

As time passes, new methods are created and others fall into disfavor. Rajagopalan (2007) has observed that teachers experience ‘methods fatigue’ with the continual coming and going of methodological fashions. This has not been our experience, however. Our experience is that teachers always want to know what is new. They know that teaching is difficult work, and they are always searching for ways to make it more successful. It is also sometimes the case that methods or practices that fall into disfavor in one era are resurrected in another. For instance, for many years, teachers were told that they should never use the students’ native language in the classroom—that they should never translate—even when all the students shared a language in common. The motivation for this advice was to maximize students’ opportunities to use the language they were studying. Associated with the Direct Method (see [Chapter 3](#)), this admonition arose because its immediate predecessor, the Grammar-Translation Method ([Chapter 2](#)), made abundant use of translation (as the name suggests), but it did not prepare students to communicate in the language of instruction. However, these days such absolute proscriptions to avoid use of the students’ common language have come under attack. For instance, Cook (2010) suggests that such a proscription is isolationist and undermines the possibility for teachers and students to establish a relationship between languages. Further, he notes, it also violates the pedagogical principle of moving from the known (here the common language of the students) to the unknown (the language the students are learning). This principle is firmly embedded in Community Language Learning ([Chapter 7](#)), which makes use of translation to establish meaning and correspondence between the languages. It should

be clear, then, that some of the methods featured in this book are incompatible with others.

Of course, it is not only the dynamics internal to the field that contribute to changing practices. There are factors external to the field that affect language teaching as well. For instance, population flows among countries of the world have increased multilingualism (Todeva and Cenoz 2009). Then, too, the development and promotion of the Common European Framework (CEFR: Council of Europe 2001) has influenced thinking about language education. Among other things, the Council of Europe has encouraged **plurilingualism** (an individual's language proficiency in several languages). Use of the CEFR promotes the view that most learners are not complete *tabulae rasae*. They already have some degree of competence in another language or languages, and teachers should take advantage of this (Paradowski 2007). The ongoing development of technology is another of those external influences that has had a major impact in the field, and this is likely to increase in the future. Speaking of external influences, we should also acknowledge that standardized examinations and textbooks, which require adherence to even the smallest details through their teacher guides, mean that, in reality, teachers are not always able to exercise the methodological choices they would wish (Akbari 2007).

Finally, it was not our intent to be comprehensive and to deal with all language teaching methods that have ever been practiced. While we consider the various methods in a rough chronological order, it is also the case that there were methods practiced before the first one discussed in this book, and that many of them are practiced concurrently. To be clear, we are not claiming that newer methods are better in all respects than older methods. What we did choose to do was to include methods² that are practiced today, and that reflect a diversity of views on the teaching and learning processes. By confronting such diversity, and by viewing the thought-in-action links that others have made, we hope that you will arrive at your own personal conceptualizations of how thoughts lead to actions in your teaching and how, in turn, your teaching leads to the desired learning outcomes in your students. Thus, ultimately, the choice among techniques and principles depends on learning outcomes, a theme to which we will return in the final chapter of this book.

Doubting Game and Believing Game

Some of what you encounter here will no doubt affirm what you do or believe already; other things you read about may challenge your notions. When our fundamental beliefs are challenged, we are often quick to dismiss the idea. It is too threatening to our well-established beliefs. Diane Larsen-Freeman will never forget one of the first times she heard Caleb Gattegno discuss the Silent Way, a method presented in this book (see [Chapter 5](#)). Diane reports that it was at a language teaching convention in New York City in 1976:

Several things Gattegno talked about that day were contrary to my own beliefs at the time. I found myself listening to him and at the same time hearing this doubtful voice in my head saying ‘Wait a minute... .’

Gattegno said that day that a teacher should never praise a student, not even say ‘Good,’ or smile. ‘Wait a minute,’ I heard the voice in my head echoing, ‘Everyone knows that being a good teacher means giving positive feedback to students and being concerned about their affective side or their feelings. Besides, how will the students know when they are right if the teacher doesn’t tell them so?’

Later, though, I found myself thinking, ‘On the other hand, I can see why you are reluctant to give feedback. You have made me think about the power of silence. Without having the teacher to rely on, students have to assume responsibility for the work—just as you so often say, ‘only the learner can do the learning.’ I can see how this silence (behavior) is in keeping with your belief that the students must do without the overt approval of the teacher. They must concentrate on developing and then satisfying their own **inner criteria**. Learning to listen to themselves is part of lessening their reliance on the teacher. The teacher will not always be there. Also, they will be encouraged to form criteria for correcting their own mistakes—for monitoring their own progress. I also see how you think that if the teacher makes a big deal out of students’ success, this implies that what the student is doing is out of the ordinary—and that the job of learning a language must be difficult. Also, I see that in your view, students’ security is provided for by their just being accepted without regard for any linguistic successes or difficulties they might be having.

What are the differences between the two voices Diane heard in her head—between the ‘Wait a Minute’ and the ‘On the Other Hand’ responses? Well, perhaps it would be clearer if we reflected for a moment on what it requires to uphold each position. What Diane has attempted to illustrate is two games (Larsen-Freeman 1983b). They are described in the article, ‘The Doubting Game and the Believing Game,’ which appears in an appendix to a book authored by Peter Elbow (1973). Elbow believes that

doubting and believing games are games because they are rule-governed, ritualized processes, which are not real life. The doubting game, Elbow says, requires logic and evidence. ‘It emphasizes a model of knowing as an act of discrimination: putting something on trial to see whether it is wanting or not’ (Larsen-Freeman 1983a: 15). We think its practice is something far more common to the academic world than its counterpart—the believing game. As the famous Tibetan Buddhist master, Sogyal Rinpoche, puts it:

Our contemporary education, then, that indoctrinates us in the glorification of doubt, has created in fact what could almost be called a religion or theology of doubt, in which to be seen to be intelligent we have to be seen to doubt everything, to always point to what’s wrong and rarely to ask what is right or good

...

(Sogyal Rinpoche 1993: 123–4).

Many of us are very good at playing the doubting game, but we do so at a cost. We may find fault with a new idea before giving it a proper chance.

What does playing the believing game require, then? The believing game ‘emphasizes a model of knowing as an act of constructing, an act of investment, an act of involvement’ (Elbow 1973: 163). It is not just the withholding of doubt. Rather, it asks us to put on the eyeglasses of another person—to adopt his or her perspective—to see the method as the originator sees it. Further, it requires a willingness to explore what is new.

While it may appear that the believing game is the more desirable of the two games, Elbow is not arguing, nor are we, that we should abandon the doubting game, but rather that you attempt to understand first before you judge. Therefore, do not be quick to dismiss a principle or technique because, at first glance, it appears to be at odds with your own beliefs or to be impossible to apply in your own situation. For instance, in one of the methods we will consider, teachers translate what the students want to know how to say from the students’ native language to the language they are studying. If you reject this technique as impractical because you do not know your students’ native language or because your students speak a number of different native languages, then you may be missing out on something valuable. You should first ask what the purpose of translating is: Is there a principle behind its use in which you believe? If so, can you apply it another way, say, by inviting a bilingual speaker to come to your class now and again or by having your students act out or paraphrase what they want to be able to say in the language they are studying?

Layout of Chapters

You will learn about the methods by entering a classroom where each method is being practiced. In most chapters in this book, one language teaching method is presented. However, in a few chapters, a more general approach to language teaching is presented, and what are described in the chapter are one or more methods that are examples of the approach³. We have assumed that observing a class will give you a greater understanding of a particular method and will give you more of an opportunity to reflect on your own practice than if you were simply to read a description of it. It should be acknowledged, however, that these classroom encounters are idealized. Anyone who is or has been a language teacher or student will immediately recognize that lessons seldom go as smoothly as the ones you will see here. In the real world students do not always catch on as quickly, and teachers have to contend with many other social and classroom management matters than those presented here. As we have already acknowledged, a method does not reflect everything that is happening in the classroom.

We will observe the techniques the teacher is using as well as his or her behavior. (In the even-numbered chapters, the teacher is female; in the odd-numbered chapters, the teacher is male.) After observing a lesson, we will try to infer the principles on which the teacher's behavior and techniques are based. Although in most cases, we will observe only the one beginning or intermediate-level class for each method, once the principles are clear, they can be applied to other situations. To illustrate the application of the principles at more than one level of proficiency, in two instances, with the Silent Way and Desuggestopedia, we will first visit a beginning-level class and then later briefly visit a class at a high-intermediate level. It should be noted that when learners are at the advanced level, methods are often less distinct because advanced learners may have special, well-defined needs, such as learning how to read and write academic texts. However, as we have seen from Stevick's example of using a picture to teach a dialogue, the way the teacher thinks about language teaching and learning will still affect how the teacher works at all levels.

After we have identified the principles, we will consider the answers to 10 questions. The questions are:

- 1 What are the goals of teachers who use this method?
- 2 What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?
- 3 What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?
- 4 What is the nature of student–teacher interaction? What is the nature of student–student interaction?
- 5 How are the feelings of the students dealt with?
- 6 How is language viewed? How is culture viewed?

7 What areas of language are emphasized? What language skills are emphasized?

8 What is the role of the students' native language?

9 How is evaluation accomplished?

10 How does the teacher respond to student errors?

The answers to these questions will add to our understanding of each method and allow us to see some salient differences among the methods presented here. Before reading the answers to these questions in the book, you might first try to answer them yourself. This might increase your understanding of a method and give you practice with reflecting on an experience.

Following these questions, the techniques we observed in the lesson will be reviewed and in some cases expanded, so that you can try to put them into practice if you wish. Indeed, as we mentioned earlier, another purpose of this book is to present a variety of techniques, some of which may be new to you, and to encourage you to experiment with them. We know that the more experienced a teacher is, the broader is his or her repertoire of techniques (Arends 2004). Presumably, such versatility allows a teacher to deal more effectively with the unique constellation of students with whom she or he is working at any one time.

In the conclusion to each chapter, you will be asked to think about how all of this information can be of use to you in your teaching. It is you who have to view these methods through the filter of your own beliefs, needs, knowledge, and experience. By playing the believing game, it is our hope that no matter what your assessment of a particular method, you will not have reached it without first 'getting inside the method and looking out'. We should note, though, that this book is not a substitute for actual training in a particular method, and specific training is advised for some of them.

At the end of each chapter are two types of exercise. The first type allows you to check your understanding of what you have read. The second type of exercise asks you to make the connection between what you understand about a method and your own teaching situation. Wherever possible, we encourage you to work with someone else as you consider these. Teaching can be a solitary activity, but collaborating with other teachers can help enrich our experience and nurture our growth.

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- ¹ We will use the term 'thoughts' for the sake of simplicity; however, we mean for thoughts to include beliefs, attitudes, values, and awarenesses as well.
 - ² It should be acknowledged that not all of the originators of the methods presented in this book would call their contribution a 'method' because they note that the term is sometimes associated with formulaic practice. We hope that we have made it clear that for us a method is a way of connecting particular principles with particular techniques into a coherent package, not a 'recipe' to be prescribed to teachers.
 - ³ Following Anthony's (1963) use of the term 'approach.'