

# **Language Learning: Methods and Media**

**Prof. Nicole Nau, UAM 2016**

**Fifth lecture (21.03.2016)**

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## Introduction to SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research

- SLA research vs. glottodydaktyka
- Focus on the individual (the learner)
- Acquisition and learning
- Second and first language acquisition
- Stephen Krashen's ideas about SLA

**Important points of last week's lecture**



Common features:

aural  
learners

- based on audio material; focus on spoken
- skills: listening and speaking
- starts with examples, explanations later
- focus on the target language

inductive  
learning

Differences:

particular;  
synthesizing

- FSI: from bits to larger units,  
Pimsleur: first presenting the whole dialog
- FSI: step-by-step, progress controlled

global;  
analytic

concrete-  
sequential

What kind of **learning styles** can you  
associate with these features? Strategies? Motivation?

**"Army method" (FSI) and "Pimsleur" compared**

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## ASSIMIL *Polski bez trudu.*

(author Barbara Kuszmidler; German version by Brigitte Nenzel)

- Listen to the first lesson.
- What characterizes the method?
- How does it differ from the Army method and/or Pimsleur?



For comparison: Pimsleur Spanish



**Another similar method: Assimil**

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- all audio material is in the target language; metalanguage (here: German) used in the textbook, but minimally;
- vocabulary: many internationalisms (*profesor, telefon, egzamin*) => "comprehensible input" (also re. grammar)
- dialogs are interesting, funny => motivation
- short lessons
- rigid structure for all lessons: dialog – phrases – guided translation into Polish
- focusses first on listening (repeating is mostly meant for memorizing)

## **Some features that distinguish ASSIMIL from Pimsleur**

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- "*Approach* refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching."

(Richards and Rodgers 2001, cited after Scott Thornbury at <http://scottthornbury.wordpress.com/2012/01/22/a-is-for-approach/>)

## **Approaches and methods**

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- Formal approach
  - Direct (or: Natural) approach
  - Communicative approach

## **Three main approaches to language learning and teaching**

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"A **method** is a teaching-learning model that emphasizes a core concept as the key solution to successful language learning.

It can be viewed on **three levels**:

- **normal level**: a specific method as a descriptive framework with its own name, such as Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning or Total Physical Response,
  - **smaller level**: a specific textbook of such a method, which is more concrete as application, but may deviate more or less from the method it claims to follow;
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- **broader level**: a grouping of specific methods that have a common emphasis or core idea [...]. The so-called communicative approach of the past 25 years is also a conglomerate of various specific methods. In that sense the word "**approach**" is better suited as it suggests a broader front in which specific methods can exist. Sometimes the term "**methodology**" is suggested as a grouping of similar methods."

(Decoo 2001)

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Gottlieb (Theophilus) Heness (1866 *Leitfaden für den Unterricht der Deutschen Sprache*)

Claude Marcel (1867 *L'art de penser dans une langue étrangère*)

Maximilian Berlitz (1878 Berlitz Schools founded)

François Gouin (1880 *Exposé d'une nouvelle méthode linguistique*)

Wilhelm Viëtor (1882 *Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren!*)

**The direct (or "natural") approach**  
**History: the 19th century**

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- USA (1940s) "Army method"; audio-lingual method
- France: direct method; audio-visual methods
- France: Assimil (teach-yourself-books)
- USA: Natural method based on Krashen's monitor model
- USA: Pimsleur
- ...

## **Later methods within this approach**

- first and second language acquisition use the same mechanism; teaching has to **imitate natural language acquisition** ("learn like a child!");
- the goal of language learning = speaking a language (like a native speaker);
- **no metalinguistic knowledge** is needed; mastering a language is achieved **directly** through practice and imitation;
- **imitation** is the essential process in language learning.

## **The direct (natural) approach: assumptions**

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## Basic assumptions

- Language learning = learning a linguistic **system**,  
Knowing a language = knowing vocabulary and grammar
- goal of language learning: being able to **translate**  
(especially written texts)
- **metalinguistic knowledge** is essential (you have to know the **rules** in order to understand and use the language)
- second language **learning** is different from first language acquisition

## **The formal approach** **(Grammar-translation method)**

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Trevor G. Fennell & Henry Gelsen. 1980.

A Grammar of Modern Latvian

What characterizes the method of this book?

How do you evaluate it?

**Example of a textbook using the  
grammar-translation method:**

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- a lot of explanations in English (metalanguage)
- first explanations, then examples and practice  
(=> deductive)
- only way of practice is translation
- everything through written language
- there are only single sentences, no texts, no thematic coherence
- the starting point for the organization of the course is the language system

**Fennell & Gelsen “A Grammar of Modern Latvian”**

- Wilfried Decoo. 2001. On the mortality of language learning methods. (online)
- Wikipedia entry "Language pedagogy"  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language\\_pedagogy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_pedagogy) and entries about individual methods
- Scott Thornbury's website (M is for method")  
<http://scottthornbury.wordpress.com/>
- Diane Larsen-Freeman on Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching (5 minutes):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNSmrbkYKx8>
- Three language teaching methods demonstrated by SUPSI (10 minutes)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMZrN5TKSHM>

**Read or hear more about methods**