

*Artikov Jasurbek Alisherovich, assistant,
Foreign Languages department
Tashkent State Transport University*

NAVIGATING THE MAZE: EXPLORING EFFECTIVE METHODOLOGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Abstract. Feeling lost in the labyrinth of English language learning methodologies? This article equips you with a compass! We delve into ten of the most effective approaches, exploring their core principles and highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. Whether you're a complete beginner or aiming to refine your fluency, this guide empowers you to choose the methodology that best suits your learning style and goals.

Keywords: English language learning, methodologies, communicative approach, audiolingual method, gaming methodologies, Pimsleur method, Shekhter method, Dragunkin method, Polyglot method, Zamyatkin method, Rosetta Stone method

Introduction

With the advent of modern communication tools, as the English say, "the world is getting smaller," and hence the need for language learning arises.

It can help us find common ground with foreigners while traveling, secure new job opportunities, make friends from around the globe, or even establish personal relationships. It's no wonder that more and more people want to learn it. And the more people wish to study it, the more methodologies emerge in the market.

So, what exactly is a methodology, and why is it so important to choose the one that suits you best? In simple terms, a methodology encompasses the techniques and tools of instruction, the ways of learning a foreign language. But

as we have already noted, with the emergence of a vast number of language learners, the number of methodologies has also increased. Therefore, before delving into language learning, it's essential to find the most suitable approach for yourself. That's why we'll tell you about the 10 most relevant methodologies that have served many eager English learners well in grasping the intricacies of the language.

1. Communicative English Teaching Methodology

The communicative methodology stems from the primary problem faced by all foreign language learners: "I understand but can't speak!" "Enough is enough!" declared the teachers back then, and thus, the communicative approach was developed.

It emerged abroad in the 1960s and in Russia in the mid-1990s [12]. From the very beginning, such practice involved group sessions with a native speaker. It's easy to guess that this methodology is based on conversational practice in the language being studied. Thanks to this, the language barrier is overcome with incredible ease!

Over time, the communicative approach, like any other, naturally underwent some changes. However, its fundamental principles remain the same. By reviewing them, you will understand why this modern methodology remains one of the most effective ways to learn English.

So, the main principles of the communicative teaching method include:

Mastering fluent and accurate speech. This should be perceived as a result of constant practice, something that will develop intuitively.

Students will speak the language during lessons, starting from the first class. And this applies not only to students with a high level but also to those who are learning the language from scratch!

The use of modern and authentic materials. Textbooks are so well thought out that you will use this practical material in real life. This methodology is suitable if you want to [12]:

- Hone your skills in fluent and accurate speech
- Understand spoken English without difficulty
- Stop translating your thoughts literally from Russian to English

If you fear grammar like a "scary dream," then with this methodology, all your doubts will vanish [3]. This is because it is based on a very accessible teaching principle: you won't be cramming theory. You will only be taught how to apply a rule, and you'll practice it until it becomes automatic. Forget about rote learning once and for all! By using the communicative approach, you will practice rules only through repeated practical application.

2. The Methodology of Language Learning Through Original Text Reading (by Ilya Frank)

From the title alone, it becomes clear that the essence of this methodology lies in reading. But this isn't just about reading Jack London in the original.

Books constructed using this methodology include adapted text, their translations, explanations of individual words, and transcriptions.

And you might ask, "Does this work?" The answer is unequivocally "Yes!" And there are compelling reasons to prove that this method is truly productive.

Reason #1. Passive Learning

The beauty of this methodology lies in its "light" learning mode. That is, you learn through interesting and engaging reading without engaging in complex tasks. And, in principle, there's no need to make a concerted effort to memorize anything, as our brains absorb new material remarkably well through associative thinking. And with passive learning, it does so much more effectively [4].

Reason #2. Productive Material Acquisition

Based on Frank's concept, people tend to better remember new words when experiencing strong emotions or impressions. Here's what he says: "For memorization, mere mechanical memorization or the acquisition of certain skills is not enough; what is needed is novelty of impressions. It's better to encounter a word several times and in different contexts [4]." And literature offers plenty of that.

It's important to relax and enjoy reading. Achieving this is very simple: just choose a book to your taste. After all, reading should be captivating and thrilling.

This approach is more suitable for those with a low level of proficiency in the foreign language. Conversely, for those with a higher level of knowledge, this method is not very suitable because they no longer need a parallel translation. Reading books in the original will be much more beneficial for them.

3. Audiolingual Methodology of English Language Learning

The essence of this methodology lies in understanding foreign speech by ear [1]. A characteristic feature is the analogy method used in memorizing new words. You memorize basic language structures and frequently used vocabulary, which facilitates sentence construction and communication on everyday topics.

This methodology also involves memorizing various dialogues. Initially, this involves practicing basic grammatical and lexical structures using a basic set of words. Then, gradually, the vocabulary expands with new lexical units.

It's worth noting that only one-fourth of the lesson time is devoted to theory, while the rest is entirely dedicated to practice.

Many universities and language schools, starting from Oxford, widely use this approach. The audiolingual methodology underlies some proprietary

programs, such as: Charles Fries's Audiolingual Teaching Method, Robert Lado (USA), P. Rivana (France), Guberin (Yugoslavia) [2].

This methodology will serve as a good addition to language learning for both experienced students and newcomers, especially if you need to prepare for an exam in a relatively short period. It can be used both as a group learning option and individually.

4. Gaming Methodologies for English Language Learning

This is the case when being a gamer is not only cool but also beneficial! Seriously though, games are one of the most effective methods of learning.

Because all successful interactive courses are somehow connected to this methodology. And they are suitable for both children and adults.

Let's consider the advantages of games in English language learning.

Advantages [11]:

- Games allow combining the useful with the enjoyable, and learning occurs naturally and effortlessly, as with young children.

- Speaking of games in lessons, they serve as a sort of break and help shift attention from one task to another. Consequently, attention span increases, and, of course, mood improves.

- Also, we shouldn't underestimate the didactic function, that is, through games, students can learn new facts, expand their general knowledge, all while communicating in English.

- Games are used at every stage of the lesson, whether it's practicing phonetic rules, grammar or vocabulary topics, reading rules, or listening practice.

At first glance, this may seem paradoxical, but teenagers who play computer games acquire a larger vocabulary compared to peers who don't play. This is shown by comprehensive research conducted by Pia Sundqvist from Karlstad University and the University of Oslo. She is not surprised by the

results, as previous studies, not only in Scandinavian universities, have shown that those who play regular commercial computer games know more English words. Some of the most popular games include Counter-Strike; Warface; Warframe; Dota 2; Assassin's Creed, Minecraft, and others.

5. The Author's Methodology of Paul Pimsleur

If you enter "The most popular audio course" into a search engine, you'll find Pimsleur's method in the top three positions. Strangely enough, this course is designed for Russian speakers. In his methodology, Pimsleur utilizes the natural process of communication. Each lesson begins with the practice of basic constructions used by native speakers in everyday speech. Most Russian athletes, when at the initial stage of language learning and with the goal of future work in the USA, learn English using this method [2]. And just a couple of months later, they have no trouble conversing on various topics.

At the core of the teaching is also dialogue, but unlike the audiolingual methodology, you will actively participate in it.

Thanks to this, by the 27th lesson, you will be able to speak and comprehend speech confidently enough, giving you the opportunity to feel like a native speaker. You will acquire exactly the amount of vocabulary needed for everyday communication.

This methodology is ideal for learning English at different levels. Specifically, there are courses of three levels, each with 30 audio lessons of 30 minutes each. According to Pimsleur, the first 30 minutes are when a person is most capable of effectively absorbing information. The entire course of level 1, 2, or 3 is designed for 15 hours of independent work [2]. Believe me, after completing the first 2 lessons, you will remember everything you listened to forever.

6. The Language Teaching Methodology of Igor Shekhter

The next methodology we're considering belongs to Igor Shekhter. It is based on an individual approach to each learner. And it's necessary to give due credit to the significance of this approach. Shekhter's concept is firmly rooted in the belief that the language being studied should develop in the learner's mind in the same way as their native language once did [10].

Based on these beliefs, Shekhter has developed situations that simulate direct communication and naturally help to assimilate new knowledge.

Thus, the mechanism that once helped in the development of the speech apparatus tuned for communication in the native language is activated in the person's mind.

All learning according to Shekhter's method can be divided into three stages, which simulate the steps in mastering the native language:

First, the center of new speech is generated. This happens through special "embeddings" of speech patterns endowed with specific meanings. They become automatic at the subconscious level.

Next comes the assimilation of grammatical skills and lexical units. Thus, the psychological barrier lifted in the previous stage will no longer hinder the natural learning process.

Then comes the so-called preparation for "emerging into the world." An emotional and meaningful foundation is created for further assimilation, smoothing out rough spots. The so-called linguistic "childhood" comes to an end, and you are ready to go to the school of life associated with the new language.

This methodology is somewhat unique. Therefore, people who work with groups undergo serious training, acquiring skills not only as teachers but also as psychologists and actors [9]. Moreover, they must be able to stage situations resembling real-life scenes as closely as possible.

7. The English Teaching Methodology of A. Dragunkin

This methodology differs fundamentally from others because Alexander found in English those regularities or peculiarities that clearly distinguish it from Russian [7]. And he built his methodology precisely on the study of these differences, asserting that understanding a foreign language is possible only by studying its differences from the native one.

Features of English according to Dragunkin's approach [6]:

- English has mutable and immutable words. In the second class, there are only 27 lexical units, which are the "central figures" in learning.
- The author invents his own schemes that allow him to organize all the incomprehensible things neatly.
- He also found his own way to explain the use of English tenses.

This course can be considered as introductory. Moreover, if you find grammar difficult and rules unclear, Dragunkin provides good explanations for some complex issues.

8. "Polyglot" by Dmitry Petrov

First, a few words about the author. Petrov is a fairly renowned psycholinguist, author of the book "The Magic of Words," as well as other literature. In addition to this, he hosts the show "Polyglot [13]." His methodology includes 16 hours of intensive learning, after which even preschoolers will be English language experts.

Advantages of the methodology [13]:

- Simple explanation of complex rules.
- The show host is accustomed to explaining in such a way that even the most complex rules fall into the category of simple and no longer cause difficulties for students.
- Say "No!" to the language barrier once and for all.

- After Dmitry Petrov's courses, you will literally forget what it's like to feel constrained due to lack of knowledge and will be ready to apply all the skills you've previously developed. You will have good spoken English.

Disadvantages of the methodology:

- Basic vocabulary.
- "Polyglot" is, in a sense, a good starting "push," but for more advanced levels, it may be somewhat weak.
- It takes quite a bit of time for everything.
- The grammatical rules practiced in "Polyglot" according to a certain scheme may seem absolutely straightforward, but they are only partly so. After all, to consolidate the theory, good practice is needed, which in turn requires time.

9. Modern Teaching Method by N. Zamyatkin

The principles of this methodology are [14]:

- Listening to audio materials, reading texts
- Using English at all stages of learning, and whenever possible, avoiding the use of the Russian language

"Matrix-language tai chi" - that's what Nikolai Zamyatkin calls his invention. And for many, learning through this method resembles meditation.

At the core of this teaching are matrices with excerpts from texts or dialogues arranged from simple to complex. Each of the dialogues requires great attention: you listen to them for several hours, at least 2 hours per day.

Each of the dialogues demands considerable effort. Initially, you listen to excerpts for several hours in a row, at least 2 hours per day. It is not advisable to try to translate the text at this stage. It is recommended to simply listen until all phonemes become clear, until all words are distinguishable.

Then, simultaneously with listening, you read the text, which contributes to a deeper understanding. This stage continues until the dialogue is memorized

by heart. And ultimately, you should loudly recite this dialogue many times, trying to mimic the intonation and expressiveness of the narrator.

From all of the above, we can draw the following conclusion: this method is suitable for students who already have some basic level in the language and who are ready to work diligently and purposefully.

10. Rosetta Stone Teaching Methodology

Oddly enough, "Rosetta Stone" is a computer program. It is named after the Rosetta Stone, which aided linguists in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Intuitive perception is at the core of this methodology. Learning through this program can be compared to children learning their native language at an early age. The program creates situations from everyday life.

The main principles of the methodology are [8]:

- Language environment as a natural factor in learning
- Gradual assimilation: from simple to complex
- Intuitive perception of the English language
- The principle of induction is taken into account: students draw conclusions about rules based on examples or specific cases
- Frequently repeated material to ensure assimilation

This methodology is a good option for additional practice at the early stages of language learning.

How to Choose Your English Language Teaching Method?

Choosing a methodology is a fairly individual matter, but we can recommend criteria to consider when choosing the most suitable methodology for you.

Key criteria:

- Your level of preparation
- The amount of time you can devote to studies
- Financial possibilities

- Your own priorities and desires

Also, it's important to understand how you best perceive information: by listening, through textbooks, with the help of video lessons, in a gaming format, etc. If you choose a method that suits your mindset, character, and interests, successful learning will naturally follow. By the way, this advice applies to tutors as well: to maximize help to your student, it's necessary to understand their perception channel and accordingly direct the tasks. Before you know it, the effectiveness and results will increase exponentially.

Conclusion

The quest to master the English language doesn't require a one-size-fits-all approach. This exploration of ten diverse methodologies has hopefully illuminated the unique strengths and considerations of each. The ideal path hinges on your individual learning style, time commitment, budget, and aspirations. Reflect on how you best absorb information – visually, aurally, kinesthetically, or through interactive games. Do you crave structured grammar drills or an immersive, intuitive experience? By aligning your preferences with the core principles of each methodology, you'll be well-equipped to navigate the maze of English language learning and emerge a confident communicator. Remember, the most effective method is the one that keeps you motivated and engaged on your linguistic journey. So, embark on this exciting adventure, embrace the methodology that resonates with you, and celebrate every milestone along the way!

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