Methods of Language Teaching

Reviewed by

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PRODUCT AT A GLANCE

Product Type:
Instructional, descriptions and videos of 7 language teaching methods

Language(s):
Appropriate for instructors of all languages

Level:
Pre/in-service foreign language instructors, including graduate teaching assistants

Activities:
Questions to accompany videos

Media Format:
1 DVD-ROM

Operating Systems:
Windows or Macintosh OS

Hardware Requirements:
256 MB RAM; no hard disk space required; DVD-ROM drive; sound card; video card

Supplementary Software:
Adobe Flash Player (version 8.0 or above recommended)

Documentation:
None

Price:
Single user copies available for $20 at Brigham Young University Bookstore

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Methods of Language Teaching is an introduction to seven of the most commonly taught language teaching methods including the grammar/translation method, the audio-lingual method, the cognitive approach, total physical response, the natural approach, the communicative approach, and total physical response storytelling. The CD-ROM begins with an introduction, which includes a justification for studying different teaching methods and why the authors chose to include the methods they did (based on their practicality for current classrooms and availability of skilled teachers to demonstrate the methods). Next on the CD-ROM are seven

questions for thought that can be applied to discussion about each method. Finally, there is a list of each method/approach, which includes a description, placing the method/approach within its historical context, theories upon which it is based, an explanation of how a typical lesson could be organized, and a video demonstration of the method.

No online help or manuals are provided to accompany the CD-ROM.

EVALUATION

Technological Features

The software is very easy to install. The CD-ROM is compatible with both PC and Macintosh computers. On a Macintosh computer, after simply inserting the CD-ROM and clicking on "start.htm," the program opened in the Firefox web browser. Using a PC with Windows XP, the program immediately opened in the web browser after inserting the CD-ROM. If the computer does not have Adobe Flash Player installed, a link appears to download it immediately. There were no delays in the start-up and no problems with crashing.

The program is organized in a very simple manner, which makes it easy to navigate. When the program opens, a table of contents appears with the introduction, questions for thought, and list of seven teaching methods or approaches (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Table of Contents

After clicking on the introduction or questions for thought, a new menu opens with a link back to the main menu or to the description (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Questions for Thought Page

To return to the table of contents after reading the introduction or questions for thought, users simply click on the main menu. After clicking on a method within the table of contents, users have the choice of main menu, description, or video. When they click on description, they see a succinct yet comprehensive introduction to the method as well as an introduction to the class that will be taught in the video (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Audio-Lingual Method Introduction

After clicking video, a video screen opens in the same window and begins to play the sample lesson. While watching the lesson, it is possible to pause, stop, fast forward, and rewind (see Figure 4).

Figure 4
Sample Lesson
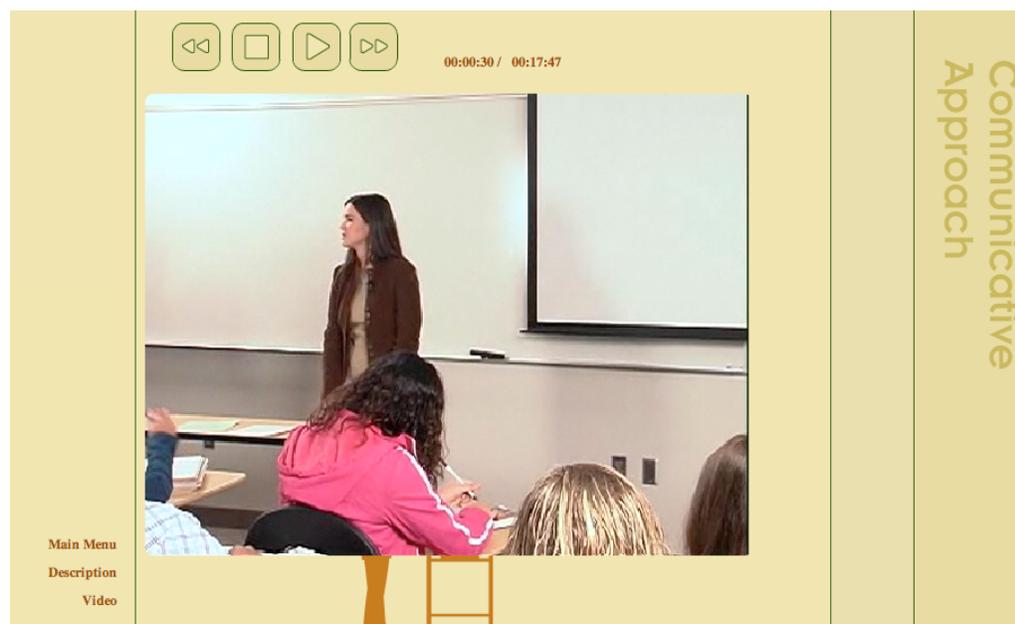
Due to its simple organization, the CD-ROM is easy to use and follows the same pattern with each method (introduction and video). The videos are well filmed, the sound quality is clear, and it is easy to navigate within the videos to fast forward or rewind. When the table of contents is open, the graphics show students walking around, but after clicking on a method, an overhead projector is brought in to symbolize discussion of the description. After clicking on video, the overhead projector is replaced by a video projector. These graphics help to facilitate the transition between the descriptions and videos.

Activities (Procedure)

Students could be assigned to watch the CD-ROM at home or read the methods descriptions on their own, but the purpose of the CD-ROM seems to be mainly to provide live demonstrations of teaching approaches/methods that are typically mentioned in language teaching methods textbooks. There are questions listed that students could answer on their own and/or could be discussed in a methods class together. The activities are mainly passive reading or viewing activities and what students do with the information they take in would be up to the teacher to decide.

Teacher Fit (Approach)

The authors claim not to prescribe to any one method/approach described in the CD-ROM. Instead they strive to present each method within its historical context while mentioning its critiques and advantages. By including the historical context, the authors are also able to

discuss why a certain method/approach may have fallen out of favor, as well as what it still may offer for classrooms today. With the discussion questions, the authors try to leave the assessment of the methods/approaches up to the learner. They achieve their goal of merely providing an introduction to the methods/approaches so that learners can decide on their own about the strengths and weaknesses of the various methods and their possible applications in the language classroom. Although it could be viewed as a disadvantage that the activities in this CD-ROM are all passive reading and viewing activities, this can also be seen as an advantage. The instructor can tailor the tasks associated with the CD-ROM to fit most appropriately with the goals of his/her class.

The methods/approaches the authors chose provide a varied picture of teaching styles and a comprehensive overview of each method/approach. The teachers included in the videos are all vibrant, dynamic teachers who provide new teachers or preservice teachers with a skillful model of classroom interactions and use of the target language in addition to an introduction to their specific method/approach. Each video includes several different activities to illustrate the various steps involved when teaching with the various approaches/methods.

Since the authors do not prescribe to a specific approach/method, this CD-ROM could supplement a methods class of any philosophy. With the information and examples provided, a methods instructor could discuss the positive and negative aspects of each approach/method to help students reach their own decisions about the most appropriate methods/approaches for them and their program, or the instructor could focus on the one or two methods that fit his/her program best and on which he/she wants students to focus and use.

Learner Fit (Design)

This software is most appropriate for university-level preservice teachers in a teacher-training program. The written descriptions and videos offer something for both audio and visual learners, and the ease of installation and navigation makes the CD-ROM appropriate for all levels of computer users. It would most aptly be used to supplement a methods textbook for a foreign language teaching methods course. Since commonly used methods textbooks, such as Omaggio-Hadley's (2001) *Language in Context* and Shrum and Glisan's (2004) *Teacher's Handbook* merely include descriptions of teaching methods, this CD-ROM provides the example lesson that is lacking in those descriptions. After viewing an actual lesson by a practitioner of the method/approach, students can more easily visualize what works well and not so well and what aspects of the method/approach might fit into their teaching philosophy. In a survey conducted by Moore and Bresslau (1996), students reported that they did not feel that learning about teaching methods was integral to their development as a language teacher due to their lack of practical applications. However, in a survey conducted by Brandl (2000), graduate teaching assistants found their methods class especially helpful in preparing them to teach due to its "practical and hands-on orientation" (p. 362). Perhaps supplementing readings with these videos could help students connect theory to practice to understand the relevance of these methods in today's language classroom.

SCALED RATING

(1 low-5 high)

Due to its ease of use, comprehensive yet succinct discussion of the seven most applicable methods to today's language classrooms, and excellent video examples, this CD-ROM could

be quite useful as a supplement to the textbook when discussing the history of methods in a language teaching methods class.

Implementation Possibilities: 5
Pedagogical Features: 4
Sociolinguistic Accuracy: 5
Use of Computer Capabilities: 3
Ease of Use: 5
Overall Evaluation: 5
Value for Money: 5

REFERENCES

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Moore, Z., & Bresslau, B. (1996). An investigation of the effectiveness of foreign language training programs for TAs: An exploratory study. *Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education, 2*(2), 18 pp.

Omaggio-Hadley, A. (2001). *Teaching language in context* (3rd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Shrum, J. L., & Glisan, E. W. (2004). *Teacher's handbook: Contextualized language instruction.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

PRODUCER DETAILS

Center for Teaching and Learning, College of Humanities, Brigham Young University (2007); authors: Blair Bateman & Baldomero Lago

REVIEWER'S BIODATA

Lara Ducate is the coordinator of the beginning German language program at the University of South Carolina. She teaches foreign language teaching methods, including technology in foreign language instruction, and German. She conducts research and has published on the topics of teacher training, blogs, podcasting, and computer-mediated communication and co-edited a volume on computer-assisted language learning.

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