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# *Approaches and Methods Techniques and Principles*

Comparative Review by  
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APPROACHES AND METHODS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS. Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. pp. viii + 171. Paper \$9.95, Hardcover \$24.95.

TECHNIQUES AND PRINCIPLES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING. Diane Larsen-Freeman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. xvi + 142. Paper \$6.95.

These two books, aimed at the teacher of second languages, have essentially the same objectives: to inform the practitioner, new or experienced, about the methodological diversity that continues to characterize the second-language teaching field.

Larsen-Freeman discusses eight different methods: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, The Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, and the Communicative Approach. All of these are also discussed by Richards and Rodgers but these authors add a few topics not covered by Larsen-Freeman.

After providing a brief history of language teaching, Richards and Rodgers discuss the nature of approaches and methods in general. In addition to the methods listed above they treat the Natural

Approach (Krashen & Terrell) and the Oral Approach/Situational Language Teaching (a method developed and used primarily in England).

The format of both books is highly structured. In each of her chapters Larsen-Freeman first presents a brief overview of the method under discussion and then leads us into an idealized classroom where we "observe" the method in action. Next she takes the reader through a series of observations about the activities "seen" in the classroom and extracts the underlying principles from these. Subsequently, the principles are reviewed in question and answer format and then the techniques employed in the method under discussion are analyzed. Each chapter ends with a summary/conclusion. Activities provided with each unit give readers an opportunity to assess their ability to implement the method.

Richards and Rodgers follow a similar approach. Their overview of the background of each method, however, is somewhat more extensive than Larsen-Freeman's, as is their discussion of the process, which is structured as follows:

Under the heading "Approach", the authors analyze the theory of language and theory of learning which underlie the particular method.

Under "Design" they discuss objectives, the syllabus, types of learning and

teaching activities, learner roles, teacher roles and the role of instructional materials.

"Procedure" includes descriptions of what might actually go on in a classroom where the method is being employed.

Like Larsen-Freeman, Richards and Rodgers sum up each chapter with a conclusion. Both provide reading lists for further study, but the lists in Richards/Rodgers are more extensive.

In general, the Larsen-Freeman text is easier to read, assumes less prior knowledge and, because of the activities provided, is best suited for the beginning second-language teacher. The Richards and Rodgers book would also serve the beginner but should be a useful reference

for the more experienced practitioner as well.

In short, while the titles differ, the content of the two texts does not. Both are talking about approaches and methods and both are discussing principles and techniques. The difference turns out to be essentially one of style although, as noted above, the Richards and Rodgers book is somewhat more extensive. Both are composed by very knowledgeable second-language teacher-trainers and are highly recommended by this reviewer. The choice of which one to obtain should depend primarily on the professional background of the reader.

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