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THE SILENT WAY METHOD: A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This article provides information about The Silent way method which is a language teaching method that was developed by Caleb Gattegno in the 1950s. This method emphasizes the importance of learners taking an active role in their language acquisition process, using visual aids and physical objects to facilitate learning without relying heavily on the teacher's verbal instruction. This article examines the history of this approach, its role and effectiveness in language learning, the key characteristics and pros and cons of the method.

Key words

The Silent Way Method, history, role, effectiveness, pros and cons, teaching techniques.

Аннотация

В этой статье представлена информация о методе «Безмолвный путь» - методе обучения языку, разработанном Калемом Гаттеню в 1950-х годах. Этот метод подчёркивает важность того, чтобы учащиеся принимали активное участие в процессе овладения языком, используя наглядные пособия и физические объекты для облегчения обучения, не полагаясь в значительной степени на устные инструкции учителя. В этой статье рассматривается история этого подхода, его роль и эффективность в языке, ключевые характеристики, плюсы и минусы метода.

Ключевые слова

Метод «Безмолвный путь», история, роль, эффективность, плюсы и минусы, методика преподавания.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada 1950-yillarda Kaleb Gattegno tomonidan ishlab chiqarilgan til o'rgatish uslubi bo'lgan Silent Way haqida ma'lumot beriladi. Bu usul o'quvchilarning tilni o'zlashtirish jarayonida faol ishtirok etishi, o'qituvchining o'g'zaki ko'rsatmalariga ko'p tayanmasdan o'rganishni osonlashtirish uchun ko'rgazmali qurollar va jismoniy buymlardan foydalanish muhimligini ta'kidlaydi. Ushbu maqolada yondashuvning tarixi, uning tildagi o'rni va samaradorligi, asosiy xususiyatlari va usulning ijobiy va salbiy jihatlari ko'rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar

Silent Way usuli, tarix, rol, samaradorlik, ijobiy va salbiy jihatlari, o'qitish usullari.

Caleb Gattegno developed the “silent approach” for teaching languages, which was influenced by Noam

Chomsky’s focused language study approach. This method is considered highly innovative and has gained recognition in recent times. Gattegno, a mathematician and educator, believed that learning should be student-centered and that teachers should facilitate learning rather than direct it. This method is based on the idea that students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process. The Silent way gained popularity in the 1970s as an alternative to traditional language teaching methods. It was praised for its focus on student participation and its ability to help students develop confidence in using a new language. However, it has also been criticized for being too abstract and difficult for some students to understand. Despite its criticisms, the Silent Way continues to be used by some language teachers around the world as part of a broader approach to language education. Its emphasis on student engagement and active learning remains influential in modern language teaching methods.

The emphasis on human cognition led to the establishment of the **Cognitive Code Approach**. Rather than simply being response to stimuli in the environment, learners were seen to be much more actively responsible for their own learning, students were observed taking on a more proactive role in their learning process, actively participating in creating hypothesis to uncover the rules of the language they were studying. Errors were inevitable and were signs that learners were actively testing their hypothesis. For a while in the early 1970s, there was great interest in applying this new Cognitive Code Approach to language teaching. Materials were developed with **deductive(learners are given the rule and asked to apply it) and inductive(learners discover the rule from the examples and then practice it)** grammar exercises.*

Lots of people have negative things to say about The Silent Way. More precisely, because of the teacher’s distance and the generally unfavorable classroom conditions, it was viewed as rather severe. However, even though treating the students with silence or expecting a lot of independence might not always work, a lot of the Silent Way principles are still used. Within the Silent Way, the teacher is a promoter of the learning process rather than an educator. Students are taught to rely on their knowledge and themselves. They are encouraged to try expressing themselves a lot. Therefore, teachers can interfere only when it is necessary.

The role of teachers:

- Setting up a supportive learning environment
- Providing minimal verbal input
- Observing and diagnosing student needs
- Encouraging student participation
- Offering feedback
- Fostering independent learning

The pros and cons of the method:

Pros	Cons
The emphasis is on the students’ autonomy and critical thinking.	Lack of a teacher’s assistance sometimes.
Students are more engaged in the process of learning.	The silence as a method may create a lot of extra tension and confusion.
A lot of meaningful practice rather than automatic repetition.	Lack of practice at home has a great impact on the students’ progress.
A lot of pair and group work.	Can be harsh and challenging for introverted students.
Studying through the associations rather than repetition.	Lack of understanding because some topics do require some explicit explanations and help from the teacher.

Teaching techniques of the Silent Way method:

- **Teacher's silence** encourages students to take more active role in their learning by prompting them to engage in critical thinking and allowing them the opportunity to independently explore and develop their own ideas.
- **Peer correction** – students are encouraged to help another student when he or she is experiencing difficulty. It is important that any help be offered in a cooperative manner, not a competitive one. The teacher supervises the assistance to ensure it is beneficial, not disruptive.
- **Rods** can be used to provide visible actions or situations for any language structure, to introduce it, or enable students to practice using it. The rods trigger meaning: Situations with the rods can be created in such a way that the meaning is made clear; then the language connected to the meaning. Rods can be utilized at the introductory level to teach colors and numbers. Later on they can be used for more complicated structures; for example, statements with prepositions and conditionals. Rods can also be used in more creative ways, such as helping students learn to tell time in the target language by making a clock, constructing a family tree, or designing a floor plan of their house.
- **Self-correction gestures.** The teacher uses hand gestures to signal students to extend specific vowel sound and also uses a finger for each word in a sentence to help pinpoint areas of difficulty for the student.
- **Structured Feedback.** Students are encouraged to take charge of their learning by recognizing and managing their use of various learning strategies during class. The duration and frequency of feedback sessions may differ based on the teacher and the class.

In conclusion, The Silent Way method is an innovative approach to language teaching that challenges traditional methods by placing greater emphasis on student autonomy and self-discovery. While it may not be suitable for every learner or classroom setting, it offers valuable insights into alternative approaches to language education and has inspired further developments in language teaching methodology.

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