

## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

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Basically, language teaching is the presentation of a certain language material to be learnt, and teaching method is the way this language material is presented. During the long history of language teaching there were a lot of different approaches to teaching a foreign language, all of them conditioned by a variety of reasons from cultural to political ones. Modern language teaching methods tend to use games and education through play, as well as role play games and simulations. These methods are positively accepted from both sides of the desk: while students prefer game activities to tedious traditional grammar-translation method just because they are more fun, teachers choose these methods for a variety of reasons: these methods meet the learners' real-life needs, motivate the students, and simply are more engaging, and fun, of course.

As there is a tendency that children are taught foreign languages since their early years it is not surprising that games are widely used in primary school and kindergartens. The use of this modern method there is easily explained by development psychology, as children from 3 to 7 years old cannot concentrate or be seated for a long time. However, from the point of view of development psychology, the use of these methods is hardly explicable in secondary and high schools, or even in higher educational institutions or in teaching adults. There exist a number of theories under this choice: for instance, communication as terminal learning objective and acquisition of knowledge through experience, in communicative approach and experiential learning, respectively. In the above approaches positive effect of learning by doing is coupled with immediate practicability of the acquired knowledge and skills. Modern language teaching methods make use of the recent achievements of psychology and even psychiatry for various reasons, e.g. to make class interaction closer to real situations, to motivate learners, or to help them discover inner potential

for language learning, or even to cheat students to learn a language if they lack inner motivation by enchanting them, for example. However, there seems to be one serious drawback in these approaches to language teaching: it is the idea that learning should always be fun, otherwise students tend to refuse to take part in the process. The speed of today's life is so fast that many people are not ready to spend two or three years to learn a subject. We live the world of express methods, i.e. if they do not learn to do something (to speak a language, to fight, to draw or sing) in a month, nobody will attend your school.

However, looking back, it occurs that the majority of language teachers were taught with the use of traditional approach that involved drilling, translation and grammar work and loads of home assignments for years. However boring and tedious this may sound, this work gives a student the insights into the language as a system, and helps him or her see the logic and the beauty of its structure. Moreover, only this solid foundation can ensure the ability to teach others. Unfortunately, although being immediately practical, modern 'learn-English-in-two-weeks' approaches are unable to unveil the magic of the language and secrets of culture underlying the language.

Of course it is arguable, if every student learning a language for this or that reason really needs this magic. A dozen of tricks will do for the majority of people nowadays. The times of 'art for art's sake' ('language for language's sake', in our case) have gone long ago, and the difference between Past Perfect Continuous and Past Perfect Simple is not really important any more, as well as Subjunctive mood, "Long live the Queen!" (except for students preparing for Proficiency tests, of course, and these people are quite rare today).

What are the drivers of today's language students and what is the direction of today's language teaching methods? How important is it to be earnest in today's teaching and learning?

Anyway, every language course starts with needs analysis, which in its turn provides the teaching method and specific techniques for the teacher to use in class to meet these needs.