

Lecture 1: Introduction to Didactics (Teaching English as a Foreign Language/TEFL)

1. History and Definition of Didactics

Wakefield (1996, p. 364) defined learning as: “a relatively permanent change in the behaviour of an individual based on his/her experiences or discoveries”. On the other hand, teaching is “to show someone something through signs or symbols” (Smith, 1987, p. 11). Smith further used the expression “teaching as success” to refer to the teaching-learning process that should lead to effective learning (1987, p. 11).

The term didactics is derived from the Greek word “didáskein” which means “to be a teacher, to educate” (Gundem, 2000). The term Didactics was used for the first time by Ratke in 1613. Then, his pupil “Comenius” set a series of classical principles for the discipline in 1640. Wolfgang Ratke and Johan Amos Comenius were the first scholars who used the term ‘didactics’ in their writings to refer to “the art of teaching” (Kansanen, 1999, p. 23). Education became an independent discipline in 1779 at the University of Halle in Germany with the first professor in this field ‘Ernst Christian Trapp’ (Kansanen, 1999). Later, contact with German research has led to the emergence of Didactics as a field of study at the University of Iowa (USA) in 1873. In the German context, “*Didaktik*”, in its different forms, can be described as “systematic reflection about how to organise teaching in away that brings about the individual growth of the student” (Hudson & Schneuwly, 2007, pp. 106-107). Didactics is defined as:

- 1-“the science of learning and teaching in general. It deals with learning in all possible forms and with teaching of all kinds at all levels" (Dolche, 1965, as cited in Gundem, 2000).
- 2-“the science whose subject is the planned (institutionalised and organised) support of learning to acquire ‘Bildung’” (Seel, 1999, p. 14).
- 3-“the science of teaching under conditions of school aiming to foster formation of pupils of different ages” (Seel, 1999, p. 15).

In short, didactics is the science of education concerned with the theory and practice of teaching and learning. It is concerned with:

- 1-What should be taught and learned (content).
- 2-How to teach and learn (knowledge transmission).
- 3-Why something should be taught and learned (objectives and aims).

According to Tella, “foreign language didactics include foreign language teaching and studying and, on the other hand, aspects related to methods, teaching practices, curricula and instructional contents” (1994, pp. 136-137). Basic features of didactics are:

- 1-Didactics is both an art and a science.
- 2-Teaching should have as its main aim the learning of everything by everyone.
- 3-Teaching and learning should be characterized by speed and effectiveness, prioritising the key role that language and images play in each of the two processes.

2. Related Terminology

2.1. Didactics vs. Pedagogy

Pedagogy is concerned with how people are educated and they claim that didactics is part of Pedagogy. Didactics is “knowledge-oriented, a science which aims to understand how teaching leads to learning”; whereas, pedagogy is “practice-oriented, concerned more with applied aspects of language teaching” (Sarré & Whyte, 2016, p. 142). It is pedagogy as a whole that guides the instructional process according to the aims and goals stated in the curriculum.

Didactics	Pedagogy
1-Knowledge-oriented	-Practice-oriented
2-A theorising process	-A practical process
3-Main objective: the analysis of how teaching leads to learning	-Main focus: teaching practices and education
4-Draws on various contributive sciences	-Draws on didactic approach (it is an applied component of didactics)
5-Covers both SLA and foreign language education	-Covers actors, curricula, content, context, and objectives.

2.2. Methodology vs. Pedagogy

Methodology is the study of a range of methods which are used in teaching (Adamson, p. 2004, p. 605). It is a term used to refer to *pedagogical practices* in general irrespective of the particular method the teacher is using. It allows teachers to focus both on the insights into the theories behind particular methods, as well as how they are enacted in the actual classroom. When one looks at the history of language teaching, from Roman times until today one cannot help but wonder why there have been so many methods. Nunan explained that is so because all methods:

[H]ave one thing in common. They all assume that there is a single set of principles, which will determine whether or not learning will take place. Thus, they all propose a single set of precepts for teacher and learner classroom behaviour, and assert that if these principles are faithfully followed, they will result in learning for all. (1991, p. 3)

Stern's (1983) concept of methodology can be identified with design. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), methodology involves *content, objectives, materials, procedures and assessment* (under the acronym of C.O.M.P.A.). Together with *organisation*, it constitutes the practical level of the general model for second language teaching (Stern, 1983, p. 44). Whatever considerations are involved in "how to teach" are methodological (Brown, 1994, pp. 15-16). Unlike methodology, pedagogy has broader educational goals. It is influenced by a wide range of theories and curricular influences and tensions, and is more rooted in and responsive to *the practical realities* of a particular classroom (Adamson, 2004, p. 605).

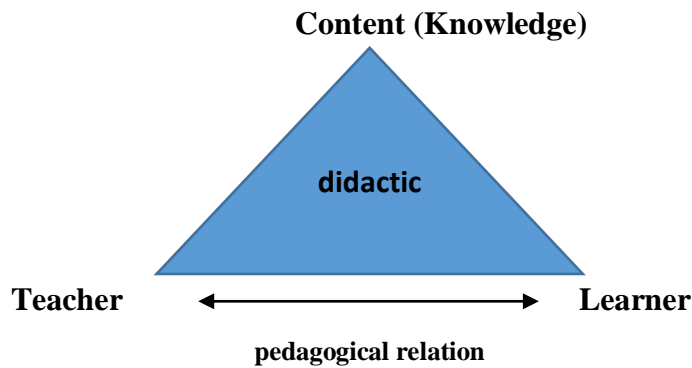
The search for the appropriate method might have begun around 1880 with François Gouin's publication of "The Art of Teaching and Learning foreign languages". The theoretical principles which have traditionally inspired the diverse methods come from different linguistic and psychological conceptions. Language and learning are the two foundation stones on which methods have been based:

a-Language: linguistics: **what?**

b-Learning: psychology: **how?**

Educational psychology is “the intersection of education and psychology. In that intersection we find an area where the aspects common to education and to psychology are found” (Kansanen & Meri, 1999, p. 108).

3. Didactic Triangle (Johann Friedrich Herbart)



4. Types of Teacher's knowledge

Teachers' knowledge evolves out of the interaction of four interrelated and mutually inclusive areas (Grossman, 1990):

4.1. Subject matter knowledge: which includes the various paradigms within a field which affect both how the field is organized and the questions that guide further inquiry together with an understanding of the canons of evidence and proof within a discipline which help members of the discipline evaluate the knowledge claims made. If a teacher only possesses this kind of knowledge, we cannot claim that person is a teacher, but a subject expert.

4.2. Pedagogical knowledge: to include knowledge about learners and learning, classroom management, curriculum and instruction. Again, this kind of knowledge is not sufficient to make a teacher. Those who possess strong pedagogical knowledge but lack the necessary content knowledge cannot be called teachers but a pedagogues or activity designers.

4.3. Knowledge of context: encompassing students' backgrounds and identity configurations, knowledge of the educational institution and the community within which it develops its social role and last, but not least, knowledge of the requirements of the school system and the purposes of

education in society. If teachers only possess this kind of knowledge then they cannot be called teachers either, but social workers.

4.4. Pedagogical content knowledge: the kind of knowledge that distinguishes between the subject matter expert, the activity designer, and the experienced teacher. It includes a multitude of facets and is, in itself, an integral part of a teacher's professional landscape. Pedagogical content knowledge encompasses: knowledge and beliefs about the purposes for teaching a subject at different grade levels; knowledge of students' understanding, conceptions and misconceptions of particular topics in the subject matter; knowledge of curriculum materials available for teaching the subject matter; and, knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics, etc. In short, pedagogical content knowledge is about “the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (Shulman, 2013, pp. 6-7).

5. Approach, Method, and Technique

Language teaching is discussed in terms of three related aspects which are "approach", "method", and "technique". In an attempt to clarify the difference between the three terms, the American linguist Edward Anthony (1963) proposed a scheme in which he identified three levels of conceptualisation and organisation: "approach", "method", and "technique". He argued that “the arrangement is hierarchical” and that “the organisational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach”.

5.1. Definition of Approach: it is defined as:

1-“a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning” (Anthony, 1963, p.63). He further added that “an approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught. It states a point of view, a philosophy, an article of faith—something which one believes but cannot necessarily prove” (Anthony, 1963, p. 64).

2-“an orientation to the problem of language learning which derives from an amalgam of linguistic and psychological insights into the nature of language and the nature of the learning process...an

approach is a theory of applied linguistics which seeks to explain the phenomenon of language learning in terms which assist the learner to achieve his goal” (Bell, 1981, p. 75).

3-“an approach refers to foundations/theoretical assumptions and to a level (an interlevel) between theory and practice where the educational linguistics theory and research take place” (Stern, 1983, pp. 43-50).

4-“theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as a source of practice and principles in language teaching” (Richards & Rogers, 1986, p. 16). An approach describes how language is used and how people acquire their knowledge and makes statement about the conditions which will promote successful language learning.

5-It is theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings (Brown, 1994, pp. 15-16).

6-“the source of practices and principles in language teaching...it refers to the ‘philosophy’ or belief system, that a method reflects” (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 22). In short, an approach refers to the theory of language and language learning. It is the theoretical assumptions and principles underlying learning.

5.2. Definition of Method: it is defined as:

1-“an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language materials, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach” (Anthony, 1963, p. 65). He differentiated between approach and method by explaining that “an approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural” (Anthony, 1963, p. 65). He also maintained that “within one approach, there can be many methods” (Anthony, 1963, p. 65).

2-“the application of the insights which constitute the approach to the problem of language learning. Typically, method will have a pedagogical grammar - or grammars - associated with it and principles which guide the creation of such grammars, the selection of elements to be taught and of techniques for teaching them” (Bell, 1981).

3-This term is concerned with the different ways of teaching a language, which is based on principles and procedures, i.e. which is an application of a view on how a language is best taught and learned (Richards, J. Platt, & H. Platt, 1992, p. 238).

4-A generalized set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistics' objectives. Methods tend to be concerned primarily with teacher and student roles and behaviours and secondarily with such features as linguistic and subject-matter objectives, sequencing and materials. They are almost always thought of as being broadly applicable to a variety of audiences in a variety of contexts (Brown, 1994, pp. 15-16).

5-A specific instructional design or system based on a particular theory of language and of language learning. It contains detailed specifications of content, roles of teachers and learners, and teaching procedures and techniques. It is relatively fixed in time and there is generally little scope for individual interpretation. Methods are learned through training (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 245).

6-"A single set of practices and procedures, derived from theory or theorization of practice that impinges upon the design of a curriculum plan, resources, and teaching and learning activities. Methods link theory to practice; thus, they represent a key contribution of applied linguistics to language education" (Adamson, 2004, p. 605). In short, a method is the practical realisation/the application of an approach. It is procedural.

5.3. Definition of Technique: it is defined as follows:

1-"Technique is implementational - that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective" (Anthony, 1963, p. 66). Anthony added that "techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. Techniques depend on the teacher, his individual artistry, and on the composition of the class. Particular problem can be tackled equally successfully by the use of different techniques" (Anthony, 1963, p. 66). He gave the example of imitation, drawing, laboratory tape-recorders, and phonographs (record players) as techniques.

2-A technique is any specific strategy used in a classroom to obtain immediate results. It is what really happens during the lectures. It involves “lectures, exercises, projects and assignments, case studies, discussions, role plays and simulations” (Bell, 1981).

3-It deals with the different kinds of classroom activities used in teaching such as drills, dialogues, role play, and so forth (Richards, J. Platt, & H. Platt, 1992, p.20).

4-Any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives (Brown, 1994, pp. 15-16). For instance, when using videos, teachers often use a technique called “silent viewing” which consists of playing the video without sound and asking students to figure out what the characters were saying.

5.4. Methods’ Levels

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001, as cited in Adamson, p. 605), methods are described in terms of three levels:

5.4.1. Approach: theory of language, theory of learning, principles.

5.4.2. Design: developing a design for an instructional system represents the level of method analysis in which we consider (a) the objectives of a method; (b) content selection and organisation; (c) tasks and activities; (d) the roles of learners; (c) the roles of teachers; and (f) the role of instructional materials (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 29).

5.4.3. Procedure: Harmer (2001) described ‘procedures’ as “an ordered set of techniques.” They are the step-by-step measures to execute a method. According to Harmer, a procedure is “smaller than a method and larger than a technique.” it can be described in terms of first do this, then you can do that... it can be said that a procedure is a sequence of techniques.

A procedure can be understood as a set of actions, operations, techniques and strategies which has to be executed accordingly to a perception on how to obtain an expected result.

Procedures are those “techniques, practices, and behaviours observed when the method” is taken to the classroom, as Richards and Rodgers summarised (1986).

6. The Main Models/Views of Language Teaching/Learning

Seven theoretical views inspired the various approaches and methods of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The following is a very brief description of some of the different models of language that are reflected in language teaching methods. However, they are incomplete and need to be complemented by theories of language learning.

6.1. The Structural Model/View

An interesting traditional way of conceptualizing language and one that has had a wide application in language teaching is the structural view, the view that language is a system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning. The target of language learning is seen to be the mastery of elements of this system, which are generally defined in terms of phonological units (e.g., phonemes), grammatical units (e.g., clauses, phrases, sentences), grammatical operations (e.g., adding, shifting, joining, or transforming elements), and lexical items.

6.2. The Functional Model/View

A different model of language and one which takes a number of different forms is the functional view, the view that language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meanings and for performing real-world activities. It is pragmatic and instrumental. It aims at addressing societal problems aiming at solving them by drawing on different types of competencies. Functional models of language are linked to the concept of communicative competence -knowing how language is used to achieve different kinds of communicative purposes or, as defined by Brown (1994):

That aspect of our competence which enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts ... [The] knowledge that enables a person to communicate functionally and interactionally. (p. 227)

Functional approaches emphasise the semantic and communicative dimension rather than merely the grammatical characteristics of language, and lead to a specification and organisation of language teaching content by categories of meaning and function rather than by elements of structure and grammar. They describe language in terms of sets of the competencies a learner is

able to express through language. The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement likewise begins not from a structural theory of language but from a functional account of learners' needs. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983, pp. 65-66) placed the functional categories under five headings as noted below: *personal*, *interpersonal*, *directive*, *referential*, and *imaginative*.

6.2.1. Personal: clarifying or arranging one's ideas; expressing one's thoughts or feelings: love, joy, pleasure, happiness, surprise, likes, satisfaction, dislikes, disappointment, distress, pain, anger, anguish, fear, anxiety, sorrow, frustration, annoyance at missed opportunities, moral, intellectual and social concerns; and the everyday feelings of hunger, thirst, fatigue, cold, or warmth...

6.2.2. Interpersonal: enabling us to establish and maintain desirable social and working relationships: greetings and leave takings (at work); introducing people to others; identifying oneself to others; expressing joy at others' success; extending and accepting invitations; refusing invitations politely or making alternative arrangements; making appointments for meetings; breaking appointments politely and arranging another mutually convenient time; apologizing; excusing oneself and accepting excuses for not meeting commitments; indicating agreement or disagreement; interrupting another speaker politely; changing an embarrassing subject...

6.3.3. Directive: attempting to influence the actions of others; accepting or refusing direction: making suggestions in which the speaker is included; making requests; making suggestions; refusing to accept a suggestion or a request but offering an alternative; persuading someone to change his point of view; requesting and granting permission; discouraging someone from pursuing a course of action; asking for directions or instructions...

6.3.4. Referential: talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future; talking *about* language: identifying items or people in the classroom, the school the home, the community; asking for a description of someone or something; defining something or a language item or asking for a definition; paraphrasing, summarising, or translating; explaining or asking for explanations of how something works; comparing things; requesting or reporting facts about events or actions...

6.3.5. Imaginative: discussions involving elements of creativity and artistic expression: discussing a poem, a story, a piece of music, a play, a painting, a film, a TV program, etc.; expanding ideas suggested by others or by a piece of literature; creating rhymes, poetry, stories or plays; recombining familiar dialogs or passages creatively; suggesting original beginnings or endings to dialogs or stories...

6.3. The Interactional Model/View

It sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals. Language is seen as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations. Interactional theories focus on the patterns of moves, acts, negotiation, and interaction found in conversational and other kinds of exchanges which are central to an understanding of discourse. “Interaction” has been central to theories of second language learning and pedagogy since the 1980s. Rivers (1987, p. 4) defined the interactive perspective in language education: “students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages”. Negotiation of meaning is believed to play a central role in interactive views of language and is central to current teaching proposals.

Language is acquired through interaction. In the 1960s, considerable research looked at how parents interact with children in the first language. Long suggested that it is not what the learner hears but how they are interacted with that matters (1981). Learning through interaction involves negotiation of meaning. The central concept in the interaction approach is ‘negotiation of meaning’ –that is keeping the channel of communication open – the equivalent of saying, ‘Are you still there?’ In other words, useful interaction involves keeping the conversation rolling by continuously resolving any difficulties in comprehension. Some of the different possibilities are: ‘repetitions, confirmations, reformulations’. Following this model, teaching means setting up tasks that involve negotiation of meaning, and teacher or peer feedback is important to interaction, particularly through recasts (reformulations).

6.4. The Cognitive View

A cognitive view of language is based on the idea that language reflects properties of the mind. Atkinson (2011) identified a number of core features and assumptions of a cognitive view of language, or “cognitivism”:

1. **Mind as a computer:** a set of operations that take in input, process it, and produce output, as with a computer.
2. **Representationalism:** processes that the mind engages in to store internal representations of external events.
3. **Learning as abstract knowledge acquisition:** i.e. abstracting the rules of the competence that underlies linguistic performance, as Noam Chomsky put it. (pp. 4-5)

Chomsky’s theory of Universal Grammar (UG), first proposed in the 1980s is a well-developed example of a cognitive model of language. According to UG theory, our minds contain a mental grammar that consists of universal principles that are common to all languages, and parameters that vary according to different languages.

6.5. The Sociocultural Model/View

A related view of language is referred to as a sociocultural model. Sociocultural theory views language as a communicative activity in which the social context is central. Knowledge is constructed through social interaction with others and reflects the learners’ culture, customs, and beliefs as well as the collaborative activities people are engaged in.

6.6. The Genre Model/View

The genre model (considered also as a functional model) is derived from the genre-based approach. Genre refers to an area of human activity where there are norms of language usage, such as in science, business, medicine, literature. Texts are the units of discourse that occur in different genres such as narratives, descriptions, and explanations. The main concepts of this model of language can be summarised as follows (Feez, 1998, p. 5):

- 1-Language is a resource for making meaning.

- 2-The resource of language consists of a set of interrelated systems.
- 3-Language users draw on this resource each time they use language.
- 4-Language users create texts to create meaning.
- 5-Texts are shaped by the social context in which they are used.
- 6-The social context is shaped by the people (specialists in a specific field) using language.

This has had an impact on the teaching of both English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Paltridge, 2006).

6.7. The Lexical Model/View

The lexical view of language prioritises the role of lexis and lexical chunks or phrases in language and highlights the interrelatedness of grammar and vocabulary. Rather than seeing lexis and grammar as discrete, they are viewed as being intrinsically related (Schmitt 2004; O’Keefe et al., 2007). Advocates of lexical models of language suggest that grammatical competence arises out of phrase- and lexically-based learning and argue for a greater role for vocabulary as well as lexical phrases and chunks in language teaching. This view is reflected most directly in the Lexical Approach.

7. Product-oriented vs. Process-oriented Methods

Product-oriented methods have product-oriented objectives (linguistically oriented) where much emphasis is placed on vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and accurate/correct pronunciation; whereas, process-oriented methods focus more on language use and communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 30). Consequently, there is no need for clearly-defined outcomes/objectives as the aim and content of a course “will vary according to the needs of the students and their particular interests” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 65).

8. Teachers’ Roles

The teacher has several roles in the classroom. According to Harmer (2003), s/he can be a controller, an organiser, an assessor, a prompter, a participant and a resource.

8.1. Controller: teachers as controllers are in charge of the class and of the activities going on in groups. This control is not the most effective role for the teacher to adopt. This role is useful during the accurate reproduction stage of the lesson and in frontal activities. At the practice stage and especially at the production stage of the lesson this control should be relaxed to some degree.

8.2. Organiser: organising students to do various activities is one of the most important roles that teachers have. It involves giving the students information and organising teaching material.

8.3. Assessor: a major part of a teacher's job is to assess the students' work, to see how well they are performing and how well they have performed. It is vital for the teacher to be sensitive and tactful to his/her students in his/her role as assessor and to start assessment always with the positive feedback.

8.4. Prompter: in this role the teacher needs to encourage students to participate in a role play activity or needs to make suggestions about how students may proceed in an activity.

8.5. Participant: teachers should not be afraid to participate in certain activities as a partner but s/he should not get involved in pair-work or group-work because it will prevent him/her from monitoring the students and performing other important roles.

8.6. Resource: teachers used to be the only resource of information but this role cannot be performed these days as it was done several decades ago. Students have an access to the Internet and other important sources so teachers can add only some pieces of information to the ones gained from other sources. Teachers are supposed to organise and coordinate the process of acquisition, to act as a catalyst (Harmer, 2003, pp. 56-63).

9. Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction, also termed individualised and responsive instruction, is “a teaching method that is quickly developing in the higher education setting (Tulbure, 2011). It takes into account student's learning styles including, but not limited to, individual strengths, weaknesses, interests, and goals to promote success (Hart et al., 2006). It is “a teaching philosophy based on the premise that teachers should adapt instruction to student differences” (Cobb, 2010, p. 38).

10. Learners' Styles in General

10.1. Visual (we look and see): visual learners tend to prefer reading and studying charts, drawings and graphic information.

10.2. Auditory (we hear and listen): these learners are characterised by a preference for listening to lectures and audiotapes.

10.3. Kinaesthetic (we feel externally, internally or through movement): these learners are right-brain dominant, they use both hemispheres of their brains simultaneously that is why they are acquiring the structures through actions.

11. Willing's Learning styles (1987)

11.1. Convergents: these are students who are by nature solitary, prefer to avoid groups, and who are independent and confident in their own abilities. Most importantly they are analytic and can impose their own structures on learning. They tend to be cool and pragmatic.

11.2. Conformists: these are students who prefer to emphasise learning 'about language' over Learning to use it. They tend to be dependent on those in authority and are perfectly happy to work in non-communicative classrooms, doing what they are told. A classroom of conformists is one which prefers to see well-organised teachers.

11.3. Concrete learners: though they are like conformists, they also enjoy the social aspects of learning and like to learn from direct experience. They are interested in language use and language as communication rather than language as a system. They enjoy games and group work in class.

11.4. Communicative learners: these are Language use orientated. They are comfortable out of class and show a degree of confidence and a willingness to take risks which their colleagues may Lack. They are much more interested in social interaction with other speakers of the language than they are with analysis of how the language works. They are perfectly happy to operate without the guidance of a teacher.

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