



SAE 3

(If the lesson shapes described on page 3 and the terms below are unfamiliar to you, you may like to attempt this SAE after completing the input module.)

The lessons specified on page 3 fit one of the lesson types listed below. Can you match them up?

1. ARC (Authentic Use, Restricted Use and Clarification and Focus) _____
2. Test-Teach-Test _____
3. Deductive Presentation _____
4. Task Based Learning _____
5. The Discovery Method _____
6. Presentation Practice and Production _____
7. The improvement of listening skills: specifically the sub skills of listening for gist, listening for detail and listening for specific information. _____

There are other approaches linked to humanistic thinking, see Harmer Chapter 6 which can be very successful. Nevertheless important psychological factors need to be taken into account when implementing them and they are not necessarily appropriate in all educational settings or with all students. Some of the activities suggested by proponents of humanistic approaches may be in conflict with the cultural and religious mores of certain nationalities. Others may expose the learner to reveal more, emotionally than they, their fellow students or the teacher are qualified to handle.

Please check your answers before proceeding further.

Theoretical background

Until the twentieth century, the teaching of a second language followed a procedure begun in monasteries and continued across the centuries. This is known as the grammar translation approach. It was informed by intellectuals, rather than researchers engaged in a study of the mental processes involved in second language learning (also referred to as acquisition). Second language acquisition theory is relatively new and was preceded by the study of linguistics.

Learning as product

It was linguists who considered that language can be acquired incrementally and that learners progress in a series of stages from easy to difficult. Language was analysed and graded according to various criteria, the most common of which was complexity and learnability. Consequently a language syllabus evolved which predicted what could be taught according to perceived simplicity of structure, ease of teaching and level of learner. The more complex a structure the higher the level of student before it could be introduced. Learning was perceived as the product of teaching. Most materials writers continue to follow this line of thought.

You could say that the thrust of linguistic research was 'What is learned first?' and the implication for the classroom was, 'What do we teach first?'

Learning as process

Psychological research into what factors facilitate learning followed and the findings were seized upon by educationalists, with a rash of so called 'methods' resulting. Whatever the method, learning as a product of the teaching of a content based syllabus, has been called into question by recent psycholinguistic research which has focussed upon the mental processes involved in language learning. Cognitive theory considers that language acquisition occurs as the result of a process of internal system building, some of which is conscious and some unconscious. Where a second language is learned in an institutional, rather than a naturalistic context, it is not the content of the syllabus which is crucial to successful learning but the methodology employed by the teacher. The role of the teacher as instructor has been called into question by current research. Doubts have been cast upon prescribing what is to be learnt, i.e. providing a syllabus. Instead recent thinking considers that the teacher's role is to draw the student's attention to meaning and language systems, whilst accepting that what is taught is not immediately acquired. Such thinking ignores learners' expectations of the teacher's role, and the educational and cultural context of learning.