

from the teacher requires the students to develop “inner criteria” and to correct themselves. The absence of explanations requires learners to make generalizations, come to their own conclusions, and formulate whatever rules they themselves feel they need (Richards and Rodgers 2003:83).

Stevick defines the Silent Way teacher’s task as (a) to teach, (b) to test, and (c) to get out of the way. Although these are the standard teaching practices, the steps followed are unique to the Silent Way. By “teaching” it is meant the presentation of an item once, typically using nonverbal clues to get across the meanings. Testing follows immediately and might better be termed elicitation and shaping of student production, which, again is done in as silent manner as possible. Finally, the teacher silently monitors learners’ interactions with each other and may even leave the room while learners struggle with their new linguistic tools (Stevick 1980:56).

## Criticisms

Brown (2001:29) criticizes the Silent Way as being “too harsh a method and the teacher too distant to encourage a communicative atmosphere.” Students often need more guidance and overt correction than the Silent Way permitted. There are some aspects of language that can be easily quickly “told” to students. They need not struggle for hours or days with a concept that could be easily clarified by the teacher’s direct guidance. “The rods and charts wear thin after a few lessons, and other materials must be introduced, at which point the Silent Way classroom can look like any other language classroom.

Richards and Rodgers (2001, 88) conclude that “the method exemplifies many of the features that characterize more traditional methods, such as Situational Language

Teaching and Audio-Lingual Method, with a strong focus on accurate repetition of sentences modeled initially by the teacher and a movement through guided elicitation exercises to freer communication.”

And yet, as Brown (2001) states “the underlying principles of the Silent Way are valid. All too often we are tempted as teachers to provide every thing for our students, neatly served up on a silver platter. We could benefit from injecting healthy doses of discovery learning into our classroom activities and from providing less teacher talk than we usually do to let the students work things out on their own.

## Reference

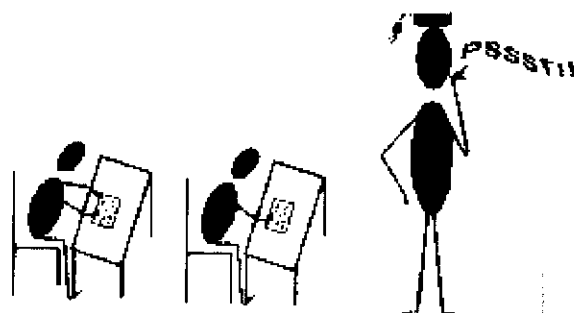
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and visual cues thus constitute the basis for classroom activities (Richards and Rodgers 2001).

Language teachers using the Silent Way employ three basic teaching aids: a set of colored rods, color-coded pronunciation and vocabulary wall charts, a pointer, and reading/writing exercises all of which are used to illustrate the relationship between sound and meaning in the target language. The teacher begins by taking a rod and saying 'a rod' to the students. Later he induces them to repeat the name of the object. The next step is to combine the names of colors with the object, saying 'a blue rod', 'a green rod', etc. the final step in the teaching sequence is to get the students to say 'a blue rod', 'a green rod', etc. without the teacher's model. With the wall charts the teacher gets students to form strings of words with what they have learned orally by pointing to a series of words that they read in the order indicated. Another technique is to ask them to point to the words after the teacher gives them. Gattegno refers to this type of practice as "visual dictation". As the students learn more, the teacher says less and less (Chastain 1988: 101).

The pronunciation charts, called "Fidels" have been devised for a number of languages and contain symbols in the target language for all of the vowel and consonant sounds of the language. The symbols are color-coded according to pronunciation; thus, if a language possesses two different symbols for the same sound, they will be colored alike.

Just as the Fidel charts are used to visually illustrate pronunciation, the colored rods are used to directly link words and structures with their meanings in the target language, thereby avoiding translation into the native language. The rods vary in length from 1 to 10 centimeters, and each length has a specific color. The rods may be used for naming colors, for size comparisons,

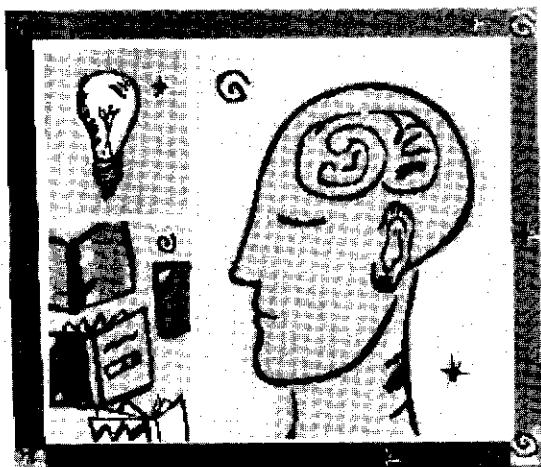


to represent people, build floor plans, constitute a road map, and so on. Use of the rods is intended to promote inventiveness, creativity, and interest in forming communicative utterances on the part of the students, as they move from simple to more complex structures.

### The role of learner and teacher

According to Larsen-Freeman (1986: 62) the teacher is a technician or engineer in this method. "Only the learner can do the learning," but the teacher, relying on whatever students already know, can give what ever help is necessary, focus the students' perceptions, force their awareness, and provide exercises to insure their facility with the language.

Learners are expected to develop independence, autonomy, and responsibility. Independent learners are those who are aware that they must depend on their own resources and realize that they can use "the knowledge of their own language to open up some things in a new language" or that they can "take their knowledge of the first few words in the new language and figure out additional words by using that knowledge" (Stevick 1980:42). The absence of correction and repeated modeling



of vocabulary as crucial. The most important vocabulary for the learner deals with the most functional and versatile words of the language, many of which may not have direct equivalents in the learner's native language. This "functional vocabulary" provides a key, says Gattegno, to comprehend the "spirit" of the language.

Gattegno is highly skeptical in drawing similarities between L1 acquisition and L2 learning because of the differences between the two processes. He instead emphasizes on the principle that successful learning involves commitment of the self to language acquisition through the use of silent awareness and then active trial. Silence is considered the best vehicle for learning because in silence students concentrate on the task to be accomplished and the potential means to its accomplishment. Silence, as avoidance of repetition, is an aid to alertness, concentration and mental organization (Gattegno 1967: 80).

### Objectives and the syllabus

Concerning the goals of teachers who use the Silent Way, Larsen Freeman (1986: 62) notes that "students should be able to use the language for self expression - to express their thoughts, perceptions and feelings. In order to do this, they need to develop independence from the teacher,

to develop their own inner criteria for correctness."

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 83) the general objective of the Silent Way is to give beginning-level students oral and aural facility in basic elements of the target language. The general goal set for language learning is near-native fluency in the target language, and correct pronunciation and mastery of the prosodic elements of the target language are emphasized. An immediate objective is to provide the learner with a basic practical knowledge of the grammar.

The Silent Way adopts a basically structural syllabus, with lessons planned around grammatical items and related vocabulary. However, Gattegno does not provide details as to the precise selection and arrangement of grammatical and lexical items to be covered. As Larsen-Freeman (op. cit.) notes there is no fixed, linear, structural syllabus. Instead, the teacher starts with what the students know, and builds from one structure to the next. As the learners' repertoire is expanded, previously introduced structures are continually being recycled. The syllabus develops according to learning needs (p. 64).

### Activities and materials

Learning tasks and activities in the Silent Way have the function of encouraging and shaping students' oral response without direct oral instruction from or unnecessary modeling by the teacher. Basic to the method are simple linguistic tasks in which the teacher models a word, phrase, or sentence and then elicits learner responses. Learners then go on to create their own utterances by putting together old and new information. Teacher modeling is minimal, although much of the activity may be teacher-directed. Responses to commands, questions,

look for while an adult already knows at least one language and knows how it functions. Therefore, instead of an approach based on principles of first language acquisition, he proposes an artificial approach that is strictly controlled (Chastain 1987).

Gattegno's main concern was 'subordination of teaching to learning.' He held that good teaching must always conform to the demands of learning and he spent most of his life investigating what those demands might be (Mirhassani 2003). He dismissed traditional teaching as being too concerned with filling memories rather than educating students. Elements of the Silent Way, particularly the use of color charts and colored rods, grew out of Gattegno's previous experience as an educational designer of reading and mathematics.

While Gattegno was interested in a 'humanistic' approach (Chamot and Mckeen 1984:2) to education, much of the Silent Way was characterized by a problem-solving approach to learning. Richards and Rodgers (2003:81) have summarized the learning hypotheses underlying Gattegno's work:

1. Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than memorizes and repeats what is to be learned.
2. Learning is facilitated by accompanying physical objects.
3. Learning is facilitated by problem-solving involving the material to be learned.

According to these principles learning is a problem solving, creative activity, in which the learner is an actor rather than a bench-bound listener. Brown (2001:29) views 'discovery learning' as a popular educational trend of the 1960s that advocated less learning 'by being told' and more learning by discovering for oneself various facts and principles. Bruner

(1966:83) discusses the benefits derived from 'discovery learning' under four headings; (a) the increase in intellectual potency, (b) the shift from extrinsic to intrinsic rewards, (c) the learning of heuristics by discovering, and (d) the aid to conserving memory.

Stevick (1976) summarizes the Silent Way in five basic ideas; (1) learning should take precedence over teaching; (2) learning does not consist of imitation of drill; (3) learning consists of the mind equipping itself for what it needs to learn; (4) learning involves the mind drawing on what it already knows; and (5) learning will take place more readily if the teacher will stop interfering and sidetracking the learning process (Chastain 1988:102).

### Theoretical Bases

In Gattegno's (1972) work, considerable discussion is devoted to the importance of grasping the 'spirit' of the language, and not that just its component forms. By the 'spirit' of the language Gattegno is refers to the way that each language is composed of phonological and suprasegmental elements that combine to give the language its unique sound system and melody. The learner must gain a 'feel' for this aspect of the target language as soon as possible.

By looking at the material chosen and the sequence in which it is presented in a Silent Way classroom, it is clear that the Silent Way takes a somehow structural approach to the organization of language to be taught. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching and the teacher focuses on prepositional meaning, rather than communicative value. Students are presented with the patterns of the target language and learn the grammar rules of the language through largely inductive processes.

Gattegno sees vocabulary as central dimension of language learning and the choice



# The Silent Way

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## چکیده

پس از دهه‌ی شصت میلادی که به دهه‌ی انقلاب در نظریه‌های روان‌شناسی و زبان‌شناسی معروف است، اصول شناخت‌گرایی به تدریج جایگزین اصول رفتارگرایی و تجربه‌مداری در تئوری‌های یادگیری و زبان شدند. روش‌های تدریس زبان نیز در راستای این تغییرات رویکردهای نویی را اتخاذ کردند. روش صامت آموزش زبان، روشی است که در سال ۱۹۷۲ توسط گالب گاتگنو در اروپا ابداع شد. در این روش که رویکرد شناخت‌گرایانه دارد، نقش اصلی و عمده‌ی یادگیری بر عهده‌ی زبان‌آموز گذاشته می‌شود و سکوت و عدم دخالت معلم، ابزاری است که به زبان‌آموز امکان می‌دهد تا قواعد زبان جدید را با بهره‌گیری از قوای ذهنی و ادراکی خود کشف کند. کلید واژه‌ها: شناخت‌گرایی، رفتارگرایی، تجربه‌مداری، روش صامت آموزش زبان.

## Abstract

The decade of 1960s is known as the decade of revolution both in psychology and linguistics. The long-standing behavioristic views of language and learning gave way to cognitive psychology, which emphasized the role of learners' mental processes in language learning. Foreign language teaching methods also kept track of the revolutionary theories and ideas. The Silent Way method was introduced by Calleb Gattegno in 1972 in Europe. The main characteristic of this method is the subordination of teaching to learning. The teacher's silence is in fact a tool to allow the learner to employ his mental capacities to discover the rules of the new language.

**Key Words:** cognitive psychology, behavioristic views, the Silent Way Method, discovery learning.

## Introduction

The Silent Way is a second language teaching method which was devised by Calleb Gattegno. It is based on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom but the learner should be encouraged to produce

as much language as he/she can. Gattegno (1972) as the originator and principal philosopher of the Silent Way, claims that a child learning his or her first language and an adult learning a second language in a classroom have little in common. A child has no idea what language is nor what to