

BLOCK 3.

Back to the past (2).

The 19th century: The century of “methods”

Sub-block 3.2.
The Natural Approach from the 19th century

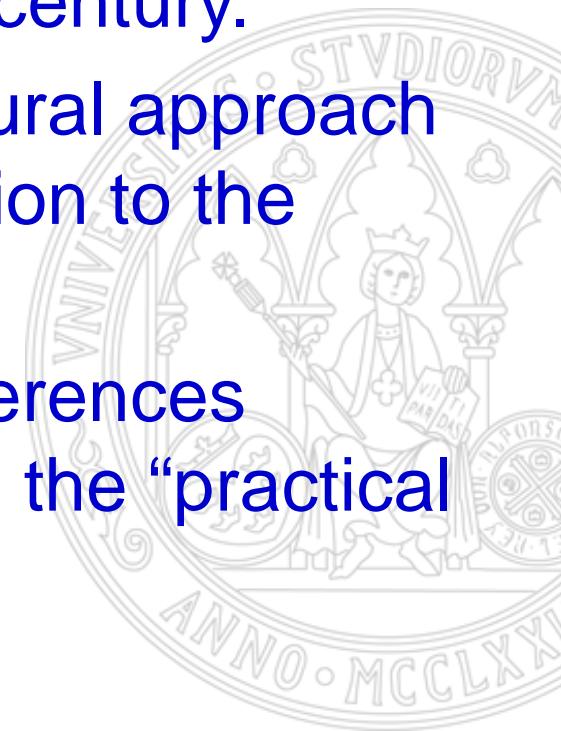
Unit 3.2.1. Introduction

Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Historical reasons for the rise of the “Natural Approach to learning and teaching languages” in the 19th century
3. What is the Natural Approach to learning languages?
4. Predecessors of the 19th century’s Natural Approach
5. Pedagogical procedures of a natural methodology
6. Relationship between the 19th century’s Natural Approach and Ahn and Ollendorff’s “practical method”
7. Two major strands within the Natural Approach of the 19th century:
 - 7.1. Pedagogical strand: individual pre-reformers and the Direct Method
 - 7.2. Linguistic and psychological strand: The Reform Movement

1. Objectives of this unit

1. Know the origin and features of the natural approach in the teaching of foreign languages popularised in the 19th century.
2. Know the predecessors of the natural approach of the 19th century and its connection to the conversational tradition.
3. Recognise the similarities and differences between the natural approach and the “practical method” by Ahn and Ollendorff.



2. Historical reasons for the rise of the “Natural Approach to learning and teaching languages” in the 19th century



Sub-block 3.1:

- *Not all learners could be expected to learn a foreign language through the academic ‘grammar school’ education or traditional education or even to pay for such education.*
- *A new class of learner emerged in the 19th century due to historical reasons:*
 - *changes in patterns of transport*
 - *emigration to the USA*
 - *industrialization of the second half of the nineteenth century*



need to be orally proficient in foreign languages

3. What is the Natural Approach to learning and teaching languages? Distinguishing characteristics

19th century: spreading of the natural methodology all over the world.

The reasserting of a more natural approach was not only the result of loyalty to a long-standing tradition that dated back to ancient civilizations and had been consciously affirmed especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was more particularly the emergence of new ideas within the ranks of such newly born sciences as Linguistics and Psychology. Representative of the soundest portion of this educational heritage are such teachers as Heness, Marcel, Sauveur and Gouin. On the linguistic side, Viëtor could be considered as the pioneer of a more scientific reform that arose toward the end of the nineteenth century.

(Titone, 1968: 31)

3. What is the Natural Approach to learning and teaching languages? Distinguishing characteristics



What is the opposite of “natural”? How would you define a natural approach to learning languages?



3. What is the Natural Approach to learning and teaching languages? Distinguishing characteristics

We could state the following features of a natural approach to learning languages:

- 1) Learning must follow the principles of Nature.
- 2) Learning the language is carried out in a natural environment, i.e. as in mother tongue acquisition.
- 3) In a natural environment you learn
 - a) by listening and repeating
 - b) by practising (by doing)
 - c) by using the language you really need
 - d) (mostly) inductively
 - e) by establishing a direct association between words and concepts by means of *objects/realia*

In other words: in a natural environment you learn the FL by orally communicating in that language

4. Predecessors of the 19th century's Natural Approach



- 1) All the conversational tradition! (units 2.1 and 2.2)



- 2) Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592):

Essay on the Education of Children (1580). Example of learning Latin in the conversational and formal way.

My Latin immediately grew corrupt, and through lack of practice I have since lost all use of it. The only service that this new method of education did me was to let me skip the lower classes at the beginning. For when I left the school at thirteen, I had finished the course -as they call it- and really without any benefit that I can now note in its favour.

(Montaigne, 158: 83-84)

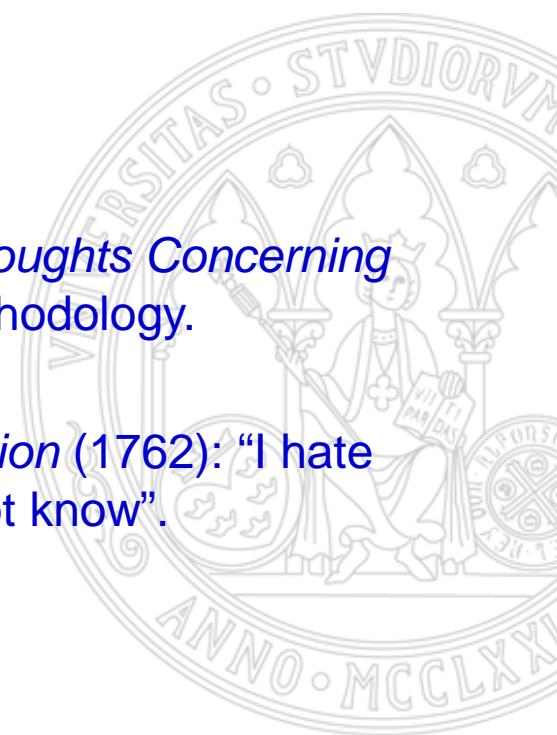
4. Predecessors of the 19th century's Natural Approach

- 3) Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670). *Janua Linguarum Reserata* (1633), *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658). First author to explicitly establish the principles of inductive learning for adults. Object-based teaching



Unit 3.2.4 (Pestalozzi)

- 4) John Locke (1632-1704). English philosopher. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) he stresses the merits of the Natural methodology.
- 5) Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). *Emile or On Education* (1762): “I hate books. They only teach one to talk about what one does not know”.



4. Predecessors of the 19th century's Natural Approach

- 6) P. J. F. Luneau de Boisgermain (1732-1804). The first author to accurately define the idea of 'natural method'. *Cours de Langue Italienne* (1783):

When we want to learn a language, I think that we have to proceed as a child whom we want to teach to speak its mother tongue; and that it is necessary to follow in this new study solely the instinct from the mothers who teach how to speak to their children. When Nature has given the child's organs the facility to utter the different sounds of the voice, a mother teaches him or her the words of her language, one after another. She repeats them until the child has retained them and starts making use of them. Mothers do not employ either masters or grammars to this end. They talk to their children: They put words into the latter's memories. I want us to proceed like them when we want to learn a foreign language. The masters of foreign languages only see pronunciation and grammar in the study of languages. They are interested in stressing the importance of their work very much.

(Criado's translation from the original French. In Titone, 1968: 20-21)

All these ideas put forward by the previous authors paved the way for the rise of the Natural Approach in the 19th century.

5. Pedagogical procedures of a natural methodology

1. The teacher must start by pointing to the objects around him/her and making the student repeat the names of those objects. Then, the words are written on the blackboard and later practice will consist of making sentences that imply the recombination and variants of the lexical elements.
2. Writing will be introduced as an efficient method to fix the spoken language.
3. The exposure to language will be intense: listening to readings, describing objects, stories...
4. Only then are teachers allowed to introduce grammar in an **inductive** way: students must deduce them from the preceding practice.
5. Graded readings are introduced from simple to complex. They must be carefully chosen so as to arouse interest and thus sustain motivation.

(Sánchez, 1997: 109. Criado's translation)

6. Relationship between the 19th century's Natural Approach and Ahn and Ollendorff's “practical method”

Can you work without speaking? - I can work, but not study Spanish without speaking.

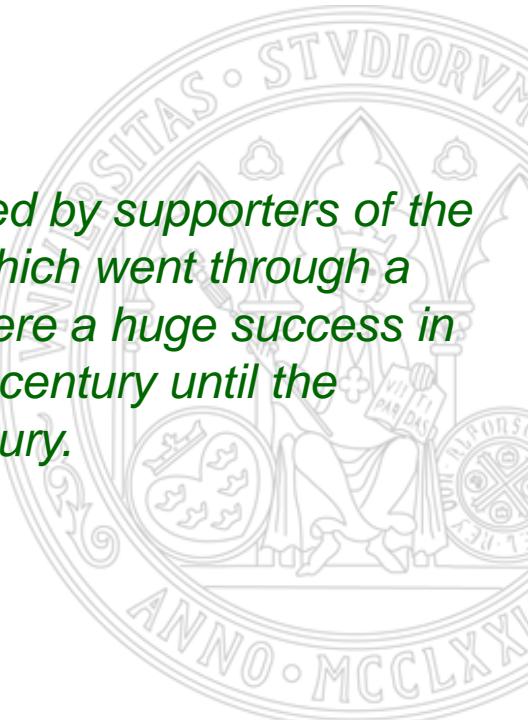
(Lesson forty-three in *Ollendorff's New Method of Learning to Read, Write, and Speak the Spanish Language*, 1895: 180).

Sub-block 3.1:

Ollendorff's “practical approach” was very much favoured by supporters of the Natural Method or Natural way of learning languages (which went through a revival in the 19th century). In fact, Ollendorff's books were a huge success in the USA and Europe, dominating the market in the 19th century until the appearance of the Direct Method at the end of that century.



1, 2



7. Two major strands within the Natural Approach of the 19th century

7.1. Pedagogical strand (language teaching concern):

- Individual pre-reformers (Dufief, Jacotot, Marcel, Prendergast, Rosenthal, Gouin).



Unit 3.2.2

- The Direct Method:

From its predecessors (Comenius, Pestalozzi, Sauveur) to its final configuration with Berlitz.



Unit 3.2.4

7.2. Linguistic and psychological strand: The Reform Movement.

The scientific approach in language teaching. Origin of Applied Linguistics. Rise of the science of phonetics.



Unit 3.2.3