

THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEACHING APPROACHES, METHODS, PROCEDURES, TECHNIQUES, STYLES, AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract: Language teacher education relies on a small set of terms approach, method, procedure, technique, style, and strategy that are frequently used as if they were synonyms, even though each occupies a distinct place in the hierarchy of instructional decision-making. This article draws on Hasanova et al. (2021) to clarify the conceptual boundaries between these six terms and illustrates each one with examples drawn from recent Uzbek EFL scholarship, including work on writing-skill activities (Absalamov & Khujakulov, 2024), the teaching of culturally specific lexical items such as folk-medicine terminology (Khujakulov, 2024), and the instructional needs of passive learners (Khujakulov, 2025c). The article argues that terminological precision is not a pedantic exercise but a practical necessity: teachers who conflate approach with method, or technique with strategy, are more likely to make inconsistent classroom decisions and to struggle when justifying those decisions in lesson planning, materials design, and professional reflection.

Introduction

Anyone who has sat through a methodology course in TESOL will recognize the discomfort of being asked to distinguish an 'approach' from a 'method,' or a 'technique' from a 'procedure.' The terms circulate constantly in teacher-training literature, course syllabi, and lesson-plan templates, yet they are rarely defined with the same rigor from one source to the next. Hasanova et al. (2021) address this gap directly, proposing a layered model in which each term operates at a different level of abstraction from the theoretical assumptions that underlie a program of instruction down to the momentary choices a teacher makes in the middle of a lesson. This article extends that model, using it as a lens through which to examine a range of practical examples from Uzbek EFL research, and closes by considering why the distinctions matter for classroom practice rather than only for terminological housekeeping.

Approach: The Theoretical Foundation

An approach is the broadest of the six terms. It refers to a set of correlative assumptions about the nature of language and the nature of language learning, without prescribing any particular classroom procedure. Communicative Language Teaching, for instance, rests on the assumption that language is fundamentally a tool for meaning-making and social interaction; that assumption can be realized through many different methods and countless techniques, but the approach itself commits a teacher to nothing more specific than a general orientation toward communication over rote

accuracy. Hasanova et al. (2021) emphasize that an approach is axiomatic it describes a belief system, not a plan of action which is precisely what distinguishes it from the next level down, the method.

Method: The Overall Plan

A method translates an approach into an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material. Where an approach answers the question 'what do we believe about language and learning?', a method answers the question 'how, in general terms, will we organize instruction to reflect that belief?' The Audiolingual Method, the Direct Method, and Task-Based Language Teaching are all methods in this sense: each is a coherent, describable system with its own syllabus logic, role for the teacher and learner, and treatment of error, but each still leaves room for a teacher to select from a range of specific classroom procedures on any given day. Hasanova et al. (2021) note that a single approach can, in principle, give rise to more than one method, which is part of why conflating the two terms causes confusion in teacher training.

Procedure: The Sequence of Techniques

A procedure is a step-by-step account of what actually happens in the classroom in the service of a method the ordered sequence of techniques, in other words, that operationalizes a lesson. A reading-comprehension procedure under a communicative method might proceed through pre-reading prediction, silent reading, pair-checking of answers, and a follow-up discussion task, in that order. The procedure is what a teacher would write into a lesson plan; it is specific enough to be observed and evaluated but still describes a sequence rather than a single moment of instruction.

Technique: The Classroom Implementation

A technique is the narrowest instructional term in the hierarchy: it is a single, specific activity, task, or trick used to accomplish an immediate objective within a procedure. Absalamov and Khujakulov (2024) provide a useful illustration of this level in their discussion of innovative writing activities for school-age learners, where individual techniques such as sentence-combining exercises, peer-editing checklists, and guided free-writing prompts are used to build discrete sub-skills within a broader writing-instruction procedure. Techniques are the most visible and most easily shared part of teaching; they are what appears in activity banks and professional-development workshops, even though, on their own, they say little about the underlying method or approach that motivates their use.

Style: The Teacher's Personal Manner of Delivery

Style refers to the consistent, individual manner in which a given teacher enacts approaches, methods, procedures, and techniques the personal register, pacing, and relational tone that remain recognizable across lessons regardless of the content being taught. Two teachers using an identical technique can produce very different

classroom experiences depending on style: one may deliver the same peer-editing activity with brisk efficiency, while another builds in extended rapport-building talk around it. Style becomes pedagogically significant when it intersects with learner variation. Khujakulov's (2025c) profile of 'passive' EFL learners suggests that a mismatch between a teacher's habitual style for example, a fast-paced, cold-calling delivery and a learner's preferred mode of participation can itself contribute to observed passivity, independent of the method or technique in use. This suggests that adjusting style, not merely swapping techniques, is sometimes the more effective intervention for re-engaging quiet or reluctant students.

Strategy: The Learner's Own Approach to a Task

Where the previous five terms describe the teacher's side of instruction, strategy shifts attention to the learner. A strategy is a conscious or semi-conscious plan that a learner adopts to accomplish a specific learning task for example, guessing an unfamiliar word from context, forming a mnemonic association, or drawing on an etymological pattern to remember a term's meaning. Khujakulov's body of work on folk-medicine terminology offers a rich case study of this level. His comparative-historical analysis of folk-medicine lexical units (Khujakulov, 2025a) and his account of their derivation across English and Uzbek (Khujakulov, 2024b) both describe the kind of etymological and morphological reasoning that a learner might use, consciously, as a vocabulary-learning strategy when confronted with culturally specific terminology (Khujakulov, 2024a, 2025b). A teacher cannot dictate a learner's strategy directly, but techniques and procedures can be designed to model and encourage strategic thinking for instance, by explicitly walking learners through the etymology of a folk-medicine term before asking them to guess the meaning of a related one.

How the Six Terms Relate to One Another

Taken together, the six terms form a hierarchy rather than a set of interchangeable labels. An approach establishes what a teacher believes about language and learning; a method translates that belief into an overall instructional plan; a procedure sequences that plan into an observable order of events; and a technique fills each step of the procedure with a concrete activity. Style and strategy sit alongside this vertical hierarchy rather than inside it: style is the teacher's personal signature across every level, and strategy is the learner's own parallel decision-making process, which teaching can influence but never fully control. Hasanova et al. (2021) frame this relationship as one of decreasing abstraction moving from approach to technique, with style and strategy operating as the human, individual variables that determine how any given approach is actually experienced in a real classroom.

Implications for Teacher Preparation

The distinctions outlined above are not merely academic. A novice teacher who is asked to justify a lesson plan needs to be able to say, with some precision, which

decision belongs at which level: whether a struggling activity should be replaced with a different technique, sequenced differently as a new procedure, or whether the underlying method itself is a poor fit for the learning objective. The writing-activity work of Absalamov and Khujakulov (2024) demonstrates how a well-designed bank of techniques can be organized under a single writing-instruction procedure without requiring a change of method. Similarly, recognizing passivity as a possible style mismatch, following Khujakulov (2025c), rather than assuming it reflects a fixed learner trait, opens a wider range of responses than technique substitution alone. Teacher-preparation programs that make these six levels explicit rather than leaving them to be absorbed implicitly equip novice teachers with a shared vocabulary for diagnosing classroom problems and for communicating their reasoning to supervisors, peers, and, eventually, their own students.

Conclusion

Approach, method, procedure, technique, style, and strategy describe six different levels of a single, coherent process: the translation of a belief about language learning into a lived classroom experience. Confusing these terms is not simply a matter of imprecise vocabulary; it can lead teachers to solve problems at the wrong level, replacing a technique when the real issue is methodological, or blaming a method when the real issue is a mismatch of personal style. The layered model proposed by Hasanova et al. (2021), illustrated here through examples ranging from writing-skill activities to the vocabulary of folk medicine and the profile of passive learners, offers language teachers a practical framework for locating exactly where, in their own practice, a change needs to be made.

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