

The Silent Way

Q/ What does Gattegno believe?

A/ Gattegno believes that to teach means to serve the learning process rather than to dominate it.

Q/ According to the silent way, how is learning facilitated?

A/ Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned.

Q/ Why it is called the silent way method?

A/ 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 possible.

Important questions on The Silent Way

1. What are the goals of teachers who use the Silent Way?

Students should be able to use the language for self-expression—to express their thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. Students become independent by relying on themselves.

2. What is the role of the teacher?

The teacher is a technician or engineer. The teacher can (1) give what help is necessary, (2) focus the students' perceptions, (3) force their awareness (4) and ‘provide exercises to insure their facility’ with the language.

Important: The teacher should respect the autonomy of the learners in their attempts at relating and interacting with the new challenges.

3. What is the role of the students?

The role of the students is to make use of what they know to actively engage in exploring the language. No one can learn for us; to learn is our personal

responsibility. As Gattegno says, ‘The teacher works with the student; the student works on the language. The students aim to develop independence and autonomy. They participate in class verbal interaction and peer correction activities.

4. What are some characteristics of the teaching/learning process?

1. Teachers lead their students to associate the sounds of the target language with particular colors.
2. Later, these same colors are used to help students learn the spellings that correspond to the sounds (through the color-coded Fidel Charts) and
3. how to read and pronounce words properly (through the color-coded word charts).
4. The teacher sets up situations that focus student attention on the structures of the language.
5. The situations provide a vehicle for students to perceive meaning.
6. With minimal spoken cues, the students are guided to produce the structure.
7. The teacher uses the students' errors as evidence of where the language is unclear to students and, hence, where to work.
8. The students gain autonomy in the language by exploring it and making choices.

5. What is the nature of student–teacher interaction?

For much of the student-teacher interaction, the teacher is silent. He is still very active, however—setting up situations to ‘force awareness,’ listening attentively to students’ speech, and silently working with them on their production through the use of nonverbal gestures and the tools he has available.

6. What is the nature of student–student interaction?