

FIGURE 4  
Comparison of Methods in Terms of Proficiency Orientation

	NATL		
	GTRAN	ALM	APP
Provides practice in range of proficiency-oriented contexts	1	2	2
Provides for range of functional language practice	1	1	2
Concern for development of linguistic accuracy	3	3	1
Encourages students to express own meaning	1	1	3
Promotes active communicative interaction	1	1	3
Emphasizes affective concerns	1	2	3
Promotes cultural understanding (formal and everyday culture)	2	2	2
Emphasizes use of authentic/natural language in instruction/materials	2	2	3

ing to the development of proficiency, listed along the left-hand side of the chart, has been extracted from the hypotheses presented earlier. Each of these components has been assigned a value of "3," "2," or "1" according to whether it is given a high, medium, or low priority in the method or approach being considered. This sample appraisal of the methods represented in Figure 4 is offered not as a critique or "scientific" analysis of current practices, but rather as a means of illustrating how one might assess any method or approach in the light of proficiency goals. The reader is invited to subject his or her own approach to teaching to a similar type of analysis.

#### KEY TO METHODS CITED

*GTRAN: The Grammar/Translation Method.* This method focuses on the formal and extensive analysis of the grammar of the target language and on translation. Reading and writing skills are emphasized, with very little, if any, training provided in listening and speaking.

*ALM: The Audiolingual Method.* Based on behavioristic psychology, this method is characterized by the teaching of all "four skills" in their "natural order," with an emphasis on speaking. Oral skills are practiced before reading and writing. Language is viewed as a set of habits to be learned through extensive manipulative pattern practice and mimicry and memoriza-

tion of dialogues. Creative language practice is extremely limited or non-existent in beginning and intermediate stages of learning. The method requires the immediate eradication of all errors through correction, control of output, and overlearning of patterns. Vocabulary and structures are presented in colloquial and authentic language samples. Translation is avoided.<sup>33</sup>

*NATL APP: The Natural Approach.* Advocated by Tracy Terrell, this adaptation of the direct method emphasizes that "immediate communicative competence (not grammatical perfection) be the goal of beginning language instruction."<sup>34</sup> Students are provided with natural acquisition opportunities, rather than formal learning opportunities, through the use of comprehensible input as the medium of instruction in the classroom. Any formal learning is relegated to homework and out-of-class practice. Terrell advocates using the entire class period for communication activities, with emphasis first on listening skills. Students are permitted to respond in the native language, the target language, or both until they feel comfortable using the target language. Affective considerations are of primary importance in the "natural approach." Error correction during the class period is virtually nonexistent, and is done only for written work. Terrell maintains that the correction of speech errors is not necessary in natural acquisition, and, in fact, is very likely detrimental in terms of motivation, attitude, and embarrassment to students.

#### CONCLUSION

The set of "working hypotheses" presented in this paper may or may not represent the best assessment of priorities for future approaches, but they may be useful in promoting discussions about priorities as we develop and adapt our methods in the coming years. If the foreign language teaching profession does indeed opt for proficiency as the organizing principle, then almost any of the varieties of methods and approaches now in use today can be adapted or adjusted to meet those common goals more efficiently. Teachers must have the option to make their own decisions about which proficiency goals should receive the highest priority in their own situations and for their own students, and then find ways to achieve those goals most directly. The time when all of us were expected