



An Overview of ELT Methods and Approaches

Corresponding Author: XXXX

Abstract

Since we belong to teaching community, we need to adopt certain approaches or methods to teach effectively. There are different methods being implemented across the world. Of course, my question is how far these methods are apt for our classroom teaching? Certainly, we should have some kind of introspection on this issue because number of innovative trends are being implemented everywhere, especially in professional colleges. Simply, as a teacher of English he/she can adopt these innovative trends in teaching.

If something bridges a relation between theory and practice of a language teaching, it can be considered as an approach. It tells us what kind of form needs to be taught and why we teach language at given point of time. Whereas a method is considered as an overall plan with which language can be taught systematically, if rules can be taught first, it can be deductive, if illustrations are given, it can be called inductive. But most of the times, giving illustrations is preferable. A technique is a process which can be used in a classroom, for example using blackboard and real objects.

Actually, sending and receiving information are associated with teaching profession. As a facilitator teacher keeps his efforts to transfer knowledge as the way he received. So, we as teachers have to adopt innovative approaches and methods to teach effectively. As teaching and learning aspects are interrelated, certain techniques are essential to make teaching effective.

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Grammar Translation Method

In the olden days, this translation method was adopted to teach Greek and Latin languages. For learning a new language, learner needs some kind of translation then only one can get some idea on the other language. In this method textbook is a great resource for teacher. With the help of the textbook, teacher can teach effectively. This method helps the learners to develop their memory because they have to memorize the rules of Grammar and inflexions of the language. With this method, the learners are allowed to take the test by translating sentences from one language to another. If that is the case, the learner may not acquire accuracy as well as fluency over the target language. In Grammar Translation class, the learner cannot get the chance to have second / target language atmosphere. Language learning requires atmosphere, but with Grammar Translation Method it would not be possible.

Limitation of GMT

- The Grammar Translation Method would give the chance to the learners' oral practice.
- As the total focus would be on teaching grammar, the target language would be ignored.
- In this method, the learners do not get development of thinking power. So, their mind may not work effectively.
- Simply, teaching in mother tongue would not help the students to get the correct pronunciation.
- Since the emphasis on the rules of the grammar, it would not be associated with all the language abilities.

Direct Method

When there is an association, the acquisition of the second language happens best as in the case with the mother tongue. The association provides both listening and speaking. When situation is created, unconsciously language learning happens best. Even without teaching, the learners are able to get both listening and speaking abilities. Based on complete association between the concept and the object, it attains the title as Direct Method. Exposure to language is the base concept of this method that's why, it is called Natural Method. If the learners want to acquire language, there are many situations in day-to-day life. But the problems with this method are the learners may not have the grammatical competence, they may not get word power, they may not

understand capabilities of a written text. With direct association, and the learners can develop their listening abilities and speaking abilities. With these two abilities one cannot get a complete command over the language. Of course, basically language teaching itself is oral and aural. Direct Method is completely associated with this oral and aural concept.

Limitations of Direct Method

- With Direct Method, it is very difficult to get apt expressions directly in the target language. It may not be possible with abstract ideas.
- Of course, the teacher never gets a chance to use mother tongue. Without much difficulty the learner could get new concepts with equal manner in the mother tongue.
- More stress would be given on the spoken activities so that Reading and Writing skills would be neglected. So, the learners are not able to equip with all the abilities.
- As the teacher needs to prepare lot of work sheets, he/ she would get heavy pressure.
- The learners are unable to develop the basic structures, since it avoids teaching grammar.
- Since Direct Method requires competent teachers, it is very difficult task getting them all the time.

Structural Approach

As language is matter of structures, once the structures can be mastered, learning a language becomes easier. According to structural linguists, 240 structures are required to master over the language. To have good command over these structures, principles like Behavioral psychology and learning by condition can be appropriate. Substitution tables can help the learners to produce a large number of correct sentences. Practice and oral drills are the best tools for this approach. As choral drills, repetitions, substitution tables, scripted dialogues and question answers are the backbone to this approach, there would be a lot disturbance in the class room. Even though the entire approach is highly teacher-centered, there is a lot of chance for the learners to participate in different activities. As there will be a lot of emphasis on oral work rather than reading and writing, the learner might not get the opportunity to develop reading and writing. Using mother tongue is completely banned so the learner may feel difficulty to grab the meaning and the context.

Limitations of Structural Approach

- Actually Structural Approach does not suitable for advanced learners. It is purely meant for lower class students.
- Repetition of the structures makes the learners dull and passive.
- Since the focus on teaching structures, certainly, Reading and Speaking abilities are neglected.
- Like Direct Method, it also requires competent teachers, but it is very difficult task to have them.

Situational Approach

In general we come across many situations in our day-to-day life. So situation is the best resource to learn any language. The learner can acquire language abilities through many situations. For any situation, we need language. If the learner is associated with different situations in target language, there will not be any need for special focus on second language. The syllabus in this approach is based on a set of situations the learner are likely to be in such as: at shopping mall, in school, at a coffee shop, in a theatre, with friends etc. With this view, role-play and situational dialogues can be given for practice in language labs.

Communicative Approach

The distinguished quality of human being is communication when compared with other living creatures in the world. So it helps them to survive in the society. In the context of India, teaching English as a second language through this approach is very apt. The word communication itself is sharing, the second language learning happens when there is an opportunity to the learner. Actually, second language should be acquired rather than learnt, just in the case with the learner's first language. If we provide natural atmosphere, certainly there will be a chance for acquisition. The biggest question is can we provide such required atmosphere? As far as classroom is concerned, communication is a two-way process. So the learners can get the opportunity to communicate not only with the teacher also with the classmates. When there is involvement of the learners in the classroom, certainly they can think, they can interact with the other learners. It helps them to communicate effectively and fruitfully. Through this method a teacher can get the opportunity to conduct different task-based activities like information gap activities, drills etc.

Limitation of Communicative Approach

- It does not pay sufficient attention on the context.
- It looks just like an interpretation.
- It focuses on fluency, but not on the accuracy.
- There would be a lot of chances to have incoherence, grammatical mistakes.
- As the learners are allowed to make many mistakes, it is very difficult to check the language of each and every student.

Suggestopedia

It is a teaching method which is exclusively meant for learning foreign language developed by the Bulgarian Psychotherapist Georgi Lozannov. It is highly connected with physical surroundings and atmosphere of the classroom. When these things are provided, the learners feel comfortable and confident. Of course, the teachers play a vital role. Because it is teacher's centered method. With this method the learners would get a chance to learner not only foreign language also their other subjects.

Limitation of Suggestopedia

- The problem with Suggestopedia is environment.
- In developing countries like India, a class consists of 30 to 40 students. As it requires serene atmosphere the number should be around 12.
- This method is not suitable for every student.

West Method

The problem with the Indian students even today is Reading. As far as the language skills are concerned Reading is very difficult task for many Indian students. To get solution to this problem Dr. West conducted different experiments. But these experiments were confined to the Bengal province (today it is in West Bengal and Bangladesh of the British India). The experiments stated that India students need to develop Reading skill. Of course, he was right. Most of the school children who have finished their 7th or 8th standard are unable to read 5th class or 6th class textbook.

As Bacon said "Reading maketh full man, Writing maketh an exact man", (Of Studies-Bacon) reading plays very important role in one's life. So this method is absolutely suitable for the second language learners. Once the learners have got good command over the reading skill, unconsciously the learner would become an independent learner. For West produced a list called General Service this purpose, Dr. List (GSL) of English words.

With the list, the learners would get some kind of clarity when they want develop remaining abilities. Dr. West also developed one more concept i.e. "Graded Vocabulary". The concept of Graded Vocabulary helps the learner to learn the Second language. All over the linguists have designed many language courses in the world. These course help to develop the second language learners.

Limitations of West Method:

- Reading would help the learners to get some association with Reading and Writing, but it is highly impossible to have all the linguistic aspects.
- Since language is primarily speech, introducing Reading is not suggestible. Because they may be attentive with Reading.
- Dr .West Method is completely connected with Silent reading. Silent reading would not help the learners to acquire oral skills.
- Reading Method focuses on only vocabulary. It neglects sentence structures. So the learners would unable to the language systematically.

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