

An Effective Use of Eclectic Approach in Teaching English as Second Language in India

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Abstract

English is the language required by the world for greater understanding and it is the most international of languages. For over a century and a half, Indian intellectuals have been studying English. Today English has entered the fabric of India's culture. We Indians are not native speakers of English: to us English is a second language. So, learning it is not as natural as it is to the native speakers. English is a source language as well as a link language. It has enriched our own languages; it enables us to have easy access to modern knowledge within the country and outside our country. Over the years there have been different methods employed for the teaching of English as a second language, each of which is more or less discarded in due course as a new method or approach takes its place. This article aims at exploring one of the modern approaches, named, Eclectic Approach, in teaching and learning English as a second language in India. No teacher can assert that a particular approach is the only one that he / she must use. It is important for the teacher to find out which approach will enable him / her to realize a particular objective under a set of specific circumstances. This Eclectic approach enables the teacher to choose his / her own style of teaching according to the capacity of the learners. This paper tries to expose the effective use of Eclectic Approach in ESL classroom as well as in English Literature classroom.

Introduction

English, today, is a 'lingua Franca' of the world. Life will be paralyzed if we do not understand or speak English. It is estimated that a quarter of the world's population knows English. This means that about 1.5 billion people are reasonably competent in using English. The introduction of English language by the British rulers in India was in fact a blessing in disguise, because it has opened up the gates of global job market for Indians, who with their knowledge of English are sought after all over the world.

English is considered as a dynamic language in a world of information explosion. In India, English continues to be the language of administration and judiciary and not only that, but the colonial pattern of education and English education also continues. Schools, colleges and universities do teach the reading and writing of English language. But when it comes to the proficiency in communication and listening skills, we need to enhance ourselves.

Second Language Acquisition

For us, English is a second language. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the product of many factors pertaining to the learner on the one hand and the learning situation on the other. Different learners in different situations learn a L2 in different ways. Most of the difficulties faced by L2 learners are the interference of their first language. If L1 differs from L2, then the learners' L1 knowledge would interfere with L2 and if L1 and L2 are similar, then L1 would

actively aid L2 learning. This process is called ‘language transfer’. Here the teachers’ responsibility increases, as they are forced or encouraged to find out the learners’ area of difficulties. So, to cater the needs of the learners, the teachers seek various methods and approaches to teach English.

Definition of Approach

An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning. It deals with the nature of subject matter to be taught: it is more theoretical and forms the basis of any method to be formulated: an approach is axiomatic.

Various Methods And Approaches

Every method has got its own strength and weaknesses. The grammar-translation method focuses on reading and grammar, neglecting speech. The direct method gives importance to speech and oral-aural activities, but ignores writing and grammar. The structural/ situational approach is too rigid and structure oriented with too many repetitive drills, neglecting communication and functional aspects. CLT emphasizes communication in authentic situations, but ignores accuracy and grammar. All these past approaches do not solve the problems of language learning in all possible situations. Each approach has something interesting to offer: we can only regard them as resources and not as solutions.

But after the influence of communicative approach, language teaching seems to have attained great progress. The syllabus is re-designed so as to make the learners work actively in doing the exercises. The teachers are also allowed to enjoy freedom in choosing the suitable approaches from the point of view of learners. Recent approaches include: suggestopedia, TPR, CBT, TBT, notional approach, etc.

At present days, the teachers are supplied with a variety of ideas available in the language teaching. Language teaching need not follow methodological prescription. It can break away from the method concept. The teachers can get knowledge of all possible approaches and methods. They can build up their own resources and get educated and not just trained. This can pave way for Eclectic Style of teaching.

Eclectic Approach

Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000) both have used the term eclecticism to describe a desirable, coherent, pluralistic approach to language teaching. Eclectic approach involves the use of variety of language learning activities, each of which may have different theories and different attitudes. Single theory based learning does not give much benefits to the learners. Every foreign language has got its own merits and de-merits. It is the intelligence of the teachers to develop their own approach that best suits the learners for their effective learning. Eclectic Approach is the most effective approach as the teacher enjoys the freedom to absorb the best techniques of all the well known methods and approaches. In this paper, the author tries to bring out the effective use of Eclectic Approach both in ESL classroom and in English Literature classroom, by taking the example of Robert Frost’s poem *Stopping By woods On a Snowy Evening*:

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and snowny flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

In ESL Classroom

Now consider this poem being taught in PartII ESL classroom. The teacher's task begins with reading the poem twice or thrice to draw the attention of the learners to the poem. PartII ESL classes are usually a mixture of learners from various subjects. In India, such classes are mostly large sized classes. Above all, in rural parts of India, majority of the learners come from under privileged society, whose parents happen to be laborers. So, to these learners, the medium of instruction at their schools is either their mother tongue or the regional language. It is really an irksome task for the teachers to teach English for these learners, completely in English. But the aim of the teacher is to make the learners understand his/her teaching. Naturally, the teacher takes up bilingual teaching. Most of the time L2 classes turn to be bilingual classroom, where mixed focus is given, sometimes on form, sometimes on meaning. After reading and re-reading the poem, the teacher is expected to give bilingual explanation. The next important activity of the teacher is preparing his/ her lesson plan. The teacher can make use of the following lesson plan and the learners may be instructed to answer only in English.

Vocabulary:

- A) List out the unknown words.
- B).Find out the synonyms of the following words:
Queer, harness, flake, sweep, promise.

Grammar

- A).Write the past tense of the following words:
Think, watch, shake, mistake, sweep.
- B) Fill up the following sentences with prepositions:
 - a) His house is ----- the village.

- b) The horse thinks it queer to stop ----- a farmhouse.
- c) There is no farmhouse ----- woods and frozen land.
- C) Choose the correct word:
 - a) The poet stops by ----- (sea/ woods)
 - b) The wood is filled with ----- (flowers/ snow)
 - c) It is the ----- (darkest/brightest) evening of the year.
- d) The other sounds heard in the woods are ----- (sound of wind and downy flake/sound of birds and rustling of leaves)
- e) For the poet, the woods are----- (lovely/ugly)\
- D) Say true or false
 - a) The poet knows whose woods are those.
 - b) The poet's little horse knows well why the poet has stopped.
 - c) The lake is very dry.
 - d) The woods look so noisy.
 - e) The poet likes to stay in the woods forever.

Comprehension

- a) Where does the owner of the woods live?
- b) How does the wood look?
- c) What is the reaction of the poet's horse when he stops by the wood?
- d) What are the promises of the poet?
- e) What does the word 'sleep' mean?

In English Literature Classroom

But the same poem, when taught for English literature learners, the teacher's task is lessened. First of all, there is no need to read the poem many times. Secondly, it is not necessary to take up bilingual teaching, as these learners are supposed to learn English in all the classes, since English is the medium of instruction. This enables them to grasp the contents given in English. The teacher also enjoys teaching, if it involves interaction. The highly philosophical ending of the poem is well explained to the learners, thereby motivating them study philosophy also. This type of study makes the learners to appreciate the poet and his simple truth of life. The learners become capable of critically analyzing the poem. For these learners, the teacher can prepare a different type of lesson plan. The learners may be trained in 'item writing that is, framing questions.

Vocabulary And Grammar

- a) Find out the unknown words in the poem and write out a sentence for each word.
- b) Frame Five 'wh' questions.(eg: Where does the poet stop?)
- c) Frame questions to get 'yes' or 'no' answers;
eg: Does the poet continue his ride?
Ans: No, he doesn't.

Composotion

- a) Write a critical analysis of the poem.
- b) Assignment or seminar in the poem

- c) Poem recitation.
- d) Group discussion.
- e) Draw an imaginary picture for the poem.

In the above approach, the learners' anxiety and competency is explicitly seen. The teacher also enjoys teaching, as it is learner-centered method. Here, many tasks are done by the learners and this eclectic approach motivates the learners to get a deep knowledge of whatever they study.

Eclectic approach provides the teachers with the confidence they will need to face learners and it also provides techniques and strategies for presenting lessons. However, in adopting this approach, the teachers have to follow certain principles with regard to the following factors:

- Teachers' role in the classroom.
- Draw the attention of the learners to the lesson.
- Design the structure of effective teaching.
- Respond to the learners' difficulties and build confidence in them.
- Respond to the learners' mistakes or questions.
- Use suitable learning activities.
- Proper use of teaching aids.
- Design effective lesson plan.
- Invite interaction among learners.
- Realizing and acting according to the needs and interests of the learners.

Conclusion

Eclectic approach is the most effective approach; both for the teachers and learners, and the teachers enjoy the freedom to absorb best techniques of all well known methods and principles. Therefore, there is much more to teacher development, than learning how to use different approaches and methods of teaching. Experience with different approaches and methods provide teachers with an initial practical knowledge base in teaching and it could also help them to explore and develop their own beliefs, principles and practices of teaching.

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