



Application of Different ELT Methods in the Classroom Teaching to Develop Communicative Skills of the Students

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ABSTRACT

Modern language teachers always insist upon grammatical mastery and good reading ability along with fluency in oral communication. They feel that there is a need to evolve and use an eclectic approach which incorporates almost all elements from the methods available today. But a single, universal method for teaching and learning modern languages is not that easy to arrive at. The prime aim of this paper is to provide a practical knowledge base in language teaching, with which teachers may be able to explore and develop their own methods, principles and practices.

Key words: modern language, grammatical mastery, eclectic approach, elements, methods, teaching and learning, practical knowledge, explore, principles, practices.

INTRODUCTION

Modern language teachers always insist upon grammatical mastery and good reading ability along with fluency in oral communication. They feel that there is a need to evolve and use an eclectic approach which incorporates almost all elements from the methods available today. But a single, universal method for teaching and learning modern languages is not that easy to arrive at. The arrangement is hierarchical. The organizational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach. An approach

is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught.

Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural.

Within one approach, there can be many methods....

..... a technique is implementational-that which actually takes place in a class room. It is a particular trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with the method and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. (Richards 19)

An overview of characteristics of language teaching methods and approaches:

Grammar Translation Method

In this method, classes are taught in the students' mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. Elaborate explanations of grammar are provided. They provide the rules for putting words together; with a focus on the form and inflection of words. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. Little attention is paid to the content of texts. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation. Drills or exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue, and vice versa are also used. Though this method is widely used in language classrooms, it is a method for which there is no theory or literature that offers a rationale or justification for it.

Limitations

The grammar-translation method's fall from favour is attributed to its lack of potential for lively communication.

Direct Method

This method was developed initially as a reaction to the grammar-translation method in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language in instruction.

Here, lessons begin with a dialogue using a modern conversational style in the target language. Material is first presented orally with actions or pictures. The mother tongue is NEVER used. There is NO translation. The preferred type of exercise is a series of questions in the target language based on the dialogue or an anecdotal narrative. Questions are answered in the target language.

Grammar is taught inductively-rules are generalized from the practice and experience with the target language. Verbs are used first and systematically conjugated much later, after gaining some oral mastery of the target language. Advanced students read literature for comprehension and pleasure. Literary texts are not analyzed grammatically.

Limitations

Its weakness is the lack of insight into the reality of the classroom situation. In a class room where there is a mixed group of students one cannot expect all of the them gain mastery of the language through the instructions in target language alone.

Audio-lingual Method

This method is based on the principles of behavior psychology. It adapts many of the principles and procedures of the Direct Method.

In this method, new material is presented in the form of a dialogue. Base on the principle that language learning is habit formation, the method fosters dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases. Structures are sequenced and taught one at a time. Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills. Little or no grammatical explanations are provided; grammar is taught inductively.

Much importance is given to precise native-like pronunciation. Use of the mother tongue by the teacher is permitted, but discouraged among and by the students. Successful responses are reinforced; great care is taken to prevent learner errors. But, there is a tendency to focus on manipulation of the target language and to disregard content and meaning.

Limitations

Content and meaning should also be given equal importance as that of the manipulation of the target language. Students are unable to transfer the habits they had mastered in the classroom for communication outside the classrooms.

Community Language Learning (CLL)

This approach is patterned upon counseling techniques and adapted to the peculiar anxiety and threat as well as the personal and language problems a person encounters in the learning of foreign languages.

Here, the learner is not treated as a student but as a client. The instructors are not considered as teachers but as language counselors. The language-counseling relationship begins with the client's linguistic confusion and conflict. The aim of the language counselor's skill is first to communicate empathy for the client's threatened inadequate state and to aid him linguistically. Then slowly the teacher-counselor strives to enable him to arrive at his own increasingly independent language adequacy. This process is furthered by the language counselor's ability to establish a warm, understanding, and accepting relationship, thus becoming an "other-language self" for the client.

Out of the five stages to be crossed to attain language mastery, the teacher focuses not only on the language but also on being supportive of learners in their learning process in stages 1,2,3. In stage 4, the

teacher focuses more on accuracy. Accuracy is subordinated to fluency in the first 3 stages but the reverse is applied in the later stages. Stage 5 attempts to sharpen both fluency and accuracy strengthened by idioms and more elegant constructions.

Limitations

Most of the teachers may not be highly proficient and sensitive to nuance in both L1 and L2. Special training is required. The undue emphasis on fluency in earlier stages may affect the mastery of grammar and control over the target language usage.

Desuggestopedia

This method is developed out of belief that human brain could process great quantities of material given the right condition of learning like relaxation.

Music was central to this method. Soft music led to increase in alpha brain wave and a decrease in blood pressure and pulse rate resulting in high intake of large quantities of materials. Learners were encouraged to be as “childlike” as possible. Apart from soft music, comfortable seats in a relaxed setting enhance language learning.

The activities include dramatization, games, songs and question-answer exercises. The focus is on communicative intent and not on form of the linguistic message.

Limitations

Creating a relaxing atmosphere seems to be difficult especially in crowded classrooms since crowd leads to noise and possibly chaos and it becomes hard to manage the class. Also there may be financial limitations about setting the physical environment and using the technical equipment.

The Silent Way

This method begins by using a set of colored wooden rods and verbal commands in order to achieve the following:

The method avoids the use of the vernacular and creates simple linguistic situations that remain under the complete control of the teacher. The responsibility for the utterances of the descriptions of the objects shown or the actions performed is passed on to the learners.

The teacher concentrated on what the students say and how they are saying it, drawing their attention to the differences in pronunciation and the flow of words. A game-like situation is created in which the rules are implicitly agreed upon by giving meaning to the gestures of the teacher and his mime. It also provided time for spontaneous speech upon which the teacher and the students can work to obtain a similarity of melody to the one heard.

Limitations

The learner responsibility is comparatively higher as the role of the teacher is indirect. It would seem necessary for a teacher to gain a good deal of training and skill in order to apply the Silent Way. This method can be benefited by the teacher only in small groups of students. The suitability of this method in the average classroom situation, and the usage of it at more advanced levels is still a challenge not met.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method that combines information and skills through the use of the kinesthetic sensory system. This combination of skills allows the student to assimilate information and skills at a rapid rate. The basic tenets are:

1. Understanding the spoken language before developing the skills of speaking.
2. Imperatives are the main structures to transfer or communicate information.

The student is not forced to speak, but is allowed to spontaneously begin to speak when he/she feels comfortable and confident in understanding and producing the utterances.

Limitations

It is more useful only with the beginners. It can be a challenge for shy students. Here, generally students are not given the opportunity to express their own thoughts in a creative way. It is easy to overuse TPR. "Any novelty, if carried on too long, will trigger adaptation". The teacher may find that it is limited in terms of language scope.

Communicative Language Teaching

This method stresses a means of organizing a language syllabus. The emphasis is on breaking down the global concept of language into units of analysis in terms of communicative situations in which they are used. There is negotiation of meaning. A variety of language skills are involved. Material is presented in context. It pays attention to registers and styles in terms of situation and participants. Fluency and accuracy (different competencies), form and functions, development of autonomous learners are given importance.

According to Richards, five principles of CLT are:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

Limitations

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach does not cater to learners who come from cultures with traditional educational systems and different learning styles. Some of the students, who cannot see the value of CLT become de-motivated and are often reluctant to participate in these activities. Another limitation is that the CLT approach focuses on fluency but not accuracy.

Content Based Approach

Content based instruction integrates the learning of language with the learning of some other content, often academic subject matter. In this approach, the content of subject matter is used for language teaching purposes. The relevance of language use motivates the students. The students' previous experience is also considered while teaching in the class room. As there are contextual clues to arrive at meaning, learners acquire vocabulary at ease. The words of Wesche as quoted by Diane, "In content based language teaching, the claim in a sense is that students get 'two for one' both content knowledge and increased language proficiency" (142).

Limitations

It may be a bit difficult for the language teacher to teach language through the contents of special subject as she/ he may not have comparatively sufficient knowledge in the content rather than the form because he/she is trained to teach language only as a skill to be mastered.

Task Based Approach

In this approach, tasks form the basis of planning and instruction in language teaching. Though there are a number of definitions for the term task, let us consider Prabhu's definition as given by Richards, "an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process" (233).

There is a perceived purpose and a clear outcome in the class activities. As the learners work to complete the activity, they have ample chance to interact. By interacting with others, they learn many new language items which could be used at a later time.

There are three kinds of tasks: information gap activity which involves exchange of information among the participants in order to complete a task. In opinion gap activity, the students have to give their personal preferences, feelings or attitude in order to complete a task. In a reasoning gap activity, the students have to derive some new information by inferring it from information they have been given.

Limitations

Task designing is to be done with a clear focus on the skills to be mastered. Effective task designs can prove it to be the best available and easily practicable approach of language teaching. But this is limited to the ability of the task designer.

Cooperative Language Learning

Cooperative Language Learning approach is the one which makes use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the class room. It is designed to foster cooperation rather than competition, to develop critical thinking skills and to develop communicative competence through socially structured interaction activities. The learners acquire language by interacting in the target language. Each student is individually accountable though they work in groups. Teacher teaches not only the language but also the social skills. He helps the students in learning the language for both academic and social purpose. It is viewed as a learner centered approach.

Limitations

There may be students with different proficiency levels. Some students get more benefit than the others in these activities. Teacher has to play the role of facilitator, a very demanding task, as he has to create a highly structured and well organized learning environment. Teacher's ability to create and organize the learning environment is again a deciding factor for the success of this approach.

Multiple Intelligences

To quote the words of Richards, "MI refers to a learner-based philosophy that characterizes human intelligence as having multiple dimensions that must be acknowledged and developed in education". (115)

Howard Gardner's influence on MI has been very significant in language teaching circles. He stresses that the teachers do not take into account the specific and unique strengths of the students in classroom situations. Gardner theory proves that individuals have at least seven distinct intelligences that can be developed over a lifetime.

The eight types of intelligences are:

1.	Logical / mathematical	The ability to use numbers effectively, to see abstract patterns, and to reason well. A person with this intelligence can easily perceive quantitative relationships, particularly related to computations and scientific areas.
2.	Visual / spatial	The ability to orient oneself in the environment, to create mental images, and a sensitivity to shape, size, color. Person with this type of intelligence has awareness of his own and others' position space.
3.	Body/kinesthetic	The ability to use one's body to express oneself and to solve problems. Here, a person has graceful body movements and awareness of positions in space.
4.	Musical / rhythmic	An ability to recognize tonal patterns and sensitivity to rhythm, pitch and melody. Persons of this sort are particularly sensitive to sound and have an ability to create and communicate through rhythmic patterns.
5.	Interpersonal	The ability to understand another person's moods, feelings, motivations and intentions. Person with this type of intelligence understands and enjoys people, and relates to others easily.
6.	Intrapersonal	The ability to understand oneself and to practice self-discipline. A person with this intelligence is self-reflective and perceptive about personal abilities.
7.	Verbal/ linguistic	The ability to use language effectively and creatively. Language and words come easily to a person with this type of intelligence. He has sophisticated accessibility to language.
8.	Naturalistic	The ability to understand and organize the patterns of nature. Here, the person is interested in and knowledgeable about the natural world.

Though all learners may have all these types of intelligences, they are not equally developed in any one individual. It is always felt that there is a need to create activities that exploit all the items given above, not only to facilitate language acquisition among diverse students, but also to help them realize their full potential with all these types. One way of doing so is to think about the activities that are frequently used in the classroom and to categorize them according to intelligence type. Thus teachers can keep track of which

type they are using or neglecting in the classroom. Second way is to deliberately plan lessons so that the different intelligences are equally represented.

Limitations

It is less likely to plan every lesson plan to exploit every intelligence type. Besides, the list of intelligences is growing. The issue for teachers who wish to honor the diversity of intelligences among their students is how to equally represent the intelligences and enable each student to reach their full potential, without compromising on their prime purpose—to teach the target language.

Conclusion

Students learn in various ways, and one approach to teaching might not work for every student or even for most students. It is concluded from the study that to help students to do well in language programs, teacher must understand the learning styles of his students, so that he can plan appropriate teaching strategies to accommodate individual strengths and needs. It is very important for the teacher to share information with students about their learning styles and the preferred teaching strategies to accommodate those styles. Combining a mixture of approaches and methods allows students to react to instructional styles that best fit their individual learning styles. Effective teaching arises when the teacher successfully reaches out to students whose preferred ways of learning are otherwise mismatched with the general style of teaching.

Thus in developing a personal approach the teacher must be aware of his role in the class room, the nature of effective teaching and learning, the difficulties faced by the learners and how these can be addressed and all these put together decide the structure of an effective lesson and the success of the learning activities.

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