

Method or Eclecticism?

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ABSTRACT: It has been argued that relying on a single teaching theory (or a single method based on a relatively limited set of theoretical principles) is problematic because following a set of procedures can become rigid and mechanistic (Gilliland, James & Bowman, 1994; Lazarus & Beutler, 1993). However, as noted by Kumaravadivelu (1994: 30), "eclecticism at the classroom level invariably degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical pedagogy because teachers with very little professional preparation to be eclectic in a principled way have little option other than to randomly pull together a package of techniques from various methods and label it eclectic." The goal of this essay is to discuss the relative benefits of various approaches and an eclectic approach to teaching languages.

KEYWORDS: language teaching, pedagogy, eclectic approach.

INTRODUCTION

A good number of approaches and methods have been embraced at different times in language teaching. Therefore innovative language teaching suggestions stereotypically title to be more operative than the substituted ones. Throughout their primary teacher training, teachers are repeatedly familiarised with diverse teaching methods and approaches. Often it is recommended that they should elect, or amalgam different methods, in the beginning of their teaching. Allwright (1988: 51) stated that it is not the method but what really happens between teacher and class must matter. The Eclectic method was suggested as a response to the abundance of teaching methods in the 1970's and 1980's. The main exponent of this approach is Rivers (1981, Teaching Foreign Language Skills). In this approach, the tag is given to a teacher's usage of techniques and activities from a variety of language teaching approaches and methodologies. Teacher selects what methodology or approach to use subjected on the objectives of the lesson and the learners in the group. The asset of the eclectic technique lies in its elasticity to be adjustable in any classroom; however, the challenge is to be capable to cultivate a lesson which replicates its strengths and not be emphasizing on one method or technique whereby learners could become tangled in the lesson. The other flaw of this procedure is to find skilled and proficient educators who understand how to integrate the compound layers of the eclectic technique in the classroom. In order to efficaciously accomplish this goal, teachers need to cultivate a coherent, pluralistic approach to teaching, or principled eclecticism (Kumar, 2013) where eclecticism combines a variation of language learning activities through assortment, labelling, and assembling of teaching objectives.

HISTORY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS

Corresponding to Richards and Rodgers (2001), language teaching came into its own as a career in the twentieth century. Since then, a quantity of teaching methods and approaches has been established.

The Grammar-translation Method was the regular way of foreign language teaching in the 19th century. It emphasizes on grammar learning with the procedure of translation. Speaking capability is persistently abandoned. Its main fault lies in the fact that students are unable to learn to use sentences in communication. In addition, vocabulary selection is grounded on reading texts only and words are offered with translation so that intervention of mother tongue cannot be denied.

After the late part of the 19th century, many scholars created drastic alterations of Grammar-Translation Method. Concentration was focused to the natural learning principles which grounded **The Direct Method**. Nevertheless, it was massively criticized because of over prominence on the resemblances between L1 acquisition and L2 learning. In addition, misconception may occur because mother tongue is austere prohibited. Finally, it is not that much genuine as it seems because it is too desired for the teacher. Reading and writing aptitudes for students need are ignored.

Method or Eclecticism?

During the mid-1950s, **Audiolingualism** arrived as an origin of Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) in America. Language is observed as a scheme comprising eloquent components administered by particular procedures. Language is viewed as oral performance and habit construction is regarded essential. This approach failed as its hypothetical grounds were attacked. Elementary forms cannot guarantee learners the skill to talk about changed context.

The **Cognitive Code Approach** was originated in the 1960s. It was a feedback contrary to the flaws of the Audiolingual method. The aim was to assist the learner to practice the language productively in the outdoor. It is undoubtedly obvious from this point that the improvement of methods was gradually moving from controlled to open-ended methods. Later it was perceived that the method ignored how language is conducted under circumstances. This criticism directed towards the progress of the situational approach.

British applied linguists Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby established an approach in the 1920s and 1930s renowned as the **Oral Approach or Situational Language Teaching**. It is distinguished from the Direct Method because it opts for vocabulary and grammar methodically with grades. Its principle of language is acknowledged as British “structuralism.” Speech is considered as the foundation of language and structure is viewed as the core of speaking capability. Topics are taught verbally prior to its written format. In this theory, precision is essential. Nevertheless, in this tedious process of recurrence and replacement, students can never produce communicative tactics in actual circumstances.

Since the later 1960s, with the decline of Situational Language Teaching, certain new ideologies were swiftly established. They are known as the **Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT)** with various versions. All of them aim to “(a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.” (Richards, 1986, p.66). Classroom activities emphasize on significant tasks and sharing own thought. Under such activities, student participates mostly under an accommodating environment. The teacher is the instructor of the communication method and the member of the learning-teaching group. The classes are greatly stimulating. Although at times students have no score of accomplishment due to low grammatical aptitude to improve ultimate communicative competence.

Although CLT has acknowledged broader reception and appreciation in comparison with former methods, Gebhard, Gaitan and Oprandy (1990) dispute that there is no undoubtedly confirmation of ‘best’ way to language teaching. Nunan (1991:228) is possibly true when he comments that “it has been realised that there never was and probably will never be a method for all”. When not a single method argued above could be conducted commendably, the concept of Eclecticism – a cognisant amalgamation of assorted methods was established. It is to be stated that the term Eclecticism is essentially needed to be a principled approach.

DEFINITION AND MEANING OF THE ECLECTIC APPROACH

The eclectic approach was originated from the apprehension that every single method had assets and flaws and no particular method was approachable to the vibrant classroom environment.

As a consequent, constructed on the limitation of the methods, Brown (2002) disputes that eclecticism offers the resolution because the approach permits the teacher to elect what functions within their individual dynamic circumstances. Kumar (2013:1) summarizes that “the eclectic method is a combination of different method of teaching and learning approaches”. It can also be regarded as principled eclecticism denoting that the approach is stereotypically desirable, articulate and multiethnic to language teaching. Gao (2011:1) labels the eclectic approach as “not a concrete, single method, but a method, which combines listening, speaking, reading, and writing and includes some practice in the classroom”. He augments that the existing favored teaching methods are an amalgamation of Grammar-Translation, structural method and CLT and recommends teachers to take benefit of other methods as well while escaping their drawbacks. Wali (2009:40) recapitulates this intention that one of the principles of eclecticism is that it should be learner centered, not teaching method oriented. This statuses that teachers should emphasize on assisting learners to acquire learning and not on gratifying the instructions of the methods. In fact, Kumaravadivelu (2006) cautions in contrast to dependence on methods in their particular aspects because they do not offer concrete resolutions to language teaching. As a substitute, he recommends a post-methodic approach to language teaching. Deliberating pedagogical variables of peculiarity, pragmatism and probability as well as pedagogic pointers of the post-method teacher and learner, he proposes that a language teacher should embrace a context-sensitive pedagogic agenda that will be capable to answer to special features of a certain learning and teaching perspective.

FEATURES OF THE ECLECTIC APPROACH

The eclectic approach is not an inflexible approach. Therefore, its features are not restricted to the ones that are existing in this study.

Ali (1981:7) inclines the subsequent doctrines of eclecticism:

(a) Teachers are given a chance to choose different kinds of teaching techniques in each class period to reach the aims of the lesson.

Method or Eclecticism?

- (b) There is flexibility in choosing any aspect or method that teachers think suitable for teaching inside the classroom
- (c) Learners can see different kinds of teaching techniques, using different kinds of teaching aids, that help to make lessons much more stimulating and ensures better understanding of the material on the other hand.
- (d) Solving difficulties that may emerge from the presentation of the textbook materials
- (e) Finally, it saves both time and effort in the presentation of language activities.

It can also be disputed that another distinctive feature of the approach is that this approach is independent as it is made by a single teacher in accordance with the learning and teaching perspective. Teachers have the autonomy to elect cautiously what works best for them.

Moreover, the association of L1 and L2 is obvious in the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language. There are some explanations for this. Firstly, learning a new or second language (L2) is assisted by the learners' spontaneous knowledge (L1). Therefore, L1 assists L2 learning (Kumaravadivelu 2006). Stern (1992:283) illustrates that "it is the nature of linguistic and communicative competence that ...L1 (or the second language previously learnt) is the yardstick and guide to our new L2".

Countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language, L1 and L2 teaching and learning need to be more highlighted at primary level. Moreover, there are weak learners in high school or higher level who would get advantage if some of the conceptions in English can be explained by a local language if English seem tough to them. Several learners may also fail it in class to reveal themselves or contribute completely in communicative activities due to their insufficiency in English. As a solution to their silence in the class, the teacher can allow them to speak both in their mother language and L2 whenever they feel comfortable. Under such procedure, learners can be guided either by the teacher or the learners to learn new words which would increase their communicative capabilities in English.

From this point, it is clear that both intra-lingual and cross-lingual strategies are imposed in the eclectic approach.

Another feature of the approach is that it is situational with particular perspective. Which indicates that every global notion or conceptualization of the approach should be deducted according to the indigenous circumstances of the classroom? It is not that global ideologies of language teaching are not significant but that their effectiveness should be valued. Alwright (2000) proposes that it is better for teachers to carry principles of language teaching from context to context than carrying principles across contexts. That is why teachers are required to be well educated about the method if they decide to apply it effectively. It is fact that methods are decontextualized and the teachers, knowing what aspects are relevant to their class, will decide how to contextualize the method so that it work for the learning requirements of the learners.

Another unique feature of the eclectic approach is that mistake is measured as a usual part of the learning procedure. This is not to be confused that error or mistake is approved but it is seen as a progression of learning. Error rectification is vital as it benefits learners to modify their earlier acquaintance that could be incorrect. Mistakes should be rectified while the target is learning. It is to be debated that without rectification of mistakes, no learning would be acquired and there would be no necessity of teaching instructions because learners still would have the false instructions and they would put them in their communication even when they would have undergone a teaching system. However, it is certainly to be stated that mistake rectification must not be completed single-handedly by the teacher only. It is the learners who should also be comprised in rectifying error for instance this supports them as well to check their individual proposition of the instruction they are getting. Participation of learner should be stretched to error rectification of their mates. This is such for learners too have their own capability to detect errors committed by their mates. Thus, concerning learners in mistake rectification benefits them to improve critical rationalizing and a reason of being a significant fellow as well as asset of the classroom.

Another characteristic of the eclectic approach is the combination of both the inductive and the deductive approach of teaching. Regarding the deductive and inductive approaches, Krashen (1982) debates that both of the deductive and inductive teaching instruction is essential. As learners have innovative minds, they may get permission to practice the instruction by themselves. Yet, in case they are incapable, the teacher should bring forth a flawless clarification about the instruction towards them. So, both the teacher and the learners remain beneficial. Each individually well-proficient principled eclectic teacher will composite the two approaches in order to come to all the learners rendering to their favorite learning approach. Therefore, as Krashen (1982) counsels, there is no necessity to assert on which one is accurate and which one is not. The idea which Krashen is manufacturing here is that whether neither the deductive nor the inductive approach should rule that justification is incorrect. An apt approach that is delicate to the requirements of all the fellows of the classroom is of equal usage in the lesson alike. Such incorporation is also a unique feature of the eclectic approach.

In addition, the eclectic approach observes language as a complete one. Kumar (2013) restates the point when he opined that language should be regarded as a whole without splitting it into secluded components of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. As a fragment of observing language as a complete one, language should not be detached from its culture. Therefore, in order to teaching English as a second or foreign language, teachers must also pay attention on the cultural side of the language for this will benefit learners to learn numerous definitions of words rendering to the culture and what is suitable in specific circumstances as

Method or Eclecticism?

well. Another crucial point to be stated is that in the eclectic approach, language is regarded as both form and function. It is not that grammar is less significant, but a teacher has to take the entire perspective and communicative circumstances into count while deciding whether a statement is effective or something else. Likewise, a teacher requires accurate grammatical structure for conversing the projected definition and escape obscurity.

The eclectic approach promotes learner-centered programs. Nevertheless, one should not get confused that teachers should allow learners to act everything according to their own interest. Whereas an eclectic class lesson should be learner-centered through classroom practice and written exercises, the teacher also has a duty of giving some feedback and direction to the learners.

The part of the teacher is of an organizer while the part of the learners is of dynamic contestants in the learning method. The teacher assembles resources and organizes the classroom.

Teachers also show a dynamic part as executives of learning with learners as performers in the learning progression. Kumaravadivelu (2006) enhances the point that the teacher should guarantee learner self-sufficiency and confirm that the topic is related under social context. This denotes that teachers should work as researchers and be conscious of the beliefs of the learners and the public interest. Further, the teacher should nurture language consciousness amid learners. In other words, the role of a teacher is that of a dynamic contributor.

TEACHING MATERIALS

Stimulating and encouraging teaching and learning resources for the learners is essential for eclectic approach. This implies that teachers need to be cautious to choose teaching resources in accordance with the teaching topic, learner requirements and features and the cultural framework of the learning and teaching background. In this eclectic approach, teacher can proceed with any teaching components which will be suitable to conduct. Teachers can use both visual and linguistic materials, from charts, text books, newspapers, to radio, film, music, pictures and computers. Iedema (2003) recommends that television, film and the computer are also valuable resources in communication. Jewitt (2005) disputed that in the 21st century, image, sound and movement have arrived at the school classroom in innovative and substantial ways. The interpretation from these statements implies that teachers should not be restricted to dialogues only in terms of teaching resources; rather, they should utilize diverse resources as long as they are applicable and relevant to the learning objectives. A qualified teacher should be competent to renovate and reuse any resource and use it afresh relying on the topic in the class lesson. For instance, a biology text book can be used to instruct English grammar. A biology text book has numerous images displaying procedures. The teacher can take such images to teach present continuous tense by questioning learners to speak what is going on these images expecting that the tense will be in the present continuous tense. Therefore, it can be echoed that the eclectic approach has multiple modes.

ADVANTAGES

Researchers approve that there are numerous benefits of using the eclectic approach. Brown (2002) states that the eclectic approach is significant because it provides the teacher autonomy to elect what is suitable in their particular vigorous teaching circumstances. Kumar (2013) remarks the subsequent advantages of eclectic approach:

- (a) It is easier for learners to understand the language of the text in its cultural context
- (b) It blends listening, speaking, reading and writing
- (c) Helps teacher to teach effectively by drawing on the strength of various methods and avoiding their weaknesses
- (d) Learning is easy due to the use of realistic situations in the classroom

The message the above opinions contain is that the eclectic approach is universal. It not only reflects merely the hypothetical features of teaching and learning, but also associates teaching and learning to the actual life involvements of the learners while the teacher relishes supreme autonomy in coping with his best technique within his teaching context. This approach also embodies language universally. It incorporates all the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. There is plethora of other advantages. For instance, it is learner centred, context delicate, alive, encouraging, participating, and has multiplicity of classroom accomplishments and tasks. Learners remain conscious of what is estimated from them. This is supple and obliging to the necessities of the classroom throughout the class lesson. Moreover, it is objective correlative and yield fast outcomes since it responds to the needs of learners of diverse characteristics (Kumar 2013).

DISADVANTAGES

The term 'eclectic' only offers disguise for disinclination to alteration if our language teaching schemes are steadfastly embedded in outdated approaches. The eclectic attitude that teachers habitually embrace as an innocent approach believing that this will shelter them from becoming targets of method has some discrete shortcomings. Weidemann (2001) notes the following disadvantages of the eclectic approach:

Method or Eclecticism?

- (a) It cuts teachers off from a reconsideration of their professional practices. In a word, it discourages them to reflect upon their teaching. They have made up their minds; they will use anything that works which can obtain results and is safe from ideological excesses.
- (b) Adopting the eclectic approach can be unsafe as a teacher may fall victim of the methodological baggage that comes with it.
- (c) Mixing all manner of methods and approaches may result in gathering in one's teaching arsenal; but using such a mixed bag can lead to all kinds of conflicts.
- (d) When introduced to new methods and techniques, teachers, in their haste to integrate these into their traditional styles of teaching forget about the rationale for the techniques altogether.
- (e) If an innovative technique is used only occasionally, and mixed in with other (potentially contradictory ones), the effect of the new is diluted.

The base of this disagreement contrary to eclecticism lies upon the conception of professional uprightness. Most of the flaws cited above are merely acceptable when teachers are not intensely trained and well equipped for the classroom. Weidmann (2001:6) is perhaps right while he states that "the argument that emerges [against eclecticism] is perhaps more about the dangers of an unprincipled eclecticism than anything else". That is why Eclecticism necessitates teachers who distinguish their learners, content of the subject and procedures of teaching. They need to apprehend what is the definition of eclecticism and be capable to provide explanations for their selection of any procedure or method they want to incorporate.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this essay has taken an endeavour to offer and argue the perception of the eclectic approach by conveying its main structures and also about the gratification that comes with embracing a definite genre, and about surpassing it. In order to be a skilled language teacher, one has to be competent enough to critically appraise the teaching practices recommended by approved curricula, with which teachers are enforced to work. Lastly, this essay is about overcoming preconception in contradiction of teaching styles because when we do not realise any teaching viewpoint or approach, we are often inclined to escape it. If we can increase our intellect of the principles that escort those styles that we generally inclined not to use, we might significantly augment our individual teaching.

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Method or Eclecticism?

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