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Reforming Beliefs

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS –AN OVER VIEW

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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses the brief history of English language teaching (ELT) methods in general and the type of ELT methods. It also presents the recent research on English language teaching methods and the debates that move towards the post-method pedagogy in second language teaching/learning. The paper deals with the brief summary of the methods and approaches in language teaching from Grammar-translation method to Communicative Language Teaching. It also looks the debate on post-method pedagogy.

Keywords: English language teaching, ELT Methods.

1. Brief Summary of Methods in English Language Teaching

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000: x-xi), there are at least five ways that the study of methods is invaluable.

1. Methods serve as a foil for reflection that can help teachers in bringing to conscious awareness the thinking that underlies their actions. A purpose of teacher education is to help teachers make their tacit explicit. When teachers are exposed to methods and asked to reflect on their principles and actively engage with their techniques, they can become clearer about why they do what they do. They become aware of their own fundamental assumptions, values and beliefs.

2. By becoming clear on where they stand, teachers can choose to teach differently what they were taught. They are able to see why they are attracted to certain methods and may be able to argue against the imposition of a particular method by authorities

3. A knowledge of methods is a part of the knowledge base of teaching. With it, teachers join a community of practice (Freeman, 1992 cited in Larsen-freeman, 2000). Being a community

member entails learning the professional discourse that community members use so that professional dialogue can take place.

4.   A professional discourse community may also challenge teachers' conceptions of how teaching leads to learning. Interacting with others' sensate for inadequate conditions of learning or overcome sociopolitical inequities.

5.   Decisions that teachers make are often affected by exigencies in the classroom rather than by methodological considerations. Saying that a particular method is practiced certainly does not give us the whole picture of what is happening in the classroom.

1.1 Grammar Translation Method

The Grammar-translation Method is not new. It has had different names and has been used by language teachers for many years. At one time it was also called the Classical Method since it was first used in the teaching of the classical languages, Latin and Greek. This method focuses on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary of various declensions and conjugations, translation of texts, doing written exercises (Brown, 2007:18).

In the nineteenth century the Classical method came to be known as the Grammar-Translation Method. To this day, it is widely practiced in too many educational contexts. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979:3) cited in Brown (2007:18-19) listed the major characteristics of Grammar Translation:

a) Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.

b) Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.

c) Long, elaborative explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.

d) Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.

e) Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.

f) Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.

g) Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.

h) Little or no attentions are given to pronunciation.

Until recently, this method has been so stalwart among many competing models. It does not help learners enhance their communicative ability in the language. It is also remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for whom foreign language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusable rules and vocabulary. (Richards and Rodgers 1986:4)

1.2 Direct Method

This method came into use when teachers thought that learning how to use a foreign language for the purpose of communication was the goal of instruction. The Direct Method became very popular when the Grammar-Translation Method was not found effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively. The basic premise of the Direct Method was similar to that of Gouin's Series method which generally aims at language learning should be more like first language learning-lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages. Richards and Rodgers (2001:12) summarized the key principles of the Direct Method:

a) Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.

b) Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.

c) Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully traded progression organized around questions-and-answer exchanging between teachers and students in small intensive classes.

d) Grammar was taught inductively.

e) New teaching points were taught through modeling and practice

f) Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught through association of ideas.

g) Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.

h) Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

The Direct method enjoyed its popularity at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was most widely accepted in private schools. Charles Berlitz developed this method, (who never used the term Direct Method and chose instead to call his method the Berlitz Method in which

students were highly motivated). Direct Method did not take well in public education, where the constraints of budget, classroom size, time, and teacher background made such a method difficult to use. Moreover, it has been criticized for its weak theoretical foundations and has been more of a skill and personality of the teacher than of methodology itself (Brown, 2007).

1.3 Audio-lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method was grounded in linguistic and psychological theory. Structural linguists of the 1940s and 1950s were engaged in what they claimed was a 'scientific descriptive analysis' (Fries, 1945 cited in Brown, 2007). It is basically an oral-based approach like the Direct Method. However, it differs from the Direct Method in many respects. First, while the Direct Method emphasizes vocabulary acquisition through exposure to its use in situations, the Audio-Lingual Method drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. Secondly, the Direct Method has a strong theoretical base in linguistics and psychology. Most of the principles of behavioral psychology (Skinner, 1957:74-81) were incorporated into this method. It is for this reason that the sentence patterns of the target language are thought to be acquired through conditions which mean to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement. Learners overcome the habits of their native language and form new habits in order to be target language speakers. The key principles of Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) may be summed up in the following list (Prator & Celce-Murcia 1979:15-18):

a. New material is presented in dialogue form.

b. There is dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases, and over learning.

c. Structures are sequenced by means of contrastive analysis and taught one at a time.

d. Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills.

e. There is little or no grammatical explanation. Grammar is taught inductive analogy rather by deductive explanation.

f. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context.

g. There is much use of tapes, language labs, and visuals aids.

h. Great importance is attached to pronunciation.

i. Very little sue of mother tongue by teaches is permitted.

j. Successful responses are immediately reinforced.

k.   There is a great effort to get students to produce error-free utterances.

l.   There is a tendency to manipulate language and disregard content.

ALM, for various reasons enjoyed many years of popularity, and even today, adaptations of ALM are found in contemporary methodologies. But it did not last forever. Rivers (1964) criticizes the misconceptions of the ALM and its ultimate failure to teach long-term communicative proficiency.

1.4 The Silent Way

Cognitive Approach (Celce-Murcia, 1991, cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000) appeared as a result of this emphasis on human cognition. In this approach, learners were more actively responsible for their own learning and hypothesizing the formulas in order to discover the rules of the target language. Errors were inevitable and they were signs that learners were actively testing their hypotheses. In the early 1970s Cognitive Approach was of great interest and it was applied to language teaching. Most of the materials contained deductive (students are asked to apply the rules given to them) and inductive (learners themselves discover the rules from the examples and then practice them) grammar exercises. However, no new language method developed from the Cognitive Approach.

Silent Way is the name of a method of language teaching devised by Caleb Gattegno. It is based on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom but the learner should encourage to produce as much language as possible. Elements of this method are the color charts, colored Cuisenaire rods etc. Richards &Rodgers (2001:81) summarized the theory of learning behind the Silent Way:

a)   Learning is facilitated if the learner discoveries or creates rather than remembers and repeats   what is to be learned.

b)   Learning id facilitated by accompanying physical objects.

c)   Learning id facilitated by problem solving the materials to be learned.

Discovery learning was a popular educational trend in 1960s which advocated less learning by 'being told', and more learning by discovering for oneself various facts and principles. Thus, it was grounded on such discovery-learning procedures. Gattegno (1972) believed that learners

should develop independence, autonomy, and responsibility. Learners in this classroom have to cooperate with each other in the process of solving language problems. The teacher is a stimulator and remains silent much of the time, thus the name of the method.

1.4.1 Key Principles:

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

1. To avoid the use of the vernacular.
2. To create simple linguistic situations that remains under the complete control of the teacher.
3. To pass on to the learners the responsibility for the utterances of the descriptions of the objects shown or the actions performed.
4. To let the teacher concentrate on what the students say and how they are saying it, drawing their attention to the differences in pronunciation and the flow of words.
5. To generate a serious game-like situation in which the rules are implicitly agreed upon by giving meaning to the gestures of the teacher and his mime.
6. To permit almost from the start a switch from the lone voice of the teacher using the foreign language to a number of voices using it.
7. To provide the support of perception and action to the intellectual guess of what the noises mean, thus bring in the arsenal of the usual criteria of experience already developed and automatic in one's use of the mother tongue.
8. To provide duration of spontaneous speech upon which the teacher and the students can work to obtain a similarity of melody to the one heard.
9. To give students a great deal of meaningful practice without repetition.
10. To make meaning clear to understand student's perceptions, not through translation.

1.5 Community Language Learning

The basic principle of this method is to establish interpersonal relationships between the teacher and students to facilitate learning. The thought is that learning, like living, is a social affair and can come about only from social interaction. The students first establish interpersonal relationships in their native language while the teacher focuses their attention on students' needs. This methodology is not based on the usual methods by which languages are taught.

Rather, the approach is patterned upon counseling-learning techniques developed by Charles (1977) 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. Consequently, the learner is not thought of as a student but as a client. The native instructors of the language are not considered teachers but, rather are trained in counseling skills adapted to their roles 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.

1.5.1 Key Principles:

There are five important principles in Community Language Learning. These principles are:

a) Language is a behavior of a learner that is directed toward others. The learner can talk about things that make him interested and things that he has been experienced before.

b) A learner can learn a new behavior fast if he is not interrupted. Therefore, a learner as the client must have as many opportunities as possible to practice his language knowledge without much interference from the teacher as counselor.

c) The counselor should give assistance the clients in using their language all the time.

d) The counselor should give assistance in maintaining useful behavior by using three suggested techniques which are (a) give the chance to clients to talk much, (b) develop the language productivity of the clients and (c) give the counseling and then make some evaluations.

e) In preparing the materials, the counselor should choose the easy ones for both the clients and counselor which are suitable for the level and goal to be accomplished.

Brown (2007) points out some of the problems with method. Firstly, the counselor teacher can become too nondirective. The student often needs some direction, especially in the first stage. Another problem is that CLL relies on an inductive strategy of learning. It is widely

accepted that deductive learning is both a viable and efficient strategy of learning and that adults can particularly benefit from deductive and induction as well. Finally the success of CLL depends on the translation expertise of the counselor.

1.6 Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is a method developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist-educator Georgi Lozano. He believes that language learning can occur at a much faster rate than ordinarily transpire. The reason for our inefficiency is that we set up psychological barriers to learning. Suggestopedia is aimed at helping students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful or negative association they may have toward studying (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).One of the ways the students' mental reserves are stimulated is through integration of the fine arts, is an important contribution to this method by Lozanov's colleague Evelyna Gateva.

1.6.1 Key Principles

a) Learning is facilitated in an environment that is as comfortable as possible, featuring soft cushioned seating and dim lighting.

b) 'Peripheral' learning is encouraged through the presence in the learning environment of posters and decorations featuring the target language and grammatical information. The teacher assumes a role of complete authority and control in the classroom.

c) Students work from lengthy dialogs in the target language, with an accompanying translation into the students' native language.

d) Errors are tolerated, the emphasis being on content and not structure. Grammar and vocabulary are presented and given treatment from the teacher, but not dwelt on.

e) Homework is limited to students re-reading the dialog they are studying – once before they go to sleep at night and once in the morning before they get up.

f) Music, drama and "the Arts" are integrated into the learning process as often as possible. (Larsen-freeman, 2000:73-80)

1.7 Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response is a language learning method based on the coordination of speech and action. It was developed by James Asher, a professor of psychology at San Jose State

University, California. It is linked to the trace theory of memory, which holds that the more often or intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory will be. Asher (1996:18) defines the Total Physical Response (TPR) method as one 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. As a result, this success leads to a high degree of motivation. The basic tenet understands the spoken language before developing the skills of speaking. Imperatives are the main structures to transfer or communicate information. The student is not forced to speak, but is allowed an individual readiness period and allowed to spontaneously begin to speak when the student feels comfortable and confident in understanding and producing the utterances.

1.7.1 Key Principles:

1. Meaning in the target language can often be conveyed through actions. The target language should be presented in chunks, not just word by word.
2. The students' understanding of the target language should be developed before speaking.
3. Students can initially learn one part of the language rapidly by moving their bodies.
4. The imperative is a powerful linguistic device through which the student can direct student behavior.
5. Student can learn through observing actions as well as by performing the actions themselves.
6. Students should not be made to memorize fixed routines.
7. Language learning is more effective when it is fun.
b) TPR has its limitations like any other method that we have encountered. It seems to be the effective in the beginning levels of language proficiency, but it lost its uniqueness as learners advanced in their competence

1.8 The Natural Approach

Stephen Krashen's (1982) theories of second language acquisition have been widely debated over the years. The major methodological offshoots of Krashen's views are manifested in the Natural Approach, developed by one of Krashen's colleagues, Tracy Terrell (Krashen &Terrell, 1983). They argue that learners would benefit from delaying production until speech emerges.

They also point out that a great deal of communication and acquisition should take place when learners should be relaxed in the classroom.

The natural approach is aimed at the goal of basic personal communication skills, that is, everyday language situations-conversations, shopping, listening to the radio and the like. The initial task of the teacher is to provide comprehensible input. Learners need not say anything during this "silent period" until they feel ready to do so.

In the natural approach, learners will move through what Krashen and Terrell (1983:1-19) defined as three stages:

a) The preproduction stage is the development of listening comprehensible skills.

b) The early production stage is usually marked with errors as the student struggles with the language. The teacher focuses on meaning not on form and therefore the teacher does not make a point of correcting errors during this stage.

c) The last stage is one of the extending productions into longer stretches of discourse involving more complex games, role-plays, open-ended dialogues and small group-work.

The most controversial aspects of the Natural Approach are its advocacy of a 'silent period' and its heavy emphasis on comprehensible input.

1.9 Communicative Language Teaching

In the previous section, the history of English language teaching methods that defined decades ago was presented. In the 1940s and 1950s, the profession was determined to behaouristic tendency that scientifically ordered set of linguistic structures into the minds of learners through conditioning. In the 1960s Chomsky's notion of generative grammar raised the question whether it would fit into our language classrooms. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the beginning of a communicative approach which would incorporate functions into a classroom. The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed the development of approaches that emphasize the communicative properties of language, and classrooms were increasingly characterized by authenticity, real-world simulation, and meaningful tasks.

CLT is based on the work of sociolinguists, particularly that of Hymes (1972). Arguing against Chomsky (1957), Hymes proposed that knowing a language involves more than knowing a set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules. In order to use the language effectively, Hymes posited, learners need to develop communicative competence—the ability to use the language they are learning appropriately in a given social encounter.

As Richards and Rogers (1986:71) put it:

> Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. Thus although a reasonable degree of theoretical consistency can be discerned at the levels of language and learning theory, at the levels of design and procedure there is much greater room for individual interpretation and variation than most methods permit.

Since its inception in the early 1970s, CLT has been defined, described, and used by various educators and practitioners in many different ways. However, it is possible to identify the common essentials of CLT as proposed by the main scholars in the field. From the seminal works in CLT (Widdowson1978, Breen & Candlin 1980, Savignon 1983, Brown 2000 and Nunan 1991a), Brown (2007:43) offered six interconnected characteristics as a description of CLT:

a) Classrooms goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence.
b) Language techniques are designed to engage in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes.
c) Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
d) Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and respectively. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
e) Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate

strategies for autonomous learning.

f) The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge.

1.10 Conclusion

Many scholars have tried their level best to propose the suitable methods to teach English as second language or foreign language. The discussion in this paper captured some issues and implications of ELT methods like grammar translation method, direct method, silent way, total physical method, communicative language teaching and so on. As stated by many scholars, choosing an ELT method depends upon many factors like the level of the learners, socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic factors. Spolsky (1978) is of the view that education policies and teaching methods need to be drafted taking the classroom and all the stakeholders who come into play with education. An attempt has been made to address some issues related to English language teaching in non-native contexts. Of course, though it is done at micro level, one might get some insights of issues and implications of the ELT methods discussed in this paper.

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