

## THE BEST METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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**Abstract:** It was not difficult to realise that English served not only as a target language but also a medium of instruction in an English medium school. No matter whatever the age and the cultural background of the students, teaching methods become crucial to make the learning of the lesson fruitful. Teachers play an important role in designing teaching techniques through years of teaching experience and training. A language classroom is totally different from a typical lecture-style classroom where a teacher indulges in a one-way lecture and students take down notes. This paper aims at pointing out some effective teaching methodology focussing attention on the characteristic features, teacher-student role and example of a lesson in an ESL classroom.

**Keywords:** Techniques, Methodology, Interaction, Incorporate, Approach, Sentiments, Drawback, Linguist, Memorizing, Initiator.

As a language teacher it is very important to know yourself and your students. Not only your subject matter is important but also your students' cultural background and other personal factors- emotional and psychological are equally important. Language teachers have experimented with certain language teaching methods in isolation or combination and found one or more than one method effective and worth using. I hope this paper will help ESL teachers to gain an insight into developing an appropriate teaching material and selecting an effective, suitable teaching method that can practically be implemented in the classroom<sup>1</sup>.

The Grammar-Translation Method had been used by the language teachers for many years. It was also known as the Classical method as it was used to teach the classical Latin and Greek literature. It was believed that this method would help students to read and appreciate the foreign literature. It was also thought that by studying the grammar of the target language students will be able to understand the grammar of their native language and learn to speak and write the native language in a much better way. Though students may not develop communicative fluency in the target language but would become mentally sharp in the process of using target language to understand the native language through some similarities between the two. Let us understand the technique of Grammar-Translation method through an example

<sup>1</sup> Gebhard G. J. Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language, (2nd Ed)- A Teacher Self-Development and Methodology Guide, 2021. University Of Michigan Press

of a classroom where students are asked to translate a piece of literature from English (the target language) to Arabic (the native language). This method is used in the language classrooms with an intention of helping students use their brain intellectually. In this method students are given grammar rules, asked to memorize it and then apply it to the other examples<sup>2</sup>.

A class of students studying IGCSE syllabus are asked to read a passage from Shakespeare's book, „As You Like It“, in English and then few lines are selected by the English teacher and given to the students to translate into Arabic. Then, they are provided with a list of vocabulary such as villain, throat, crown, worship etc and are instructed to give Arabic equivalent. Students are able to give the equivalent words of almost all English vocabulary successfully. Very few students those who could not provide the Arabic equivalent to the English vocabulary asked the teacher and the teacher provided them with the correct answer directly.

While translating the lines from English to Arabic, students found difficult to write the sentence correctly. They were familiar with few words and some were new to them. Students who were able to translate English into Arabic were considered successful language learners. Learning was facilitated through attention to similarities between the target language and the native language. In the process of doing so, students were encouraged to learn grammar rules, memorizing long lists of vocabulary without preparing them to communicate in a given situation. This method ignored developing communication skills and created a teacher centric classroom discouraging student initiation or student-student interaction. The teacher alone plays the role of an initiator during the whole process of learning. Only grammar and vocabulary is emphasised giving less importance to speaking, listening and pronunciation. In this method, students' native language is used more rather than the target language. Students are encouraged to understand the target language by translating it into their native language. This drawback of paying attention to the development of communication skills gave rise to using another method of teaching English as a SL in the classroom.

The Direct Method became popular when students failed to communicate effectively using The Grammar-Translation Method. It allowed no translation of any kind. Students were helped directly to pick up the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids without seeking any help from the native language. Let us understand this method through an example<sup>3</sup>.

The teacher shows a picture to the language classroom and entitles it as “an Indian fair”. She asks them to observe this picture minutely for some time and then starts

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<sup>2</sup> Brown H. D. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy, 2021. NY: Pearson Longman.

<sup>3</sup> Larsen-Freeman D. Technique and Principles in Language Teaching (2nd Ed), 2020. New York, Oxford University Press.

asking question to get feedback from the class. The teacher asks questions such as what do you see in the picture? Prepare a list of different items seen in the picture? Is it a fair or a market place? Describe the balloon stall in the centre of the tent? What do you see on the left and the right side of the balloon stall? etc. Students give response to each question in a different way. They use their imagination and knowledge of vocabulary and sentence pattern while answering the questions. In return the students also asked questions to the teacher such as Have you ever been to a fair in your childhood? Can we go to see a fair some day? Can red and yellow be mixed to prepare orange colour? etc. Wherever students responded using a single word, the teacher instructed to answer using a complete sentence, for example instead of saying “toy”, students were supposed to say, “I see a toy stall beside the balloon stall” etc.

Students learned new words in situations. A teacher focuses attention on helping students to think in the target language in order to facilitate communication. Grammar is taught indirectly unlike The Grammar-Translation Method. Attention is given on the spoken not written. Students are motivated to speak in the target language and discuss the history, geography and the culture of the target language people. They are helped with all the four major skills of the target language-Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking. This method gives an opportunity for two-way interaction between a teacher and students. They are like partners in the teaching-learning process.

The Audio-Lingual Method is orally based just like The Direct Method. However it does not focus on picking up a vocabulary by using it in a situation like the Direct Method but drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. Teacher wants students to use the target language communicatively and in order to do so want students to over learn the target language. The teacher provides with models for the students to imitate accurately and as quickly as possible. This way the students form new habits in the target language overcoming the old habits of the native language. Teachers provide with tapes of model speakers and students imitate the teacher’s models<sup>4</sup>.

ESL classroom uses Audio-Lingual method to teach the target language directly using four different elements such as Repetition, Inflection, Replacement and Restatement. A teacher drills students in the use of grammar by asking them to repeat a sentence word to word:

Teacher- I want to go to the market.

Students- I want to go to the market.

The teacher uses a word or a sentence and the students change the form:

Teacher- I am feeling hungry.

Students: I was feeling hungry.

The teacher says a sentence and students replace a word in the sentence:

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<sup>4</sup> Larsen-Freeman D and Michael H.L. An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research, 2021. Longman Inc. New York.

Teacher- I am tired of reading.

Students- I am tired of playing.

The teacher says a sentence and the students rephrase the sentence:

Teacher- Ask me to read loudly.

Students- Read louder.

New vocabulary and structural patterns are presented through dialogues and these dialogues are learned through imitation and repetition. Grammar rules are not provided directly, it is induced through the examples given. Students learn the language patterns the way it is presented in the dialogue. There is student to student interaction but mostly it is teacher directed. He/She is the controlling authority. Although Audio-Lingual Method is still practised by the language teachers, one problem with this is that students are unable to transfer the habits they have mastered in the classroom to communicative use outside it.

The Silent-Way Method came into existence when the idea of learning a language by forming a set of habits was seriously challenged in the early 1960s. Linguist like Caleb Gattegno looked at language learning from a learner's point of view by studying the way babies and young children picked up the language. Gattegno's Silent- Way method is similar in certain aspects with Chomsky's Cognitive Approach proposing that speakers have knowledge of underlying abstract rules, which allow them to understand and create novel utterances. In other words, students are responsible for their own learning. They are initiators of learning and capable of independently acquiring language. This method gave importance to the learning process and not teaching. Students were expected to express their thoughts, perceptions and feelings and for this they were expected to develop independence from the teacher and develop own inner criteria for correctness. Teacher should give students only that what requires in promoting the learning. Students are expected to utilise what they already have and actively engage in exploring the new areas of the target language<sup>5</sup>.

Gattegno designed specialized teaching materials such as the Sound-color chart, Word charts, Cuisenaire rods and Fidel charts for beginners in school to learn sounds, intonation, stress pattern, pronunciation, vocabulary, spellings and sentence structure. Same charts have been revised and new ones developed for intermediate and advanced level students. Students begin their study of the language through its basic building blocks, its sound which is introduced through a language-specific sound-color chart.

The Communicative Approach came into lime light in 1970s when Linguists realised that students may know the linguistic usage but are unable to use the language. It became very clear that students should learn to perform certain functions such as inviting, declining, praising etc in a social context. It means being able to communicate

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<sup>5</sup> Peace Corps- Information Collection & Exchange M0041: TEFL/TESL: Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language, 2019.

students did not require linguistic competence but communicative competence that taught them what to say, when to say, how to say and whom to say. In this method the teacher's role is to establish situations to promote communication. Students interact a great deal with one another in a given context.

Grade eight students are divided into two groups- „Group A“ and „Group B“. Group A is being asked to conduct an interview for a specific vacancy in a company. Group B is told to enact a situation where few people are lost in a jungle, trying to find a way out. Both the groups are given 15 minutes time to decide who will act as what, what to say, when to say, how to say and why to say. They are allowed to jot down their points in their note books to use it as their expressions while communicating. The purpose of giving situations to the two groups is to help students use language as it is used in a real situation outside the classroom. English as a target language is a vehicle for classroom communication. After certain discussion over the given situations, both the groups performed their level best in utilising the situations appropriately and understanding the communicative purpose of the lesson by speaking for a long time without a break and making the classroom a meaningful success<sup>6</sup>.

The purpose of this communicative method of teaching was to make students speak confidently, apt to a given situation rather than just mastering the language forms. Students were expected to learn beyond sentence construction and understand the linguistic properties of cohesion and coherence that helps binding the sentences together. This communicative interaction gave an opportunity to build cooperative relationship among students making negotiation more meaningful. The given situation helped in providing meaning to the speech of each group. The teacher played her best as a facilitator and an advisor whenever required during the communicative activity. This activity helped students with lot of improvement into listening, speaking and comprehension strategies<sup>7</sup>.

There are yet other approaches making communication as central. These are content-based, task-based and Participatory approach to teaching English as a SL.

### CONCLUSION

It is actually difficult to say which teaching method is effective unless used in a classroom of students with different need, learning experience, intellectual levels, cultural background and attitude towards learning English as a Second Language. Sometimes more than one method is used to bring out the desired results in the language classroom where communication becomes the key factor of teaching-learning process. Unless students learn to utilise the classroom method to express thoughts and feelings outside into the real world situations, the learning cannot be successful no

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Language Pedagogy. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/language\_pedagogy).

<sup>7</sup> Zainuddin et al. Methods/Approaches of Teaching ESOL: A Historical Overview. From, “Fundamentals of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages in K12 Mainstream Classrooms,” 3rd ed, 2021. Kendall Hunt Publishing Co.

matter whatever teaching method is applied in English as a SL classroom. Teacher-student role becomes the centre in bringing out the maximum within the limited time in a classroom.

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