

# METHODS AND APPROACHES OF TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA: AN ECLECTIC OVERVIEW

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## Abstract

Language plays an important role in human life. English is considered as the global language which links people everywhere around the world. English as a language came into India with the establishment of East Indian Company in 1612 and the arrival of British rules in India. English becomes a medium of communication and later becomes a medium of instructions even in education. Teaching the English language in India is a challenge for teachers as well as students and any study on English language trace back its roots to the studies underwent on English Language Teaching up until now. This paper titled "Methods and Approaches of Teaching English Language in India: An Eclectic Overview" is a review on various effective approaches and methods used for language teaching in India from Grammar Translation Method to Skill Based Learning/Teaching.

**Keywords:** Audio Lingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Community Language Learning, Direct Method, English Language Teaching, Grammar Translation Method, Natural Method, Reading Method, Skill Based Learning/Teaching, Structural Approach, Structural Oral Situational Approach.

## INTRODUCTION

M. E. S. Elizabeth in her Methods of Teaching English (2010) quotes Prof. Gurrey who said: In teaching, it is highly desirable to know exactly what one is hoping to achieve as it is in all great undertakings. If this can be clearly seen then the best way of getting to work usually becomes evidence. We ought, therefore, to consider carefully what we are trying to do, when we are teaching a language. (311)

English is a fine-tuned, broadly studied language around the world. The English language has become an official language and second language in many of the countries around the world. English as a language came into India with the establishment of East Indian Company in 1612 and the arrival of British rules in India. English becomes a medium of communication and later becomes a medium of instructions even in education. Even though Hindi is the official language in India, English is the most widely used, read and write in India. Teaching English language in India is a challenge for teachers as well as students. Teachers play an important role in creating and developing new and existing methods of teaching with the use of their ideas and experience. India is a country that have a unique culture of teaching compared to the westerners. We considered teachers as equal to parents and god, "Matha Pitha Guru Deivam". Even though we are rich with traditional teaching values and norms, we don't have any unique method or approach for teaching English, we follow the methods prevalent in modern times. Before going in detail to the methods and approaches of teaching English Languages, let's embark on the difference between 'methods' and 'approaches.' Methods are a modus derived from the theories of language teaching and learning which analyse how a teacher teaches and a student learns a language. Approach is a loom on the practice of teaching a language using the theories and methods of ELT. Methods and approaches in teaching English language can be classified into:

- (a) Grammar Translation Method
- (b) Direct Method
- (c) Structural Approach
- (d) Structural Oral Situational Approach
- (e) Audio Lingual Method
- (f) Bi-Lingual Method
- (g) Communicative Language Teaching
- (h) Community Language Learning
- (i) Reading Method
- (j) The Silent Way
- (k) Natural Method
- (l) Suggestopedia
- (m) Skill Based Learning and Teaching

### **Grammar Translation Method:**

The Grammar Translation Method is one of the oldest methods of teaching since it was used to teach Greek and Latin in European countries. It is also known as Classical method. GT Method came into the forefront in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to teach modern languages such as English, French, German. It is the method of teaching grammar by translating it into the mother tongue. i.e., a text in source language gets translated to a target language. Two principle ideas should be followed in the Grammar Translation Method: First and foremost, It depends highly on teacher and literary language. Other is the need to develop good reading and writing skills with more focus on accuracy, morphology and syntax.

According to Richard and Rodgers,

“Though it may be true to say that the Grammar-Translation Method is still widely practiced, it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.” (1)

With the advent of new theories and methods in English language teaching, the Grammar-Translation method becomes imperfect but in India, grammar-translation method plays an important role in teaching English languages despite new innovations in teaching which sustains the vast syllabus and a large number of students with average, below average and intellectual academics.

### **Direct Method:**

The Direct Method is the method widely used in India which emphasis speaking, listening, and thinking without the help of the mother tongue. Direct method is also known as Natural Method or Reaction Method as the title suggests is a reaction against the grammar-translation method in France in 1901. If the Grammar-Translation method is a deductive approach of teaching Direct Method is a method with an inductive approach where students generate the rules and generalization of the topic from the pieces of information provided by the teacher. Unlike GT, Direct method focuses on the vocabulary. An apt example for Direct Method in the Indian curriculum is the teaching in primary schools where the teacher made activities is very helpful to learn the target language. Direct method cannot be used in Indian high schools since the numbers of students in a classroom is high and lack of experienced teachers to teach English in this method and it may fail to bring meaning and experience together in learning.

According to Frederick Bodmer,

When sensible people began to see the absurdity of this system, still preserved in many grammar-books, there was a swing of the pendulum from the perfectionist to the nudist (or DIRECT) method of teaching a language by conversation and pictures, without any rules. The alleged justification for this is that children first learn to speak without any rules, and acquire grammar rules governing the home language, if at all, when they are word-perfect. This argument is based on several misconceptions... The most apparent reason for its vogue is that it exempts the teacher from having any intelligent understanding of the language which he or she is teaching. (38)

### **Structural Approach:**

Structural Approach was developed from the Institute of Education at the University of London during research on English language teaching as a foreign language. It takes its root in the Direct Method of teaching where form or structure is given more importance than the meaning of the language. A structure is selected in according to these four principles: teachability, productivity, simplicity, and its usefulness.

In India, the structural approach came into limelight in the 1950s in the colleges under the Madras university following the patterns established by the University of London. This approach has been widely used around three decades in which the State Institution of Education Research and Training (SIERT) is still organising short term courses for teaching English as a second language in India. Even then language teaching doesn't reach to the level expected by the organisers due to the lack of efficient and trained teachers to teach the future educators.

### **Structural Oral Situational Approach:**

The S-O-S Approach takes its origin in the 1920s and 30s. it is an alternative to the direct method of ELT. According to this approach, language is made and used according to the situation. In this method, the teacher makes the students learn, practice and present the target language in the correct and effective situations with the correct usage of grammar and structure of the sentences as well as the language. S-O-S approach has been existed in the young educators and is ineffective in Indian schools since they have a vast syllabus to cover.

### **Audio Lingual Method:**

The Audio-Lingual method resembles the direct method of ELT where teachers teach students a new language without focusing on the native language of the students to explain the new language. This enhances the knowledge of students and helps to develop the new language in them. It focuses on grammar rather than vocabulary. Repetition, Inflection, Replacement, and Restatement are the four elements used to teach audio-

lingual method in ELT. It drills students with a new language where at first, they hear a language then learn, speak, read and write it.

Audio Lingual method as an approach for teaching English takes its origin in 1942 in America during the second world war, when Americans realized the need for trained speakers for interpreting different languages. Hence it is also known as the Army Method. They had organized an Army Specialized training Programme through which they recruit a group of people with good reading, writing and verbal communication skills. Army method can't be used in many of the Indian schools with a large strength but is possible in Indian private schools with an 'n' number of students to teach the English language. Memorization, Repetition, and Transformation are the activities generally used in this method.

#### **Bilingual Method:**

Bi-Lingual Method as the name suggests is the symbiosis of two languages i.e., the mother tongue and target language, developed by Dr C. J. Dodson Wales. It is an association of grammar-translation method and direct method. It focuses on four principles of language teaching such as Selection, Gradation, Presentation and Repetition. It is a method where the teacher uses his/her mother tongue to explain or teach a new language and its functions. The Bi-lingual method is the common method used by Indian teachers in schools to teach the student a new subject. According to Dodson, its objective is to make the students accurate and fluent in speaking the language first, then writing it. Bi-lingual applies only to those people who know two languages i.e., mother tongue and a second language. Prof. H. N. Sasthri of EFLU Hyderabad had undergone research and made it clear that Bi-lingual is one of the effective methods of teaching in India more like a translation method.

#### **Communicative Language Teaching:**

CLT is a broad approach of teaching English language in India. It helps the students to use the target language and learn the functions of languages. It is also known as the Communicative Approach where the teacher establishes a situation to practice communication. Here language is meant for communication and learners to become an active participant. Communicative approach hassles fluency and accuracy and dominates the meaning of the language. Communication Approach originates in India in the late 1960s which rather than focusing on the grammar rules assumed that language teaching must focus on the situation in which a sentence is used rather than the grammar rules. Grammar is useless if it is not applied in the correct situation which demands it. It is said that grammar should not be focused on some situations but it is given importance in the application of communication. Michael Canale and Merrill Swain in their essay in Applied Linguistics titled "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches" (1980) wrote:

Communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and communicative strategies, or what we will refer to as strategic competence. There is no strong theoretical or empirical motivation for the view that grammar competence is any more or less crucial to successful communication than is sociolinguistic competence or strategic competence. The primary goal of a communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of knowledge for the learner, an outcome that is not likely to result from overemphasis on one form of competence over the others throughout a second language programme. (27)

Here language act as a medium of expression, interaction, semiotics, learning, and communication.

#### **Community Language Learning:**

Community Language Learning is an approach developed by Charles A. Curran where the learners work together to learn a new language. It is a method in which the teacher becomes the mentor and a passive participant. Community language learning takes its origin from The Cognition Theory and Stephen Krashen's Monitor Theory. Community Language Teaching is one such method where the learning should be initiated by the learners themselves. Rather than competitive approach in learning, it becomes a co-operative learning where the teacher, student and the modulator of the subject is the learner himself/herself. The School of Joy like institutions are examples of Community Language Learning centres in India.

#### **Reading Method:**

The Reading method as the title suggests gives importance to reading for teaching English language. It was developed by Michael West, an educator in Bengal, who asserted that reading should be given more importance than speaking. He aims at understanding the language rather than facsimile it. Reading method is not successful in India since it is appropriate to provide correct and accurate comprehension to develop the vocabulary of the reader or student. H. H. Stern, Elaine E. Tarone, Hans Heinrich Stern, George Yule and Hilde Stern in their Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching: Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Applied Linguistic Research (1983) wrote:

The reading method grew out of practical educational considerations, not from a shift in a linguistic and psychological theory. It was in keeping with American educational theory of the twenties. It introduced into language teaching some important elements: (a) the possibility of devising techniques of language learning geared to specific purposes, in this case the reading objective; (b) the application of vocabulary control to

second language texts, as a means of better grading of texts; (c) the creation of graded 'readers'; and (d) thanks to vocabulary control, the introduction of techniques of rapid learning to the foreign learning classroom. (462)

#### **The Silent Way:**

The Silent Way is a method of teaching English language created by Caleb Gattegno. It enables the students to become independent in learning the language. As the title suggests, it is a silent way of teaching in which the teacher remains silent, a passive role in teaching where the students or learners have an active role in it. They engage in creative learning with the assessments like problem-solving, finding activities to be done etc. here the teacher is the one like a guide who correct the error of the learners by not indulging in giving any new form or ideas to be used in learning. Rather than a simple listener, the learner is an active participant in this method. Students learn English language using Sound-Color chart, Word-Fidal Chart etc. The Sound-color chart helps the teachers to teach and learners to learn words, grammar, pronunciation, where the blocks in the chart represent vowels and consonants. Fidal chart is a chart in which each block represents different sounds in English makes learning and teaching language easier. Even though the teacher remains silent, he/she makes awareness among students and makes student-student interaction on the right face and establish learning skills like reading, speaking, writing etc. among students.

#### **Natural Method:**

Tracy Terrell with the espousal of Stephen Krashen developed the natural method which aims at the reproduction of the language naturally to the native language. It resembles the Translation Method, Direct Method and Reading Method in Language teaching. The Natural method focuses on the use of language and the vocabulary of the language. It is a compulsion of a variety of approaches and methods in English language teaching.

#### **Suggestopedia:**

Suggestopedia is an approach developed in the 1970s by Georgi Lozanov. According to Lozanov, one of the issues in learning a subject or a language is memorization and integration of words and ideas. Suggestopedia makes learning easy with the application of positive suggestion in teaching. The term 'suggestopedia' is a portmanteau of 'suggestion' and 'pedagogy' which means emphasizing student's choice. It is also known as 'Desuggestopedia' or 'Desuggestive Learning.' Lozanov claims that the method is 25 times accurate than any other method of teaching English language. Music has a vital role in this method. Lozanov had introduced four stages of suggestopedia such as presentation, concert session, elaboration and practice. Methods of Suggestopedia includes creating an environment to learn, limited homework, general discussions, music and art in learning etc. emancipates teaching and learning English as a tough, foreign language to an easily assessable one in India.

#### **Skill Based Learning and Teaching:**

Skills can be classified into Language skills, Cognitive skills, Study skills etc. There are generally four skills in language acquisition such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, which again have sub-skills such as skimming, scanning, vocabulary, mechanics, pronunciation, specific, gist etc. Cognitive skills are mental skills to acquire knowledge and study skills are the approaches to learning or study the subject. Skill-based learning or teaching involves the specialization in learning a subject which is imperfect in India but occurs in many private schools with an international syllabus.

### **CONCLUSION**

V. Saraswathi in her English Language Teaching: Principles and Practice (2004) said:

The history of language teaching presents a fascinating variety of methods. If there is such a variety of methods, which one are we to choose? There is no definite answer to this question, what works with one learner may not work with another. One may be a wizard in grammar but another may just hate it. Others might enjoy memorizing sentences. (63)

English as a foreign language and second language has a wide reach in India as well as Indian schools. We cannot assume that all these methods and approaches are used and practised in all Indian schools, this may be limited to private schools with an extravagant syllabus. Like Indian culture, Indian academic syllabus is also vast. It is not possible to select one single method or approach suitable for Indian curriculum since the number of students in a classroom is high, trained teachers in schools are low. There are institutes like EFLU in Hyderabad which focuses on the development of language teaching in India. With the advent of digital technologies teaching had also changed. What should be focused on the modern Indian society is the apt way of teaching and setting a clear base for language teaching with quality. Language teachers should dissolve these methods and approaches into the Indian context and create new modus which provides good education system equipped with knowledge.

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