

ELT APPROACHES: THE CHANGING PARADIGMS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING W.R.T NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION OF INDIA

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Abstract:

English Language is one of the most prominent languages in the world today. In Indian context, it plays a very important role. It is required to interact with the outside world and at the same time is the link language between the people of India since there are more than 30 regional languages spoken across India. Considering the importance of English language, the Parliament of India has recognized it as a Co-Official Language of the Country. In India, English Language is taught right from very beginning of a child's schooling and it continues all through High School, Intermediate, UG and PG. The teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching English. There is no particular method that is applied to ELT in India. Though, the approach mostly used in ELT is the amalgamation of all the methods devised so far, but Communicative Language Teaching is currently considered the best approach to ELT in India, especially at the PG level. The learners learn the new language fastest by getting involved in tasks where they are required to use the target language. CLT is based on Task based teaching which focuses on the use of authentic material and meaningful tasks.

Keywords: *ELT Approaches, Language Teaching Methods, Communication Skills, Business Communication.*

Introduction

It is very important for the people of India especially the youth to be conversant with and proficient in English Language. English is, in most of the schools and colleges in India, an integral part of the curricula. The teachers of English use a variety of language teaching techniques. In most of the professional Institutions there aren't any direct English language teaching courses. These institutions have courses in Communication Skills and Language teaching is a part of these Communication Skills courses. Though, in most of these Institutions the teaching of Communication Skills Courses eventually comes down to teaching English language Skills only including all the macro and micro communication skills. The students in the professional Institutions are all adults and very diversified. In most of the schools English is taught right from the beginning and thus, these students needn't be taught the basic grammar rules but at the same time, there are students who come from those schools where medium of Instructions has been the vernaculars and not English. It becomes very challenging for the teachers to handle such a diverse group of students. The approach that these teachers apply in ELT must be thoroughly examined and gaps need to be identified to make language teaching more effective.

The present study aims at analyzing the various methods used by English teachers in India in teaching English. The main focus will be on analyzing the techniques used by English Communication Skills teachers in professional Institutions. Further, the study will try to find out which method, according to the teachers, is most effective in the Indian context with particular focus on Delhi NCR. The analysis of the methods will include the background of each method, the strengths, the weaknesses, and the feasibility

and relevance of each method in the Indian context.

Some of the important approaches to teaching English as a second language in India discussed in the paper are:

1. The Grammar-Translation Method
2. The Direct Method
3. The Audio-Lingual Method
4. Bilingual method
5. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

The Grammar-Translation Method for teaching English Language was in vogue during the 16th century. This method was originally devised to teach Latin and Greek and is also referred to as the Classical Method. The method made use of the traditional techniques of rote learning the vocabulary of the target language (TL) and learning the grammar rules. The focus of the method was on translating the texts into the TL. Latin and Greek were taught majorly as academic subjects and thus, no emphasis was laid on speaking and listening comprehension in the GTM.

This method came into being somewhere in 1500s to teach Latin and Greek but was revived in the 19th century to teach English Language. In the Indian context too, this method was quite in vogue in the early 20th century and is still practiced by many teachers. This method combines grammar rules and translation of sentences or texts between the TL and the native language. It dwells heavily upon rote learning of the grammar rules and then applying those rules while translating from L1 to TL and vice-versa. The two main objectives of GTM are - first, to help students develop their reading ability to the extent that they can read and easily understand the literature in TL and secondly, to develop the writing skills of the students. The main focus of GTM is on reading and writing and many techniques have been devised to facilitate learning reading and writing only. Consequently, speaking and listening are utterly overlooked in this method. In the classrooms, even at PG level, it is observed that the students who have learnt English through GTM fail completely to make oral presentations in the TL even though, their understanding of the grammar rules is quite sound.

Leopold Bahlsen, while talking about writing skills and speaking skills in GTM, said he would be overcome with "a veritable forest of paragraphs, and an impenetrable thicket of grammatical rules". (Bahlsen, 12)

This method does not involve any listening or speaking practice and very little attention is laid on interaction and pronunciation. Therefore, the method has been rejected by modern scholars and has no theoretical basis. According to Richards 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" (Richards and Rogers, 7).

The Direct Method

The Direct Method, also called the Natural method, was devised in the 20th century to teach second language. It is based on imitating the first language learning and completely refrains from using the learners' mother tongue or the native language. The emphasis is on developing second language through aural and oral skills. A child learns the first language naturally through exposure and compulsion to communicate. It starts imitating what it hears and gradually, imbibes in the vocabulary and the structures of the language. The Direct Method of teaching or learning language establishes direct and immediate relation between experience and expression. The concepts in this method are taught by the means of objects and by 'realia'. Grammar is taught indirectly to the learners through reading, writing, conversations, and discussions. The emphasis is on forming a direct association between the words of the

target language and the meanings, without taking any help from the mother tongue or the native language. Second language is taught in the same way as one acquires the first language. The Direct Method focuses on developing the active language skills in the first place, and then helping the learners start thinking in the target language. The salient features of the Direct Method, according to H. E. Palmer, are:

1. Translation in any form should be completely banished from the classrooms including the use of mother tongue and the use of bilingual dictionary
2. Grammar should be taught inductively
3. Oral teaching precedes reading and writing
4. Use of disconnected sentences should be replaced by the use of connected texts
5. Pronunciation should be taught on phonetic lines
6. Meanings of the words and the forms should be taught through objects and natural contexts

In this approach to language teaching, learners are asked questions which they must answer using the target language only. Teachers read out loud passages, on the basis of the grade, and the learners have to understand the text. The learners are also asked to read passages in the target language. The errors are rectified in the due course by the teachers and the peers. Conversation practice is an integral part of this approach wherein the learners interact with each other and with the teachers and also ask questions in the class. The method has many merits. It facilitates understanding of the target language in a better way since there is no intervention of the mother tongue. It improves fluency of speech in writing as well as in speaking which further, expands vocabulary. This approach promotes reading to a good extent which is quite helpful in understanding language and in acquiring information about various topics. The demerits, however, overshadow the merits of this method. The most major flaw in the method is that it can't be followed very effectively in the monolingual classes. This method may be more effective only in multilingual classes where the learners are compelled to use the target language only in order to communicate. In monolingual classes, like the ones we have in India, the learners tend to resort to the common language or the mother tongue the moment they face difficulty in expressing and it is practically very difficult to regulate it, especially in large classes. Moreover, it is very time consuming to create natural situation to teach meanings of all the words and the use of realia too has its limitations. The Direct Method did not prove very effective on account of the mentioned demerits. The perceived weaknesses in this method led to the introduction of the Audio-Lingual Method.

The Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method was based on the Behaviourist Theory which postulates that certain traits in human beings can be trained through a system of reinforcement and drilling. The Audio-Lingual method, also known as the Army Method or New Key, is an approach which was used to teach English language through the use of drills. The method could be believed to be the outcome of the exigencies during the Second World War. During the war, it became a necessity to understand various different languages and in order to train army personnel in different languages in the shortest time possible the method was devised wherein the personnel were drilled in different languages. A lot of contact was provided with the spoken language with minimum reading and writing. It was started as Army Specialised Training Programme (ASTP) but later came to be known as the Audio-Lingual Method. The Audio-Lingual Method is quite similar to the Direct Method as it completely refrains from using the mother tongue or the native language of the learners. However, this approach, unlike the Direct Method, focuses on drilling the learners in the grammar of the target language instead of teaching vocabulary. Applied to language instruction, this method requires the instructor to present a model sentence in the target language and the learners are required to repeat the same sentence in order to learn it as related to the context where they may produce it spontaneously. The instructor may also keep adding different words in the same structure. In this method, grammar is taught implicitly and the emphasis is more on memorization of the form. The instructions are based on static drills on which the learners have little or no control. They have to

practise the structures which are given to them by the instructors.

According to J.C. Richards et-al., the following are the distinctive characteristics of the Audio-Lingual Method:

1. Repetition - the learners are made to repeat the utterance as they hear it
2. Inflection - one word in a sentence appears in another form when repeated
3. Replacement - one word is replaced by another word in the same utterance
4. Restatement - the learners have to rephrase the utterance

In the Indian context, since most of the language classes are monolingual in nature, the Audio-Lingual method is not very effective. Further to this, the techniques of memorization and drilling might become tedious and boring unless the teacher is very creative and innovative. An Audio-Lingual class needs a well-trained teacher and a well-equipped classroom both of which are in utter inadequacy in India.

Bilingual Method

The Bilingual Method of second language teaching was propounded by Prof. C.J. Dodson, Wales. In this method, the first language of the learners is used to develop competency and fluency in the target language. Mother tongue or the first language is used to explain the sentence structures and the grammar rules of the target language to the learners. The meanings of the words, phrases, idioms and proverbs of the target language are also explained through the use of the first language. The term bilingual means two languages. So, in this approach to teaching English as a second or foreign language, L_1 is exploited in order to develop L_2 .

The method was first employed by Prof. Dodson to teach various foreign languages using Welsh. It was also an attempt to find out how the mother tongue, the most potential source available to a learner, could be used to learn new languages. Prof. Dodson believed in making complete use of the mother tongue of the learners instead of completely banishing it from the picture. He was of the opinion that if the L_1 is used systematically and strategically, it is the most potential resource at hand for the learners of foreign languages. The theory about the language including grammar rules, sentence patterns, meanings etc. may be explained easily using the mother tongue of the learners. The basic concepts are very clearly communicated to the learners using their first language. The Bilingual method is a little close to the traditional Grammar-Translation Method in terms that in Bilingual method also the learners have to use translation to a certain extent. They have to form sentences which correspond to the sentences in the first language. Though, word for word translation is not entertained in this method making it different from the Grammar-translation method. Translation is usually done by the teacher in dire need. Unlike the Direct Method, Bilingual method depends heavily on the use of the mother tongue. In fact, Prof. Dodson, propounded the method to reinstate the importance of the first language of the learners. He very vehemently attacks the Direct Method for completely abandoning the mother tongue or the first language.

The advocates of the Bilingual Method argue that the mother tongue, far from being a hindrance, is actually the greatest resource for the language learners since it allows easy comprehension of the grammar rules and the meanings of complex words, phrases and idioms.

In the Indian context also, the Bilingual Method is used extensively by the language teachers to teach English language. This is so because the method is simple and not many efforts are to be made. No doubt the method helps form a rapport between the teacher and the pupils and the learners do not feel stressed as they can easily get assistance from their mother tongue in the times of difficulty. The very fact that this method is simple and easy makes language learning difficult through the Bilingual Method. In order to learn a new language, it is important to get as much exposure to it as possible. Struggle which the learners have to go through while learning a new language is a vital aspect of language learning. While describing a certain place or thing, learners struggle for words and phrases; they rack their minds and try to communicate the message as clearly as possible. The learning that happens this way is learning forever. This struggle is missing in the Bilingual Method as the learners use their mother tongue to express complex

information which creates a barrier in language learning.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Language teaching was earlier regarded as a cognitive matter that involved memorizing and drilling; then it started to be considered as a socio-cognitive matter wherein it was believed that language can be learnt through social interaction; and now, on the basis of theories by Chomsky and Halliday, the most dominant approach to language teaching is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It is believed by the advocates of CLT that language education should aim at making learners able to communicate in the target language rather than making them acquire grammatical competence. In CLT the teacher is just a facilitator and not an instructor. The job of the facilitator is to provide an atmosphere which is conducive to language learning. The approach is non-methodical in nature as it does not depend on any particular textbooks. It rather uses “authentic texts” and gives learners space to interact with one another in the target language, with of course a common task to do. An authentic text may be any written material in the target language for purposes other than language learning. The learners are given tasks which are based on interactive activities. In the Communicative Language Teaching method, language skills in all types of situations are promoted. Learners converse about various topics; they share their personal experience; and teachers give them topics or texts which are not directly related to grammar. This method, in addition to making the learners learn the target language, also enhances the general learning experience since the texts related to different issues are used as the base of all interactions.

In India also, Communicative Language Teaching is the method used by most of the language teachers. CLT makes extensive use of tasks to teach language and thus, Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be considered a branch of CLT. TBLT focuses on authentic use of language and makes the learners use the target language in meaningful tasks. TBLT was popularized in India by N. Prabhu who realised that the learners learnt the new language more effectively by indulging in tasks where they need to use the target language in an authentic way. According to Prabhu's Bangalore Project the use of task based instructions make language in the classroom communicative since it relates directly to real-life situations. The task based teaching makes use of the natural ability of the learners to learn a language. A task, according to Rod Ellis, has four main characteristics:

1. The primary focus of a task is pragmatic meaning
2. There should be some kind of gap in the task. According to Prabhu's Bangalore project there are three major types of gaps - information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap.
3. The participants choose the linguistic resources needed to complete the task.
4. The outcome of the task should be clear, defined and non-linguistic.

Ellis maintained that during a task, if any attention is attached with the form i.e. grammatical structures, the learners will get distracted and will start finding and correcting. So, while preparing a 'task', the teachers must bear in mind that the outcome should be non-linguistic so that the learner in addition to acquiring language, also acquire information about various issues.

CLT has been extremely influential so far and has been accepted universally as the most effective language teaching approach. There are of course a few limitations too of the method. Some people believe that CLT focuses on fluency and not on accuracy. Further, it is also a notion that this approach leaves the learners to solve their communication issues themselves that might result in the learners keep producing incorrect and incoherent language. But with all these demerits, CLT still is the most effective method of language teaching today in the world and in India.

Discussion

The author of this paper interviewed teachers who teach Communication Skills courses to Management students and interacted with the students of management courses. The aim was to find out the approach which the teachers are using at this level and how effective and efficient the approach has been.

The approach employed by most of the teachers in improving or developing English Language Communication Skills of the PG level management students is an amalgamation of various methods like Bilingual Method, Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual Method. But on further investigating, the researcher found out that the major approach being followed by many of the teachers is Communicative Language teaching approach, though, some teachers were unaware of this approach and had been using it unintentionally because it seemed more effective to them.

The activities which most of the teachers conduct in the communication classes include role-plays, extempore speech on general topics, group-discussions, reading news, drama, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, storytelling, description of things and people and so on. All the activities mentioned above use authentic language and come under the Task based Instructions. The students are involved in these activities and the teacher facilitates the performance. In role-plays, students are made to enact in the situations based on real-life e.g. conversation between a doctor and a patient; conversation between customers and a waiter in a restaurant; buying stuff in the local market where one has to interact with vendors; etc. The teachers make sure that the learners use the target language while performing. This way the learners acquire the target language in a natural way. In the beginning they struggle for words and make wrong structures, which are corrected by the teacher. Extempore speeches on very general day-to-day topics also help learners acquire functional language and general knowledge. Comprehension exercises based on reading or listening help learners develop their reading and listening skills, the receptive skills which form the base of the students. Storytelling activities develop and improve spoken English of the learners. All these activities use “authentic texts” to help learners learn the target language quickly. Grammar rules and proper sentence structures are acquired by the learners implicitly while participating in task based activities.

The focus of all these activities is helping the learners acquire communicative competence. While interacting with the students of MBA and PGDM courses, the researcher found out that these students certainly want to improve their English Language communication skills but are not ready to study grammar rules. At this level, these students are completely occupied by projects and assignments in the specialization areas and can't spare time to go through grammar books to improve language. Thus, the best way to improve communication skills of these students is to make them participate in classroom activities. Through these activities they brush up their language and learn rules implicitly. Moreover, the involvement of the students in these tasks also helps those who know grammar rules but can't speak fluently. The students who learnt language through Grammar-Translation Method get opportunities to practise what they have learnt and thus, improve their spoken English as well.

Conclusion

English, without any doubt, is a very important language in the world and in India. People do want to learn this language for various reasons. In India, this language is required to get employment and to earn livelihood. English in India is also considered a status symbol. Though, knowing English language can by no means be considered a measure of intelligence or brilliance but given the present situation, somebody who knows English language is considered educated. The teachers of English language employ various approaches to bring about desired results. They many a times combine different methods of language teaching to help learners learn English language in an effective way. The most popular approach today in English Language teaching in India is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as it imparts communicative competence to the learners. The material and the activities used in CLT help the learners acquire the language and at the same time help the learners to be informed about what's happening around them. Thus, the text-centred and grammar-centred practices need to be replaced by the student-centred, fluency focused and problem solving activities required by CLT.

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