
Methods of Teaching English –A Survey

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Abstract:

The tradition of language teaching has been subjected to tremendous changes, throughout the 20th century. In the process of teaching and learning a method of teaching is very important. A good teacher is always in search of an effective method of teaching and a good method of teaching results in good learning. It is the duty of the language teacher to understand the various methods and techniques to apply for different learners in different contexts.

Introduction:

Effective teaching methods are essential tools that can help students achieve success in the class room. Method of teaching is always depends on the aim of teaching English. Suppose the teacher is teaching arithmetic to the students, he should enable the students to apply that knowledge in his day to day life situations. So the teacher of English should also teach English with specific objective in mind.

The word method means different things to different people. According to W.F.Mackey, “A *method* determines what and how much is taught?(selection) the order in which it is taught(gradation) how the meaning and form are conveyed (presentation)and what is done to make the use of the language unconscious(repetition)” Thus a method deals *with* four things viz.Selection gradation Presentation and Repetition.¹The term ‘Method’ is sometimes compared with the term ‘Approach’. According to Yardi “Method is rigid while Approach is flexible”. Pointing out the different views often held in less informed circle of teachers about the importance of method.

He further asserts:

“What matters is the man (the teacher) not the method.”²Yardi further explains the connotational difference between the terms ‘method’ ‘methodology’, and ‘methodics’. These are often used in English language teaching pedagogy. Each one of them carries a different shade of meaning. ‘Method’, in his opinion ‘is used in the context of language- teaching methods like ‘Direct Method’, ‘The grammar- translation Method’ or ‘The Bilingual Method’.³Yardi further went on to add that the term ‘method’ is not strictly speaking a ‘technical term’. It is a popular one, and means ‘a way of doing something’. It is often used loosely as a substitute for methodology’. ‘Methodology’, according to Yardi, ‘is a technical term which refers to a body of principles and techniques of teaching’.⁴

The following are the major methods of teaching English that have been tried and tested with its merits and demerits.

A. Translation Method:

The translation method is better known as the Grammar-Translation Method. It is also called the classical method of teaching English. In this method while teaching a lesson the teacher translates every word, sentence and phrase into mother tongue of a student. The students also required to translate the sentences from their mother tongue into English based on grammar.

Advantages:

- This method emphasizes the study of grammar.
- This method suits average and below average teacher

- It enables students to develop their vocabulary.
- This method is economical. There is no need of teaching aids.
- Communication between the teacher and student does not cause linguist problem.
- This method is useful in overcrowded class rooms.

Disadvantages:

- It lays more emphasis on grammar speaking skills are completely ignored.
- This method does not teach correct articulation and intonation.
- In this method exact translation is not possible.
- As it encourages literal translation actual meaning is diverted.

As Tickoo said: This method of Teaching and learning primarily aimed at the ability to read full texts rather than to communicate orally in everyday situations”.⁵ This method makes no provision for training in speech but lays stress on reading. Criticizing this method, Rouse remarks that the aim of this method was “to know everything about something, rather than the thing itself.”⁶ Students found the method frustrating as they had to memorize words and rules. The excessive obsession with accuracy and competence in written rather than oral language inhibited learners who often preferred to remain silent rather than expose their ignorance.⁷

B. Direct Method:

This method was developed, as Rao has pointed out, “as a reaction against the grammar-translation method”.⁸ In the opinion of Diller this method has one basic rule: “no translation is allowed”.⁹ The main philosophy behind this method is that the learner learns a foreign language in the same way as he learns his mother tongue.¹⁰ According to Webster’s New International Dictionary, Direct method is a method of teaching a foreign language, especially a modern language through conversation, discussion, and reading in the language itself, without the use of people’s language without translation and without the study of formal grammar.¹¹

Advantages:

- This method lays more emphasis on oral work. That ensures good pronunciation to the learners.
- It helps the students to have good command over the language.
- It is an interesting method as it involves many activities like speaking, listening understanding, is developed simultaneously through this method.

According to Bhatia and Bhatia, the main aim of teaching English by this method is to enable the learner “to think in English and to discourage the practice of inwardly thinking in one’s vernacular and then overtly translating the thought into the foreign language. He should be able to grasp what he hears or reads in English and should be able to express his thoughts and wishes directly and fluently so that in due course of time he obtains a real command over the language”.¹²

Disadvantages:

- This method needs competent teachers. If teacher is not competent this method is not successful.
- This method is not suitable for schools in rural areas. Regional language school children can’t follow direct method.
- It is an expensive method as it requires lot of teaching tools and audio visual aids otherwise the learner can’t follow this method. This method promotes oral skills but ignores writing and reading skills.
- Sometimes the teacher fails to convey the exact meaning because mother tongue is not allowed.

C. Audio lingual method:

The roots of the Audio lingual method can be traced back to the language teaching programmes devised in America during the Second World War. The audio lingual is based on the theory of learning Language learning formulated by the behaviorists. The Audio-lingual method, according to Thirumalai, in some

sense:“represents a return to the Direct Method, as its main goal is to develop native-like speaking ability in its learners. It is an extension as well as refinement of the direct method. Translation and reference to ‘L1’ are not permitted.”¹³

Advantages:

- Speaking and listening skills are better trained.
- It drills students in the use of grammatical patterns, such as correct grammar and articulation so there is no chance of mistakes.

Dr. Sharada Bhat has recorded the main strengths of this method as follows:

“the teaching materials are more scientifically and systematically prepared than the one-author texts; it teaches a language in a graded manner; the motivation of the students is of a higher degree; the students enjoy learning the target language because the teaching materials are specially designed to interest the students avoiding boring passages from the classes”¹⁴

Disadvantages :

- This method is based on repetition rather than creativity in language learning so pupils turn into parrots to reproduce the same.
- It is expensive and teacher centric and not successful in the absence of well trained qualified resourceful teacher.
- It is oral based approach Speaking and listening skills are better trained writing skills ignored. Albert Valdman has criticized “the exaggerated emphasis on oral drilling.”¹⁵

D. The Bilingual Method:

Bilingual Method means a method where two languages i.e., the mother tongue and target language are used. In translation method the mother tongue is used by the student as well as teacher. In direct method nobody is allowed to use mother tongue but in bilingual method there is a freedom to use mother tongue where the situation demands.

Advantages:

- The teacher teaches English to the entire satisfaction of the learners.
- The students are able to understand English well.
- Judicious use of mother tongue by the teacher does not spoil the environments of teaching English. It only helps in teaching English
- It helps in giving proper training for different skills i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Sometimes the use of mother tongue saves a lot of time. Otherwise the teacher has to use many devices to make the student understand the target language.

In the words of Dr. H.N.L. Sastry this method is simple from the point of view of teaching and learning. That is why we see majority of teachers in Indian schools follow this method. The method increases the rate and amount of learning in the classroom and it creates better attitudes in the minds of students towards learning English. It also establishes rapport between the teacher and the taught.¹⁶

Disadvantages:

- A teacher of English may not be good in both the languages.
- The use of mother tongue while teaching English spoils the continuity and fluency of language.
- A few students in the class may be more attentive to mother tongue sound and less attentive to English sounds. Their pronunciation may become defective and lead to mother tongue influence.

Conclusion:

Having discussed the various methods of teaching English we can come to conclusion that there is no one good method that is perfect in every respect. Every method has its own merits and demerits. The following observation by V. Saraswathi is very important to quote in this connection. She says:“There is no best method.

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.” “Different methods may be appropriate to different contexts. If we start searching for the perfect method or the ideal single solution to the problem of language learning, we bound to fail.”¹⁷

Teaching method is a key factor to determine the success of student. But it is not always possible to apply the same methodology to all learners who have different objectives and learning needs. A teacher should know the merits and demerits of each method that he is applying. For ex: Grammar translation is the method of choice when student's goal is to achieve high level of writing and reading. Direct method is a method of choice to achieve fluency and bilingual method ensures accessibility. A teacher should consider the following factors while making choice of his method.

- Educational objectives
- Efficiency of teacher
- Size of class
- Resources
- Learning needs.

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