

## **ENLIGHTENED, ECLECTIC APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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### **Abstract**

English language teachers need to explore what works and what does not work in a certain ELT context, applying what Brown (2001) names an enlightened, eclectic approach or a principled approach. They are suggested to explore all language teaching approaches or methods since no single approach or method is best suited for all teaching contexts. This paper also shows that up to the present the principles of Communicative Language Teaching is a generally acceptable norm in language teaching field which has been adopted in some current concepts of language teaching such as Learner-Centered Instruction, Cooperative and Collaborative Learning, Task-Based Instruction. Despite the well informed principles underlying CLT, teachers need to be aware of its implementation considering different contexts of teaching each teacher may face.

**Key words: Method, Enlightened, Eclectic Approach, English Language Teaching**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The theory of second (or foreign) language teaching has undergone many fluctuation and shifts over the years. The historical cycles and trends of language teaching have shown the approaches and methods that were applied in language teaching. The history of language teaching informs us that the language teaching profession was involved in what many pedagogical experts would call search. Brown (2001) clarifies that the search was for what was popularly called “methods,” or ideally a single method, generalizable across widely varying audiences that would successfully teach students a foreign language in the classroom. Before discussing further about the trends of language teaching, the term method will be clarified in the following.

How is method defined? Edward Anthony in Brown (2001) states the concept of method, which was the second of three hierarchical elements, namely, approach, method, and technique, as an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based on a selected approach. Approach was a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching. The third element techniques were specific classroom activities consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. Meanwhile Richards and Rodgers (2001) redefined method was an umbrella term to capture approaches, designs, and procedures. Similar to that, Prabhu (1990) thought of method as both classroom activities and the theory that informs them. To conclude the definition of method, Brown in Richards and Renandya (2002) asserts that for most researchers and practicing teachers a method is a set of theoretically unified classroom thought to be generalizable across a wide variety of contexts and audiences, for examples Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audiolingual Method, and the Silent Way or Suggestopedia, are known as methods.

The term of a suitable method or regarded as the best method in language teaching has been challenged recently by language teaching professionals. The whole concept of separate

methods is no longer a central issue in language teaching practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Brown (2001) mentioned some causes why methods are no longer the milestones of our language teaching through time:

1. Methods are too prescriptive, assuming too much about a context before the context has even been identified.
2. Generally, methods are quite distinctive at the early, beginning stages of a language course and rather indistinguishable from each other at later stages.
3. It was once thought that methods could be empirically tested by scientific quantification to determine which one is “best”. Now it was discovered that something as artful and intuitive as language pedagogy cannot ever be so clearly verified by empirical validation.
4. Methods are laden with the quasi-political or mercenary agendas of their proponents. It has demonstrated that methods, often the creation of powerful “center,” become vehicles of “linguistic imperialism” targeting the disempowered periphery.

Brown (2001) asserts that we didn’t need a new method. What is needed is to get on with the business of unifying our approach to language teaching and of designing effective tasks and techniques that were informed by that approach. He further added that it is necessary that we recognize that the diversity of language learners in multiple worldwide contexts demand an eclectic blend of tasks, each tailored for a particular group of learners in a particular place, studying for particular purposes in a given amount of time.

David Nunan (1991) summed it up:

“It has been realized that there never was and probably never will be a method for all and the focus and the focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities which are consonant with what we know about second language acquisition and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself.”

Based on the background above, this paper aims to discuss an approach to English language teaching called an Enlightened, Eclectic Approach.

### **AN ENLIGHTENED, ECLECTIC APPROACH**

It has been mentioned previously that there is no method for all. In practice Brown (2001) proposed the term an enlightened, eclectic approach or a principled approach Brown in Richards and Renandya (2002) to be applied by English language teachers in their class. They should make enlightened choices of teaching practices that were solidly grounded in the best of what they knew about second language learning and teaching.

The teachers can think of a number of possible methodological options for tailoring classes to particular contexts. Their approach - or theory of language and language learning or the basic principles of learning and teaching – therefore takes on great importance. This informed global understanding of the process of learning and teaching is inspired by the interconnection of all their reading and observing and discussing and teaching. Their approach to language teaching is the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom. The approach enables teachers, as “technicians” in the classroom, to diagnose the needs of students, to treat students with successful pedagogical techniques, and to assess the outcome of those treatments.

Brown further says that an approach to language pedagogy is not just a set of static principles “set in stone.” It is, in fact, a dynamic composite of energies within a teacher that

changes (or should change, if one is a growing teacher) with continued experience in learning and teaching because teachers cannot assume that they know everything that needs to be known about language and language teaching. Celce - Murcia (2001) shows teachers have found many ways or methods for teaching languages. All have been admired model in some time and place, often to be ridiculed, perhaps, or dismissed as inappropriate in yet another. Times change, fashions change. What may once appear new and promising can subsequently seem strange and outdated.

The interaction between one's approach and classroom practice is the key to dynamic teaching. The best teachers, according to Brown, always take a few calculated risks in the classroom, trying new activities here and there: as new student needs are perceived, innovative pedagogical techniques are attempted, and the follow-up assessment yields an observed judgment on their effectiveness. The inspiration for such innovation comes from the approach level, but the feedback that the teachers get from actual implementation then reshapes and modifies their overall understanding of what learning and teaching are. This may give a new insight and more innovative possibilities, and its cycle continues.

### **Twelve Principles in Language Learning**

A lot of information on second language acquisition and teaching has contributed to our knowledge and understanding of how to best teach a second language in the classroom although many mysteries still remain about why and how learners successfully acquire second languages. However, we should focus what we do know, what we have learned, and what we can say with some certainty about second language acquisition. In order that teaching becomes enlightened, language teachers need to perceive and internalize connection between practice (choices teachers make in the classroom) and theory (principles derived from research).

Brown in Richard and Renadya (2002) summarizes twelve principles of second language learning that interact with sound practice and on which the language teaching can be based.

#### **1. *Automaticity***

Efficient second language learning involves a timely movement of the control of a few language forms into automatic processing of a relatively unlimited number of language forms. Overanalyzing language, thinking too much about its forms, and consciously lingering on rules of language all tend to impede this graduation to automaticity.

#### **2. *Meaningful Learning***

Meaningful learning will lead toward better long-term retention than rote learning. One among many examples of meaningful learning is found in content-centered approaches to language teaching.

#### **3. *The Anticipation of Reward***

Human beings are universally driven to act or "behave" by the anticipation of some sort of reward – tangible or intangible, short term or long term that will ensue as a result of the behavior. One of the tasks of the teacher is to create opportunities for those moment rewards that can keep classroom interesting.

#### **4. *Intrinsic Motivation***

The most powerful rewards are those that are intrinsically motivated within the learner. When behavior stems from needs, wants, or desires within oneself, the behavior itself has the potential to be self-rewarding in the perception of the learners. The learners perform the task because it fun, interesting, useful, or challenging, and not because they anticipate some cognitive or affective rewards from the teacher.

#### **5. *Strategic Investment***

Successful mastery of the second language will be, to large extent, the result of learner's own personal "investment" of time, effort, and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language.

#### **6. *Language Ego***

As human beings learn to use a second language, they develop a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting – a second identity. The new "language ego" intertwined with the second language, can easily create within the learner a sense of fragility, defensiveness, and a rising of inhibitions. The teacher can bring some relief to this situation and provide affective support, for example overtly display a supportive attitude to his/her students; the teacher's choice of techniques and sequences of techniques need to be cognitively challenging but not overwhelming at an effective level; considering the learners language ego states will probably help the teacher to determine who to call on, when to correct a student's speech error, who to place in which small groups or pair.

#### **7. *Self-Confidence***

The eventual success the learners attain in a task is partially a factor of their belief that they indeed are fully capable of accomplishing the task. The teacher should give ample verbal and nonverbal assurance to students and sequence the techniques from easier to more difficult so that students can establish a sense of accomplishment to go the next, more difficult step.

#### **8. *Risk Taking***

Successful language learners, in their realistic appraisal of themselves as vulnerable beings yet capable of accomplishing tasks, must be willing to become "gamblers" in the game of language, to attempt to produce and to interpret language that is a bit beyond their absolute certainty. The teacher should try to create an atmosphere in the classroom that encourages students to try out language, to venture a response; provide reasonable challenge in his her techniques; respond to students risky attempts with positive affirmation.

#### **9. *The Language – Culture Connection***

Language and Culture are intricately intertwined. Whenever you teach a language, you also teach a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. The teacher can discuss cross-cultural differences with the students, emphasizing that no culture is "better" than another, but that cross-cultural understanding is an important facet of learning a language.

#### **10. *The Native Language Effect***

The native language of the learners will be a highly significant system on which learners will rely to predict the target language system. Although that native system will exercise



both facilitating and interfering (positive and negative transfer) effects on the production and comprehension of the new language, the interfering effects are likely to be the most salient. The teacher can regard learners' errors as important windows to their underlying systems and provide appropriate feedback.

#### 11. *Interlanguage*

Second language learners tend to go through a systematic or quasi-systematic developmental process as they progress to full competence in the target language. Successful interlanguage development is partially a factor of utilizing feedback from others. Teachers in language classrooms can provide such feedback, but more important, can help learners to generate their own feedback outside of the language classroom.

#### 12. *Communicative Competence*

Communicative competence is the goal of a language classroom, so instruction needs to point toward all of its components: organizational (grammatical and discourse), pragmatic (functional and sociolinguistic), strategic, and psychomotoric. Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to unrehearsed contexts in the real world.

### **COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

The late 1980s and 1990s saw the development of approaches that highlighted the fundamentally communicative properties of language, and classrooms were increasingly characterized by authenticity, real world simulation, and meaningful task.

Today the underlying theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), is continuously explored, and it is considered a currently recognized approach that is a generally accepted norm in language teaching. Brown (2007) asserts that CLT is an eclectic blend of the contributions of previous methods into the best of what a teacher can provide in authentic uses of second language in the classroom.

Beyond grammatical and discourse elements in communication, we are probing the nature of social, cultural and pragmatic features of language. Learners are expected to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy. We are concerned the ways to facilitate lifelong language learning among our students, not just with the immediate classroom task so that they are able to communicate genuinely, spontaneously, and meaningfully in the second language. Learners are seen as partners in a cooperative venture and classroom practices are encouraged to create atmosphere that motivate learners to reach their fullest potential.

Brown (2001) summarizes the six interconnected characteristics as a description of CLT:

1. Classroom goal are focused on all components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques.

4. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom, so classroom task must equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
5. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process and understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.
6. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.

From the description of the characteristics of CLT, a number of concepts adopt the CLT principles in their practice such as *Learner-Centered Instruction*, which places learners in central position in which learners are actively involved in their own learning process; *Cooperative and Collaborative Learning*, which encourages learners to work in pair and groups; *Interactive Learning*, which creates opportunities for genuine interaction in the classroom; *Whole Language Education*, which emphasizes the “wholeness” of language and the interaction and interconnection between oral language (listening and speaking) and written language (reading and writing), and the importance, in literate societies, of the written code as natural and developmental, just as the oral code is; *Content-Based Instruction*, which integrates the content learning with language teaching aims. Content-Based classrooms may yield an increase in intrinsic motivation and empowerment, since students are focused on subject matter that is important in their lives; and *Task-Based Instruction*, which views the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to the curricular goals they serve. According to Willis (1996) the framework consists of three phases: 1) pre task, in which the class is introduced to the topic and the task, activating topic related words and phrases; 2) task cycle, in which learners are given the chance to use whatever language they already know in order to carry out the task, and then improve that language under the teacher guidance, while planning their report of the task; and 3) language focus, which allows a closer study of some of the specific features occurring in the language used during the task cycles.

## CONCLUSION

English language teachers need to be sensitive to the approaches they adopt in their teaching because we cannot guarantee that there is a method which is “best” for multiple worldwide contexts.

Brown in Richards and Renadya (2002) concludes that language teaching profession has emerged into an era of understanding a vast number of language teaching contexts and purposes, and even larger students needs, learning styles, and affective factors. Teachers need to explore all language teaching approaches. As teachers develop and carry out classroom techniques, they can benefit by grounding everything they do in well established principles of language learning and teaching so that the choices they make enlighten or will enlighten their classroom practices.

Similar to that, Kumaravadivelu (2006) says that in post-method era there is a three part framework of language pedagogy: particularity, practicality, and possibility. The first deals with teaching contexts sensitivity such as people, local knowledge, physical settings, course and institution nature, time and teaching resources. The second encourages language teachers

to “theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize. The last refers to the macro-social factors such as institutional, social, economic, cultural, and political environments which shape identity formation and social transformation. These ideas encourage the teachers to go beyond methods and promote a self-awareness of no best methods for learning and teaching.

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