

SECOND KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ENGLISH TEACHING - THE 'BEST METHOD'

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From : London

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Firstly let us look at our theme for today. English teaching - the 'best' method? There is a question mark? So is there a 'best method?' Let's also look at the words 'teaching' and 'method'.

How about instead of teaching we look at what really matters -which is learning? I think we worry far too much about what we do, about our input rather than how and what the students **learn**. We can tell them everything in the curriculum but 1% is remembered because they weren't **involved**. Better give 10% that they enjoy and remember-the rest they can do themselves **IF** they **like** it.

As for method, well it's a way of doing something, but it can also mean putting things in order; There are methods for making cakes, growing plants-some say water, some no water and so on; and bringing up children! Sometimes I think there are as many ways of bringing up children as there are families! Some parents care and worry, others take it easy-children fall and hurt themselves, they have to cry-that's life and so it is!

But the babies, the children, the adults-we all survive somehow and we all learn language!

So let us look at some 'methods' for teaching language: Grammar/translation: Silent Way: Communicative Competence: Complete Immersion: Natural Way: Task-based: Situational learning

I am suspicious: there are so many books on gardening, cooking bringing up children AND how to teach – there cannot be one right way, can there? It's confusing, but it gives me hope for teaching with the 'best method'. Why? Because it allows us to be ourselves, to think, to work and to be the best teachers that we can be, for in the end nobody knows better than us. Is that right?

What are we trying to do? Experts say almost all of us respond to praise and so we do. I need it don't you? BUT one day I realised my boy students hated it if I praised them, said 'nice' things to them. So if I said 'Oh well done darling' it became a punishment. They worked hard if I DIDN'T do it. I had to know how they felt and then the class atmosphere was fun for them!

Looking for the best method stops us looking at what really matters

Too much valuable time is spent debating which method is best, or which tool is superior

There is no one right method, but some criteria to follow

We need to find what matters and focus on that. The best method depends on a number of factors: needs of learners, their culture, background, age, gender, objective, time, resources (and remember 'A good teacher can make a great lesson with poor resources a poor one will make even the best resources seem terrible')

Regardless of method ‘the most important consideration should be the ultimate benefits for the learner’ Keith Wright Exploring English

I remember when I worked with VSO another volunteer saying, ‘Huh, teaching English! How does that help Indonesian people?’ I was so frustrated. Teach English, we’re not just teaching English,

we’re teaching culture and life and meaning and self-discovery. And in all this students need OUR ‘input to maximise skills they can use and transfer’

Why do we want to know the best method? What are the problems? What do you do now?

Think about what you actually do in class? Are you concentrating on giving the whole of the curriculum? How are the students? No one textbook ever fits all. Are you tired of it all? It’s such a tiring job isn’t it! Let’s take time to think and look at a few ways of teaching.

Direct teaching: at the beginning it’s difficult to do much else as we give new words, basic sentences, but if we bore them we’ve probably lost it for the rest of their school life at least. So we can try a natural way and a bit of immersion. Actions so they understand, objects for meaning, beats and chanting, numbers and word games on the white or black board!

Explaining/Lecturing Remember ‘Don’t tell ‘em anything!’ Give them life skills! And here the important thing is-‘What I hear I forget; what I do I remember’: How to spell ----? Does anyone know? What’s ---in English? Who knows? How can we find out?

Cooperative Learning (Discussion/Small group discussion) It’s a fact that we learn better in groups. And it’s enjoyable. Problem solving tasks? For example back to board

Brainstorming promotes thinking, maybe even competition. (Aunt Bety’s cat, I went to market and I bought)

Video/TVetc –subtitles? Discussion, give them questions, let them make up questions, repeat for retention

Role play I like hot seating! ***Learning by teaching*** I love this! They are so disciplined!

Memorising Simple. Wonderful, from verb forms to poems to songs to jazz chants and Aunt B’s cat!

Indirect learning Do something else but do it in English without realising. (Maria/horrible jokes/Fixing together/the race/senam)

I as a teacher cannot make students learn English. I cannot make them learn anything! I cannot make them speak and I cannot make them understand I cannot solve problems. But I can like being with them and help them to enjoy what they do in English. I can give them confidence, help them to do things themselves. (My supervisor – first visit ‘You’re working hard’. Several months later. ‘Now they are working hard’. Such simple words, but I never forgot the lesson!)

The 20th century philosopher Eli Siegl believing that EVERYONE can learn (and enjoy learning) stated 'the purpose of all education is to like the world through knowing it'

My two favourite words for education begin with E, just like the word Education: Eclectic (choose ways of teaching from any method) and Elicit (get the students to tell you, not you telling them!) I'm always told: 'English is difficult' Okay! Life is difficult, so we are giving them strategies: If you want it you can get it! Help students see how much they can do and they will believe it.

Be brave/think of your students/God has given you a gift! Variety, repetition, activities. You spark them off! The rest they will do themselves-if they like it! God bless you all.