ELT Methodologies: An Overview
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Lots of people who didn't do well at school learn languages later. Modern methods are enjoyable and help you communicate and enjoy using the language.

- *Anonymous*

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Abstract

Language teaching and hence, as a wing, English Language Teaching has been regarded an art. It has also been regarded as a highly skilled activity which is learned by careful observation and patient practice. However, language teaching is a science. As a science, it is both an intellectual and a practical activity. It comprises a organized study of the structure and behaviour that is carried out through observation and experiment. Thus, language teaching method has been seen as a specified range of classroom procedures based on a coherent set of learning and teaching principles derived from the theories of what language is and how it is learnt. Through the journey of so many years of Language Teaching, various methodologies with stipulated principles and practices have evolved. Present paper is an effort in the direction of presenting some of the most prominent Methodologies and overview them keeping in view their Principles and Practices. It also tries to present the similarities and differences wherever if possible along with how and why they evolved.

Introduction

For centuries now human life has witnessed changing fashions; be them in food, clothing, life-styles, or education and in particular, teaching and learning. Narrowing it down, English has long been referred to as the language of globalization with a strong emphasis on the fact that English is linked to technology and hence to notions of development and modernization (Block & Cameron, 2002; Tsui & Tollefson, 2006). Hence, the concern herein is English Language Teaching (ELT).

However, before going into the details one needs to understand what actually a language is. By now, various linguists have thoroughly studied language and they have been regarding it as a very complex phenomenon. For some it is a tool; for some skill; whereas others regard it as a habit or behavior. Few also call it a machine that works and a few call it a living thing.

An opinion about language matters because as a Language Teacher, one's approach is determined by what one believes language to be. Though the dichotomy prevails, one has to remember that no viewpoint attributes the wholeness of Language per se. Hence, working solution has been what is *useful* and not *right*. Maybe that is the reason why context plays an important role in the Language Use and Usage.

Although many of ELT researchers and practitioners have been attempting to describe the processes of language learning and teaching, no universal methodology of English Language Teaching that can be called equitable, effective and sensitive to all learners of all ages has been arrived at or found out.

Methodology

In English Language Teaching, methodology draws very heavily on Linguistics (theories of language) and Applied Linguistics (theories of language learning). They decide different approaches, attitudes, and subsequent, methods of language teaching.

Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (1985) defines Methodology as "the study of the practices and procedures used in teaching" and also as the principles, practices and beliefs that underlie them.

Thus, language acquisition and production primarily follows three stages: understanding, production and manipulation, and communication; or preview, view and review. It includes three major components. The first one is a very careful study of the nature of language and communication skills; both expressional and receptive i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing and due sets of procedures for teaching. The second one is the meticulous planning and preparation of session plan, teaching and reading material and textbooks or reference books for imparting language skills. Similarly, the third one is the evaluation.

Methods have been defined as "the selection of materials to be taught, the gradation of those materials, their presentation and pedagogical implementation to induce learning". This means that Methodology clearly refers to the course content to be taught, material to be used, classroom deliberations and pre and post classroom preparations and practices, and the way the learning is evaluated.

The same can be presented as:

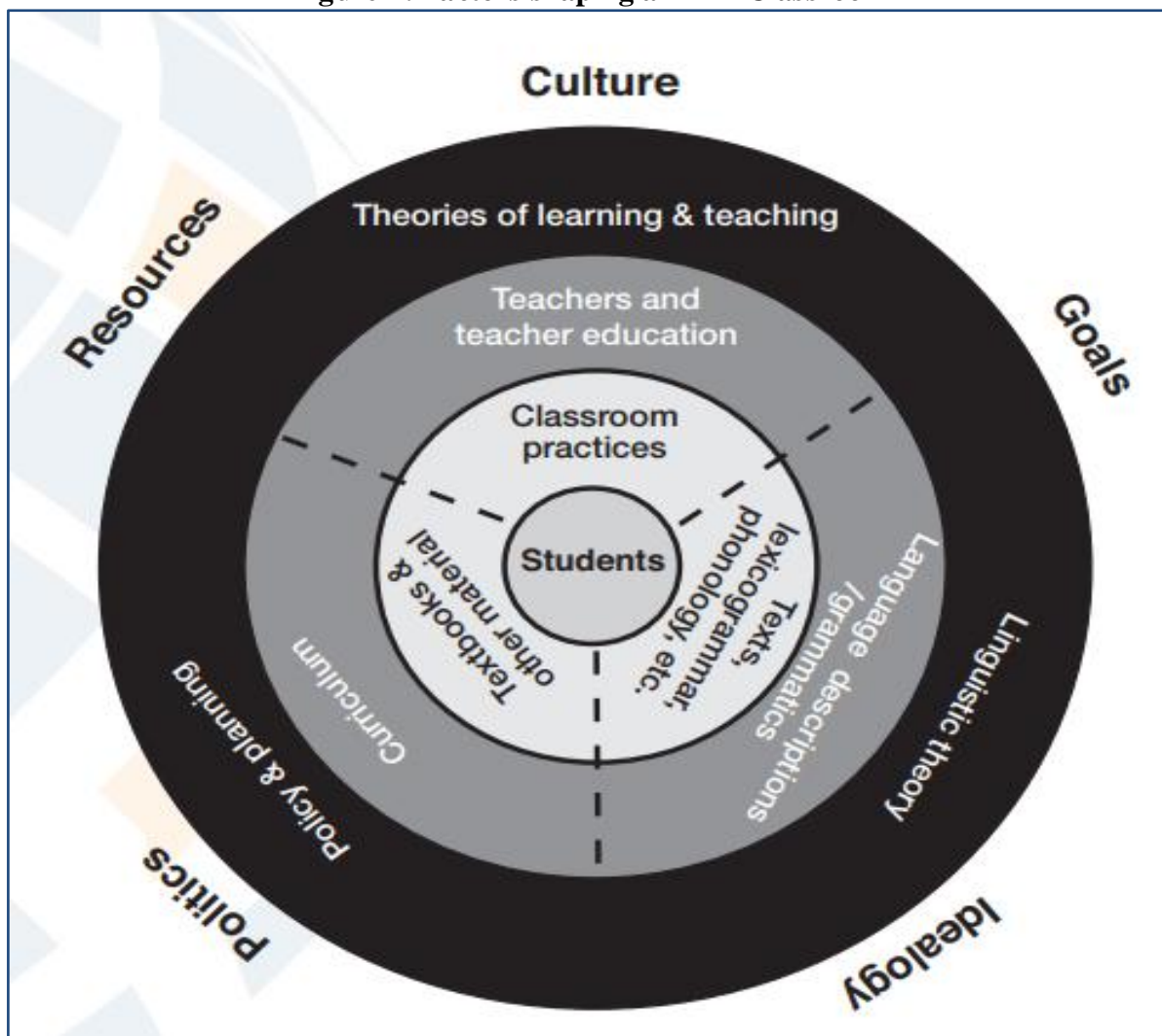**Figure 1: English Language Teaching Base Matrix**
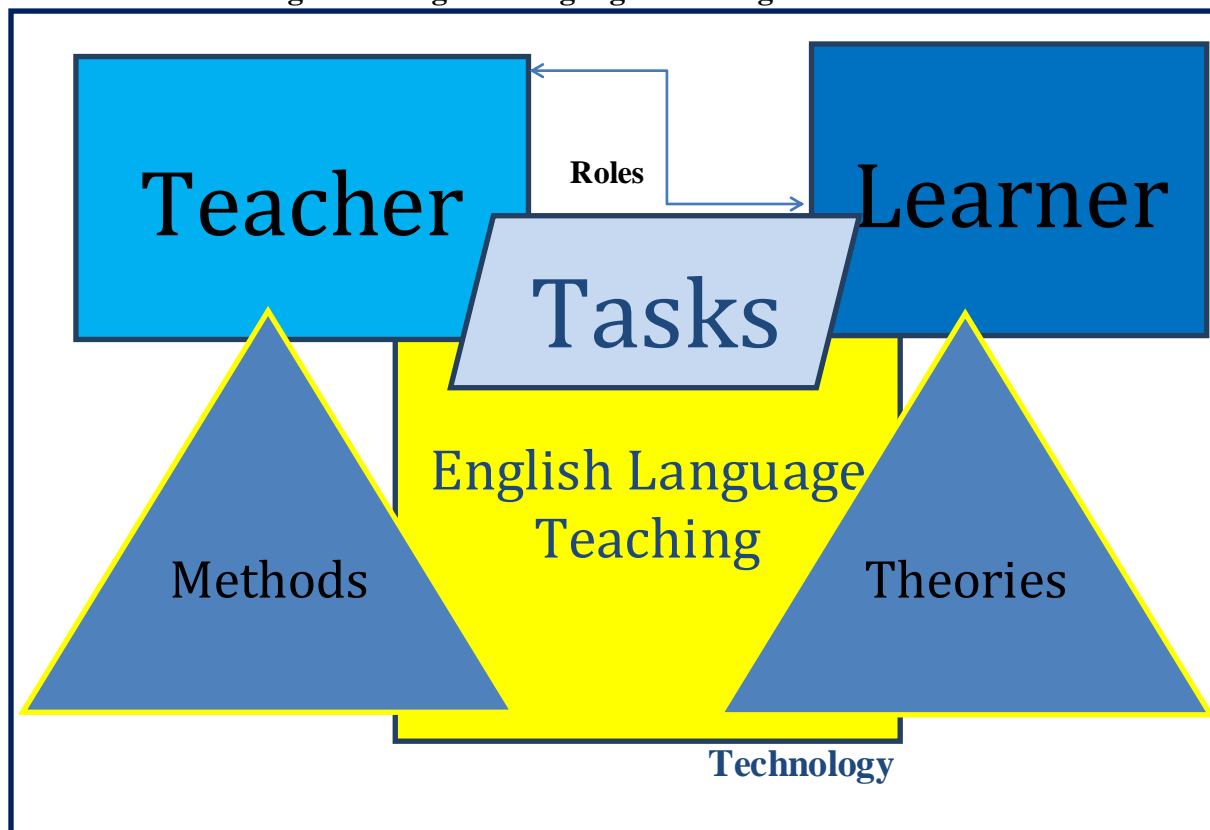
Principles in the Teaching of English as a Second Language

Principles in the Teaching of English as a Second Language involve various roles of teacher and the learners, classroom environment, teaching - learning process and its sub-processes as well as knowledge of the target language and its culture. Primarily, the principles are acronymic as *CREATE*: Collaboration, Relevance, Evidence, Alignment, Transparency, and Empowerment. If all of them are carefully studied, they mean the following. Collaboration refers to fruitful collaboration among the policy makers, the teacher and the learners. Relevance has to do with the relevance of the tasks and activities along with the relevance of the teaching and reading material and pedagogy. Evidence refers to how evident and scientific is the teaching – learning process. Alignment again refers to the alignment of pedagogy with the plans, tasks and material, teacher with the learners and learning strategies, and teacher, learner, pedagogy and of the learning outcomes. Similarly, Transparency refers to the visibility and feasibility of goals and outcomes. At last, Empowerment has to do with empowering the teachers, learners, and finally, community through collaborative, relevant, evidence-based, transparent practices.

These principles alongside bring various terms (other than Method) like approach and technique. A renowned American applied linguist Edward M. Anthony (1963) has aptly deliberated to give a few definitions. An approach in English Language Teaching is a set of correlative assumptions primarily about nature of language and nature of language and learning. A Method is always based upon an Approach. Hence, it is the broadest of the three terms. A method is a set of procedures. It is a system spelling out how exactly the language is to be taught. Thus, Method is broadly a plan for the synchronized utilization of teaching – reading material, teacher, learners and factors mentioned below. Importantly, it is based upon an approach. A technique is usually regarded as a classroom device or activity. It is the narrowest term of the three. Thus, one may conclude that methods are specific even more specific than approaches and less specific than techniques. Hence, Methods are by nature compatible with one or more approaches and in turn, some techniques are widely used and found in many methods.

Factors shaping a classroom are:

Figure 2: Factors shaping an ELTClassroom

Adapted from: https://www.tesol.org/docs/pdf/a-principles-based-approach-for-english-language-teaching-policies-and-practices-.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Overview of Methodologies

Grammar Translation Method

By nature, Grammar Translation Method is very similar to the classical approach in education; the approach that became very popular in the late 18th Century for the teaching of Greek and Latin. Pedagogy in this Method revolves round classroom interactions in the native language (L1) of the learners. The aim, however, is to make students read in the target language. Reading and Writing are the major skills focused in this method with translation as the major activity. Though, the Method is regarded as very easy, it is more known for its limitations towards generating fluency in the target language.

The Direct Method

The Direct Method came into picture not only as a strong reaction against the grammar translation method but also as a remedy to the limitations of the earlier method. It focuses more on phonetics and speaking skills. It draws more on structural approach of language teaching and its theories. Classroom interactions are directly into L2 with no intervention of L1. Drills form pedagogy. Hence, to communicate meaning, in this method, more focus is laid on audio and visuals. Unlike the previous method, this one focuses more on Listening and speaking. Grammar is more discovered than taught.

Audio-Lingual Method

Unlike the first two methods, the third one is driven more by behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics. It draws heavily from Behaviourist psychology of B.F. Skinner. It is also based on Pavlovian principles of behavior known as stimulus-response theory of psychology. With reference to the use of L1 in the classroom, it is more towards The Direct Method. However, unlike drills, it characterizes creativity in sentence learning. Grammar goes with dialogues and sentences. Structural linguistics aspect of the Method proclaims that language is a set of habits. It is more speech than writing. A teacher should teach language and not about language. The Method led to the establishments of Language Labs in Academic organizations.

The Situational-Structural Approach

Originally, the Oral Method, the Situational – Structural Approach has its origins in 1920s in the efforts of Palmer, Hornsby, and West. Later in 1960s, it received its present form, structure and identity. It has been perceived as scientific alternative to the Direct Method. Though the emphasis has been on Speaking, the Approach focuses on syllabus, classroom interactions and practice. In a nutshell, it focuses on providing context for language learning and inductive presentations with the use of visual aids and gestures. Reading and Writing follow Listening and Speaking.

The Silent Way

Somewhere in late 1950s and 60s, Noam Chomsky, one of the greatest Linguists of all time, actually demonstrated that language is more complex than how it was perceived. He proclaimed that it was much more than a set of rules forming grammar and vocabulary. Further, cognitivism also marked that communicative proficiency cannot be acquired through habit formation or repetitions. On the contrary, students need to have their own thought processes and formulate hypotheses about the language being learned and used. Hence, somewhere in 1972, the Silent Way was proposed by Caleb Gattegno. Herein, language learning has been seen as a "problem-solving, creative, discovering activity" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The Way prioritizes learner autonomy. It suggests that the teacher should be silent. Instead, students should speak as much as possible. Cooperation among fellow classmates is highly solicited in this method. However, due to the complexity of the Method and Silence and its required extent, the Method lost its charm and became obsolete.

Total Physical Response

James Asher, a known psychologist, proposed Total Physical Response (TPR) somewhere in 1974. Physical movement was a key aspect of TPR. Asher believed that lessons with physical activity may help students perform better. The base has been the same theory of learning a language – LSRW. The baseline is to follow the commands of the teachers without speaking. On a later stage, students themselves give command to other fellow students.

Suggestopedia

Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychologist and teacher proposed Suggestopedia, or Desuggestopedia in 1982. The Method has been based on the belief that the process of language learning can be much accelerated once when if the psychological barriers like performance anxiety and the fear of failure are removed. One needs to be in a relaxed mood in order to concentrate and learn effectively. All the four skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are focused with heavy emphasis on art like songs, drama and games and exercises. Even the classroom ambiance changes with light music in the background.

The Communicative Approach

The most focused and influential in the history of English Language Teaching has been the Communicative Approach that became surficial somewhere in 1970s. It propagates that communication is not just a goal of language learning, but is integral to the process. Communicative Competence gained supremacy over Linguistic Competence. The Approach focused more on socially relevant language use.

Task-Based Language Teaching

After a decade, Communicative Approach led to Task-Based teaching. Language Learning was regarded in terms of *Strong* and *Weak*. Both were juxtaposed. The weak looked at *in-class communication* as a kind of practice for *real life communication*. Whereas, the strong version opined that language is much more than what is taught in a classroom. However, basic principle of the Method is that learners learn to communicate by communicating. Tasks themselves are the syllabus.

Presentation, Practice, and Production

Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) gained prominence in late 1980s. This has been seen more as a formula and a technique than a Method. It has its roots in earlier theory of Situational-Structural (Oral) Approach. Herein, primarily, teachers provide spoken input as a presentation. It is followed by drilling which I often rigorous.

The Lexical Approach

Michael Lewisproposed the Lexical Approach in 1993. It has its roots in linguistic developments. As the name indicates, the approach lays heavy emphasis on vocabulary patterns and lexis. It is also striking against the traditional teaching of vocabulary and grammar.

Competency-Based Language Teaching

Competency-based language teaching (CBLT) is actually a very general but educational approach more commonly known as competency-based education. It is primarily an output-driven view of learning. It prepares students for specific situations and tasks. It is directed not towards what or how but more towards ability achievement after the classroom deliberations.

Recent Trends in English Language Teaching

Without any doubts, learning a foreign language has been perceived as a very natural response to communication needs of people at large in the society. Language has also been regarded as one of the greatest inventions of the human beings towards establishing the society. Learning a language is a life-long process. Teachers carry it out with various changes in the teaching and learning processes. Some of the contemporary changes and recent trends are: Experiential Learning that comes from Project-based Learning, Cooperative Learning, and Computer or Technology Assisted Learning.

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