



A THEORETICAL STUDY ON THE THEORIES AND APPROACHES USED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

In India, English Language Teaching (ELT) has a notable history and features than any other colonial country in the world. ELT practitioners of India have tried possibly all the Approaches, Theories and Methods for the benefit of the learner and successful language teaching. And it is also worth saying that these approaches and methods were tried in teaching English as a Second Language. Now a days, ELT has changed its colour of teaching by teaching English as a Foreign Language because of education and job opportunities in foreign countries. This paper presents the Approaches and Theories of ELT in detail and discuss the features simultaneously.

Key words : Approaches, Theories, ELT.

INTRODUCTION

All the main approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT) are confined to two central theories.

1. BEHAVIORIST THEORY

This theory views learning, both verbal and non-verbal as a habit. Language can be learnt through imitation and repetition. So, this theory gives importance to the imitation and repetition methods of teaching.

2. COGNITIVE THEORY

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According to this theory language learning does not take place only through imitation and repetition. Human beings are endowed with inborn faculty that helps them discover the language they hear form their own hypotheses and construct new sentences.

APPROACHES FOLLOWED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

THE AURAL-ORAL APPROACH

This method is well known as Audio-Lingual Approach. Aural means ‘received through hearing’, Oral means ‘spoken’. This approach is based on the theory of behaviorists. Underlying principle theory of this approach is language is primarily speech and the second language can be learnt in the same way how we learn the first language like starting with monosyllabic, disyllabic and so on. This approach believes that the learning becomes a habit if the response is reinforced properly. The foundation for developing the reading and writing skills are only done by developing the listening and speaking skills of the learner. And this approach insists the teachers of English should go through the pronunciation practice, conversation practice and pattern drills. Variety of drills are suggested for the teachers for example, repetition drill, conversion drill, question-answer drill, linking drill, substitution drill, triple substitution drill, concord drill, completion drill, chain drill etc.

THE STRUCTURAL APPROACH

In 1950s, the English ‘textbooks’ contained passages from original writings of great writers. Now the practice changed and we have Workbooks or Readers for English teaching. This change is caused by the introduction of the structural approach to the teaching of English. In structural approach, the words and word groups are arranged to form meaningful units. After a careful selection procedure, 250 example structures were identified in the late 1960. And now we have only 100 prescribed structures to study. This approach is known for selection, gradation and presentation. These structural and vocabulary items were selected according to their usefulness, frequency, teachability and productivity. And the structural approach followed some principles as, language is primarily speech, language acquisition is a set of habits, the teacher of English has to teach the target language but not about the language and languages are different in so many aspects. This approach was mostly used with Oral Approach.

THE ORAL APPROACH

The oral approach introduces the structural and vocabulary items to the learner to discuss the reading passages and encourage the learner orally for doing the written tasks. And it tests the learners’ comprehension. Advantages of teaching English orally is, it is considered a natural



way of learning the language, it will be a good introduction to other more difficult skills of language namely writing and reading. But the success of this approach lies in the speaking fluency of the teacher.

THE SITUATIONAL APPROACH

Situational Approach was designed based on the theory that language lives in situations and language is employed according to the needs of the situation so, the teacher of English should present the language with meaningful situations. Steps are followed in this approach as in the first step, the teacher says the example sentence, in second step, keeping the language item constant, the teacher changes the situation to make sure comprehension of the item, experience of the item and to maintain the interest of the learner, in the third step, the teacher gives oral practice according to the situation, in the fifth step, writing and reading practices are given and the last step encourages the learner to use the language on their own according to the situation. In this approach the situations are selected which are familiar to the students like home, classroom, school premises, society etc. To make the situation alive the teacher should use objects, models, charts, pictures, anecdotes, events, stories etc. And this approach is used with structural and oral approach. Hence these approaches are combined and called Structural-Oral-Situational Approach (S-O-S Approach).

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

In this approach the student is given some tasks to work out as this approach is a task-centered approach. And the teacher is the co-participant in doing the task. In this approach fluency is primary and accuracy is considered secondary. Translation and using the mother tongue are allowed to perform the task successfully. After the reading task, the students are trained in the written exercises also. The students are motivated to speak without any shyness and group activities are frequently used in the classroom.

NATURAL APPROACH

Terrell felt that the initial “silent period” should be honoured and we should not disturb until students begin to speak naturally; that is, when speech in the target language also appears of its own accord. This will occur when teachers create a non-risky environment by incorporating Total Physical Response (TPR) at the foundation level. The Natural Approach is based on Krashen’s famous Monitor Model of Language Acquisition, a set of five hypotheses: *The Acquisition vs. Learning Hypothesis* which describes the differences of the subconscious process of first-language acquisition in children and the conscious process language learning in adults. *The Natural Order Hypothesis* asserts that morphemes are acquired in an expected order like ((ing) is the first acquired morpheme in English). *The*



Monitor Hypothesis states that acquisition, not learning, is responsible for fluency. *The Input Hypothesis* maintains that language is acquired when students receive graspable input that is a fragment beyond their level of ability. *The Affective Filter Hypothesis* claims that one cannot acquire a language unless one feels confident and relaxed.

The Natural Approach classroom is a teacher-centered classroom. Textbooks are not much applied and it is the teacher's duty to maintain the classroom experience enjoyable and unchallenging. The trick is not to tell the students they are learning or to hint that they are capable of making an error. The order of teaching is to give students a steady flow of comprehensible input and giving extra information and details to help them acquire, rather than consciously learn, the second language. In this approach, teacher plays the role of an actor and support person and students play the role of "guessers and immersers" (Rogers fig. 2). Students are encouraged to express their thoughts, opinions, and feelings in their target language. The teacher uses only the target language; but, in keeping with the no-pressure method and the students are permitted to use their native language. In this approach, students acquire language without effort.

ECLECTIC APPROACH

Eclectic approach is defined on the principle that the teacher does not follow any particular method to teach but the teacher can follow a mixture of various methods according to the needs of the learners. The teacher can choose different techniques from different language teaching theories which effectively suit his class. There are a variety of English language teaching methods followed by ages which are given below:

1. Grammar-Translation Method
2. The direct method
3. Structural-Situational approach
4. Audio-lingual method
5. Bilingual method
6. Communication language teaching method
7. Total Physical Response (TPR)
8. The silent way
9. The Natural Approach
10. Community Language Learning (CLL)

The above said methods and approaches have theoretical descriptions. By using eclectic approach, the teacher can use the best and the most effective techniques from the approaches and achieve success in language classroom.



CONCLUSION

The Theories and Approaches were proved effective in English Language Teaching in its time. When the new approach emerged with its new wings of teaching method, it can not be ignored that it had inherited the qualities of all the old methods and enriched it beauty by all the experiences gained by the old methods and approaches. It is not necessary to follow one particular method for effective teaching. As the learner and learning style differs, the same way, teaching and teaching style also differs. But it is important to learn the Theories, Approaches and Methods of English Language Teaching with its merits and demerits before start teaching English.

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