
Trends in the Theories of Language Learning and Methods of Teaching ESL/EFL/ESP

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Abstract

In the present scenario, there are two most important elements: digital knowledge and English language proficiency for students' success in academic and career opportunities. Teaching and learning of English language can help the learners in acquiring communicative competence. The purpose of language teaching is to facilitate language learning. The motive of teaching and learning the foreign language is being adapted periodically. The theories of language learning have been regarded as three major categories: structural, functional and interactional.

Keywords: Teaching Methods, Approaches and Techniques, Theories of Language Learning

Introduction

In the present globalised context of economy and employment sector, there are two most important elements: digital knowledge and English language proficiency, leading the students into success for their academic and career opportunities. It is to appreciate the present educational institutions as their students are facilitated to learn and develop such kind of abilities for academic and career goals. Teaching and learning of English language and literature can help the students in acquiring communicative competence and language aptitude that are associated and commonly adding to the grip of language. In this process, almost all the institutions of higher education are currently providing and facilitating the students with good English speaking environment and necessary digital and computer-based equipment such as language lab with latest technology for teaching-learning process, for which English instructors are using an assortment of updated methods and approaches of teaching English. This paper predominantly discusses the trends in the theories of language acquisition and the language teaching methods, approaches and techniques in accordance with ESL /EFL/ESP context.

Methods, Approaches and Techniques

Language is a means of communicating thoughts and feelings to others. The purpose of language teaching is to facilitate language learning. It is essential for a teacher to understand the concept of language teaching and learning. If the teacher is fully aware of the methods and approaches of teaching of any subject, teaching becomes much more effective and systematic. The terms, methods, approaches and

techniques seem alike, but there is a lot of difference among them. So, one should understand the significance and distinction of the terms- methods, approaches and techniques.

The word, *method* is equivocal, implying the overall plan for the systematic presentation of language teaching. As per the dictionary definition, a method is a procedure, or a way of doing something, especially in accordance with a definite plan, dealing with the 'how' of teaching. A method consists of three components: *Approach*, *Design* and *Procedure*. An approach, the first component of a method, is a broader aspect of teaching, involving various methods. Design is the second aspect of a method which consists of objectives of the course, model syllabus, activities of teaching and learning and roles and functions of teachers and learners. Third component of a method, procedure focuses on what happens in the actual classroom situation.

Literature Review

The motive of teaching and learning the foreign language is being adapted periodically. As indicated by Crystal, teaching method/technique was once completely recognized as the centre of attention in learning foreign language. It is the belief of language teachers that when the teaching was started higher than a certain level of the knowledge acquired by learners, learning would instinctively develop. It is perceived teaching as the active process, while learning to be passive one in which teachers are considered active performers, whereas learners as silent listeners. At present, interestingly, reassuring language students to become dynamic students is the significant objective in foreign language instruction. Language instructors accept that learning results, accomplishment or disappointment, are straightforwardly liable to students' individual differences, explicitly as a part of their character and inspiration, just as their own obligation in the learning. Accordingly, investigation in this domain is presently focused on both teaching methodology and learning techniques. To accomplish the assorted objective of foreign language ability, the demeanor in instruction is adaptable and handy as per students' needs, learning conditions and course objectives. Blend of approaches or an assorted approach is presented. According to Crystal, there are two important historical trends in the theories of language learning, namely *the behaviourist* and *the cognitive*:

- In behaviourist theory foreign language learning is a process of imitation and reinforcement
- In cognitive theory the cognitive abilities are used in learning structural rules in the new language rather than duplicating and reinforcing them

The fundamental point of behaviorist teaching is in such way to shape new, exact linguistic propensities through intensive work on, disposing of obstruction errors all the while. Many issues emerge from this

way of foreign language learning: impersonation alone doesn't give a method for distinguishing the assignment confronting students, who are consistently faced with the need to make and perceive novel articulations that go past the constraints of the model sentences they may have exercised. Cognitive practitioners believe that students, with their own intellectual potential, can create hypotheses about the structures of the foreign language. They make rules, utilize, and modify them if students found that the rules are deficient. Thus, language learning grows in a progression of transitional stages, as students obtain good knowledge of the L2. In this regard, error analysis is a key role. Mistakes are relied upon to develop when inappropriate conclusions about the idea of the L2 are generated by language students. The mistakes are significantly accepted to give positive evidence about the idea of learning process, as the students continuously gain proficiency with the new language structure.

In this regard, the model theories in Second Language Acquisition are Krashen's Five Hypotheses of the Monitor Model (Krashen, 1981), McLaughlin's Attention-processing Hypothesis (McLaughlin, 1978), and Long's Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1985). The five Krashen's hypotheses are:

- The Acquisition-Learning
- The Natural Order
- The Monitor
- The Input and
- The Affective Filter Hypotheses

Krashen's Five Hypotheses are entirely focused on learning situations which would promote better language acquisition. In the acquisition-learning hypothesis, Krashen intends that adult language learners are able to internalize the target language through acquiring a subconscious process and a conscious process. Providing appropriate learning surroundings, fluency in L2 can be acquired through subconscious learning situation, whereas accuracy through the conscious process in which grammatical principles are taught. Alternatively, McLaughlin's attention-processing model proposes learning process, controlled and automatic processing system, as main means in learning L2. Then the third model, Long's interaction hypothesis shows interaction and input as two main characteristics in the acquisition process (Brown, 2001).

The below given table shows, in chronological order, the outlines of the development of second language teaching methods corresponding to the language theories and language learning.

Summary of Teaching Methods and Their Components

| Time | Teaching methods | Theories of language | Theory of language learning |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| 1800 - present | Grammar Translation | Structural view | - |
| 1850s – 1930s | Oral approaches (Direct Method) | Structural view | Natural method (based on child language learning) |
| 1940s – 1970s (in the US) | Audio-lingual Approach | Structural view | behaviourism (language =habit formation) |
| 1950s-1970s (in the UK) | Situational Approach | Structural view | behaviourism (language =habit formation) |
| 1970 - present | Communicative Approach | Functional view | Attention to learning process and attention to how language is used to communicate |
| 1970 - present | ESP Approach | Functional view | Attention to learning process and attention to how language is used to communicate |
| 1970s – present | Humanistic Approaches: - Silent Way -Total Physical Response - Suggestopedia | Functional view | Attention to learning process and attention to how language is used to communicate |
| 1990 - present | Content-based instruction | Interactional view | Attention to learning process and attention to how language is used to communicate |
| 1990 - present | Task-based language teaching | Interactional view | Based on Learner needs |
| 1990 - present | Competency-based instruction | Interactional view | Based on Learner needs |

The theories of language learning have been regarded as three major categories: structural, functional and interactional. Teaching methods like Grammar Translation, Oral Approach (Direct Method), Situational

Approach and Audio-lingual Approach were obtained from the thought of “language as a system of structurally related elements for coding of meaning” (Richards & Rogers, 2001). It is meant for comprehending the significance of reading passages and decoding the required grammatical rules. On the other hand, methods like Communicative Approach, the ESP Approach, the Silent Way and the Total Physical Response view language as “a vehicle for expression of functional meaning” (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

This theory comprises three key elements such as, grammatical rules, semantics, and communication. Learners are supposed to learn a language; they need grammatical rules and have to understand the meanings of the words that the learners would be able to use in authentic communication. The teaching methods like Content-based instruction, Task-based language teaching and Competency-based instruction, on the other hand, are distinguished as interactive - “language as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations” (Richards & Rogers, 1986). Therefore, language is a type of instrument to commence and build up social networks.

Approaches to ESP Syllabus Design

New teaching methods and techniques into course or syllabus planning or designing have been generated for the development of second language acquisition. There are diverse kinds of Syllabus designing approaches of which the best usually trained ones are the communicative approach (Brumfit, Cowling, Friedenberg et al., and Hymes) and the learner-centred approach (Nunan, Orsi and Orsi, Sifakis, Thanasoulas,). The ultimate target in course design is to consider the needs in English communication at the workplace and also the Task-based approach is normally used for English training programs at the workplace. For designing an ESL syllabus, the communicative approach is significant and first one of the approaches considered. Munby (1980) says that the communicative approach rose in the endeavor to realize what substance ought to be instructed and learnt if a non-local is to communicate openly and capably in English. Therefore, the syllabus design should be seriously taken with the consideration of the learners’ communicative needs.

Communicative Approach

Firstly, Hymes (1971) presented the idea of communicative competence, or the ability of language use properly to achieve communication goals. Then it has been suitably modified and applied to different teaching contexts. This famous approach covers four sorts of language skill: linguistic (syntactic fitness or

exactness), sociolinguistic (the degree to which articulations can be properly utilized or gotten), discourse (capacity to join thoughts to accomplish union and rationality) and strategic (capacity to utilize methodologies to deal with language information restrictions). As indicated by Brown (2001), a definitive objective of communicative language guidance is elevating informative capability to language students and communicative objectives are best practiced by laying pressure both on language utilization and language use, familiarity and precision. The thought of communicative skill is the point of language learning in English language preparing programs. It prompts an expanding of the substance and sorts of exercises occurring in the language classroom.

In this technique students are persuaded to build up their capacity to deliver language or to make broadened groupings of language or sentence structures which ought to be appropriate to a particular setting and achieve the engaged communicative objectives.

Thus, the Communicative Approach gives importance on emerging the communicative competence, such as “the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language use which the speaker-listener possesses”(Brumfit and Johnson, 1979). By the communicative teaching, students are motivated to “consider language not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs” (Littewood 1981). Students are provided opportunities to use the language for real life communicative situations.

Task-based Approach

This approach is gotten from Dewey's frame of mind about the critical job of understanding for a powerful learning. It utilizes language in genuine errands as the significant objective for understudies to impart at the classroom learning. It includes the particular of an arrangement of intuitive errands to be acted in the objective language. The primary qualities of task based approach are the errand as an impression of certifiable action, the prospectus unit, a student - centred base, a model for second language securing condition and an instrument to determine the parts to be gathered in the subsequent exercises.

Richards and Rogers (2001) defined Task-based instruction as “an approach basing on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching.” It is here and there expected as an improvement of informative language instructing in light of the fact that the attributes of Task-based Approach appear to be like a few ideas of informative language guidance, similar to the exercises including genuine correspondence and utilizing language for passing on important undertakings.

In the views of Friedenberget al. (2003), task-based instruction is a successful instructional method in moving second language obtaining hypothesis for grownup learning and communicative ability into classroom practice. It permits a preparation program to address the language abilities students' requirement for explicit work circumstances and to structure the prospectus to mirror a progression of such circumstances. Task-based instruction is successful at all degrees of language capability; the undertakings are keyed to students' work environment needs and ability levels.

Learner-Centred Approach

Nunan (1988) says that learner-centred approach a hypothetical and experimental objective for students inside a grown-up ESL setting and collaborative exertion between educators and students. In this technique students who become the focal point of learning are legitimately and emphatically concerned in the decision-making process with respect to the teaching settings and the strategies.

As per Savignon (1997), student centeredness in language instruction was the effect and clear for the advancement of communicative methodologies. The attention of the teaching-learning processes has been changed from language form to language function by considering the needs of learners. In this approach learners have to take part and convey effectively in significant connection so as to translate and develop importance independently from anyone else (Breen & Candlin, 1980). Gibbs (1992) says that student-centred learning provides students more noteworthy self-sufficiency and command over decision of topic, learning strategies and pace of study. It is the point of view concentrating on singular student's heredity, encounters, viewpoints, foundation, abilities, interests, capacities and requirements.

Therefore, this approach predominantly based on the principle - learning is completely controlled by the students who can use the knowledge or competence they previously acquired in perspective on understanding the progression of new data and focusing on the best way to get skill.

At present language teachers are free to adopt various methods, approaches or techniques which should be most appropriate to their students of different backgrounds in language learning process. In addition to the theories and methods discussed above, another one- Using drama in an EFL/ESL classroom is a time-proven method of language learning and acquisition, adopting an integrated and communicative approach while teaching drama, a teacher can teach language more effectively, directly involving the students in the classroom activities (Panavelil, Abraham 2019).

Conclusion

Teaching and learning of English language can help the learners in acquiring communicative competence. Language is a means of communicating thoughts and feelings to others. The purpose of language teaching is to facilitate language learning. The motive of teaching and learning the foreign language is being adapted periodically. As per Crystal's view, the theories of language learning are two: the behaviourist and the cognitive. The theories of language learning have been regarded as three major categories: structural, functional and interactional. New teaching methods and techniques have been generated for the development of second language acquisition. There are diverse kinds of Syllabus designing approaches of which the best usually trained ones are the *Communicative Approach* and the *Learner-Centred Approach*. The *Task-Based Approach* is generally used for English training programs at the workplace. So, the language teachers are, now, free and liberal to adopt various methods, approaches or techniques which should be most appropriate to their students of different backgrounds in language learning process.

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