

Transforming Learning Through Eclecticism: Implementing and Assessing the Impact of Competency-Based Course Design

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Abstract: Richards and Rodgers (2014), in *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, observe that language teaching is projected to remain one of the most sought-after professions. Nevertheless, instructing English in diverse and heterogeneous classrooms poses significant challenges due to the wide array of available theories, methods, and approaches, making the selection of the most suitable one particularly complex. In response to this dilemma, Brown (2002) advocates for the eclectic approach, which empowers English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals to adopt strategies that are most effective in ever-evolving classroom contexts. This study aims to explore how the eclectic approach grants teachers the autonomy and adaptability necessary for designing competency-based English language curricula and creating impactful lesson plans. Furthermore, it investigates the role of eclecticism in fostering student competency development. Lastly, the paper examines how this approach aids ELT practitioners in evaluating their own teaching effectiveness. The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the eclectic approach in English language instruction enhances student achievement and contributes to a more engaging and meaningful learning environment.

Keywords: Competency Based Course Design, Eclectic Approach, Language Proficiency, Minimax Approach

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Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, scholarly debates and discussions regarding the teaching of languages gained momentum. Although language teaching wasn't new, applied linguists and others made guidelines and procedures for creating teaching methods and materials by drawing on the emerging sciences of linguistics and psychology. As a result, several methods, approaches and techniques came into being for more efficient language teaching. This calls for a need to know the distinction between the philosophy of language teaching and the procedures used for teaching a language. Edward Anthony, the American applied linguist, in 1963, explained this distinction. In order to do this, he defined three things: approach, method, and technique as follows.

According to Anthony (1963), an approach refers to a set of related assumptions regarding how language is learned and taught. It is foundational and self-evident, outlining the nature of the subject matter to be delivered. A method, on the other hand, represents a structured plan for delivering the relevant content, rooted in a particular approach. While an approach is theoretical or axiomatic in nature, a method is procedural. Interestingly, a single approach may encompass multiple methods. Additionally, a technique is a practical tool or strategy used within the classroom to accomplish a specific, immediate objective. Techniques are inherently implementational and must align with the chosen method and approach to maintain coherence.

Anthony's model outlines three levels: the approach level defines core beliefs and theories about language and its acquisition; the method level translates theory into practice by shaping decisions about teaching specific skills and sequencing content; and the technique level involves actual classroom practices. Thus, it is essential for ELT practitioners to grasp the distinctions of approach, method, and technique before applying them in instructional settings.

Given that the current study explores the practicality and effectiveness of the eclectic approach in English language teaching, a comprehensive review of existing methods and approaches has been conducted. This

review aims to demonstrate why eclecticism has emerged as a highly preferred strategy in contemporary English language teaching.

Literature Review

The principles of teaching English language have been advancing to provide students with the finest learning possible and meet their demands. As noted by Richard and Rodgers (2014), language teaching developed into a profession in the twentieth century. This profession is constantly investigating the effectiveness of diverse teaching strategies and ways to address new difficulties. Throughout the history of teaching English, numerous attempts have been made to identify the best methods for language teaching.

The Grammar-translation Method, that used bilingual teaching technique, was first introduced to be formalized in the classroom, but received criticism for its use of bilingualism. The Audio-lingual Method came into existence in the 1950s to teach military personnel oral language skills. This approach gained acceptance in classrooms but came under fire for emphasizing memorization and repetitious drills. Both Grammar-translation and Audio-lingual Method could not serve the purpose of learners. The emergence of the Cognitive Method marked a significant shift, integrating principles of generative grammar with insights from cognitive psychology. This framework has garnered considerable attention among both language learners and educators, as it positions learners as active agents in the acquisition process, acknowledging errors as a natural and constructive part of language development

The Situational Teaching Method was created to teach and use a language in context. Still, it has drawn criticism as it assumes that language use can be predicted and instead forecasts what and how language will be used in a given circumstance. This was followed by the Communicative Language Teaching approach that came into being in the 1980s. This approach got a lot of consideration because it focused on language use independent of circumstance or context. However, this approach is viewed as obsolete in certain situations because language teaching decisions and strategies cannot be dictated. The learning environment should be active and supportive of teacher's initiative. Each teaching strategy had its advantages and disadvantages. This calls for the need of an effective method of teaching in the context of an English language classroom

Ever since language teaching became a profession, there has been a constant demand for bringing together various approaches and methodologies involving English language teaching. This has given rise to the eclectic teaching style, which is one of the best approaches to teaching languages. The verb root from where eclecticism has been derived is "elect". To elect means to choose, or set apart. Thus, the eclectic approach is based on the principle of choice. According to Brown (2002), the eclectic approach empowers educators to choose instructional materials that best align with the specific needs and evolving circumstances of their classrooms.

Gilliand et al. (1994) highlight that the rationale for adopting eclecticism stems from its independence from any single teaching method or approach. Thus, the Eclectic Approach offers a broad theoretical basis and adaptable teaching methods. Moreover, it is conceptual and does not rigidly idealize any single method or approach. Instead, it fully utilizes several theories, methods, approaches, etc. to gain relevant insights into the matter at hand, or applies fitting theories as per the requirement in particular cases.

Salient Features of the Eclectic Approach

The eclectic approach pertains to teaching a second or a foreign language. This approach combines the principles of various methods and approaches of teaching a language depending on students' learning objectives and individual differences (Iskan, 2017). The primary distinguishing feature of this approach is its flexibility in modifying methodology and technique to achieve the primary educational goal. Additionally, incorporating such an approach into teaching adds variety and keeps the classroom setting lively. Gao (2011) characterizes eclecticism as an instructional approach that integrates the full range of language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and applies this comprehensive practice consistently within the classroom setting.

Gao's advice to teachers is to integrate best practices from, and take advantage of, all other teaching methods and to avoid their disadvantages. The fact that the eclectic approach is not rigid, is of the essence here. Additionally, its components can be mixed with different instructional strategies. Ali (1981), in an attempt to outline the main traits and tenets of eclecticism, made the following observations:

- Regarding the instructional objectives; teachers can choose from various teaching methods in the classroom.
- Any strategy or element that works for teaching in the classroom is available to teachers.
- Different teaching tools will be displayed to students, making lessons more dynamic and fascinating.
- It would be easier for teachers and students to get past any obstacles brought on by the textbook materials.
- Language exercises can be presented more quickly and efficiently using an eclectic approach.
- This method involves various tasks, including increased interaction, active learning, correlative learning, and quick outcomes.
- Eclecticism ties learners' personal experiences to the concepts taught during language instruction.

An example to demonstrate the role of the eclectic approach in English language teaching: ELT teachers often employ the Eclectic Approach to attain classroom goals. Let's examine how educators implement it to teach language skills, vocabulary, and grammar. For example, while dealing with **sounds of English**, an ELT teacher can use **Audio-lingual Method** to teach the representation, identification and pronunciation of all forty-four sounds in English. Let's consider the vowel /e/; students will understand how to:

represent sounds through symbols: In the case of the sound of vowel 'e', it is represented as /e/

identify positions of the sound (initial, mid, final):

- Initial (every, ever, end)
- Mid (let, never, very)
- Final (this vowel usually doesn't occur in word final positions)

pronounce words using the acquired knowledge; it will help the learners to:

- recognize the sound symbol
- use the English dictionary with ease
- understand similar sound patterns
- eliminate pronunciation-related flaws

It is evident from the above explanation that an audio-lingual method helps students understand the phonological rules of English. Another version of the eclectic approach, viz. the mini-max approach can be used while teaching grammatical components. The current example shall focus on the twenty-four auxiliary verbs. The basis of this approach is less language input and maximum output while teaching English. Let's consider the following:

A.	I am Sanjay.
B.	Raman is a teacher.
C.	I can teach English
D.	They drive a car.

Table 1

The bold highlighted words (**am**, **is**, **can**) are auxiliary verbs, whereas the verb (**drive**) is a tense verb, depicting an action-oriented task. Let these sentences be put into two columns.

S. No.	Sentences with Auxiliaries	Sentences without Auxiliaries
A.	I am Sanjay.	They drive a car.
B.	Raman is a teacher.	
C.	I can teach English.	

Table 2

The sentences 'A' and 'B' in the 'Sentences with Auxiliaries' column have the verbs 'am' and 'is', depicting the state. On the contrary, sentence 'C' uses 'can' as a verb, depicting modality. Consider the next column, 'Sentences without Auxiliaries'; the sentence 'They drive a car.' uses the verb 'drive' in the first form, showing the action-oriented task. Let us further consider the following tables.

+ (plus) Action Sentences	- (minus) Action Sentences
I can teach English.	I am Sanjay
	I am a teacher.

Table 3

In table 3 the '+ Action Sentences' column has the verb 'can', expressing the ability of teaching, hence action is involved. Whereas, in the '- Action Sentences' column, the verb 'am' addresses who 'I' is and describes its profession, hence no action is involved. Tables 2 and 3 show that giving minimum inputs can provide maximum outputs in language teaching and learning. The above example demonstrates effectively that with the help of sentences with auxiliaries (-action) such as is, am, are, have, was, and were, learners can talk about their profession and state, express their opinions, and describe things in their surroundings.

Hence, eclecticism provides freedom and flexibility to ELT practitioners to incorporate multiple methods and techniques as per their classroom needs. Therefore, the Mini-max Approach, which is an embodiment of the eclectic approach is one of the best-suited ways to teach the English language.

Advantages of the Eclectic Approach

All industry experiences change, and education is no exception. Every human seeks to change, find solutions, and implement improvements in their line of work. Every person

aspires to change and makes an effort to identify problems and put improvements into practice in their field of work. The process of teaching and learning the English language follows the same pattern. Language learners constantly seek unique, innovative, and entertaining approaches to learning the language. Language learners continuously look for new, creative, and enjoyable ways to learn the language. To do this, language teachers use various successful techniques, tactics, and strategies to create a warm and welcoming environment where students may learn the language. The following are the benefits of an eclectic approach:

- incorporates many learning activities and relieves learners of boredom
- involves a range of educational pursuits driven by several underlying presumptions
- combines the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing into a seamless totality
- advises using any method or strategy as per the requirements of pupils
- simplifies the task of teaching English by simulating real-world scenarios in the classroom

Methodology

The research methodology included class profile assessment, followed by designing a need-based course. This led to the defining of competencies which acted as an aid for internalizing eclecticism for attaining competencies. The final steps involve the discussion and the evaluation of results, followed by conclusion.

Research Design

The effectiveness of eclecticism in teaching and learning of the newly designed competency-based course for the first semester students of IGNTU was tested by conducting a pre-test and a post-test before and after the

implementation of internalizing eclecticism respectively. This research followed a quasi-experiment (Thomas 2020) one group pre-test post-test design for data collection and analysis.

The participants of this study were 29 first semester students of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University. These 29 first semester students opted for studying vocational course in the department of English & Foreign Languages but were not only from the department of English & Foreign Languages but from the departments of Economics, and Journalism. There were 17 female learners and 12 male participants. The influence of English language is found only during the time of English language class hours and home assignments. Also, most of the participants are from semi-rural and rural background, so English seldom finds a place in their daily lives.

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The Intervention

Eclecticism, in this study, has been internalized and practiced as an approach for teaching English Language through a competency-based course design. The competencies were defined and selected as per the participants' needs with the prime objective of improving the English Language proficiency from A1 level to the higher level. The three chosen competencies, viz. the 44 sounds of English, the 24 auxiliaries and 3 matching tables equip the participants with required language tools. These were put into Kathreen Graves Cyclic Course Model which provides freedom and flexibility to the teachers to pace and to grade the course to equip the participants with the desired competencies. These competencies are required to be fused with language skills so that participants get engaged and stimulated and ultimately activate their language through real-time and real-life situations. This study implements the internalizing of eclecticism in competency-based course design and help students improve their proficiency.

After conducting the pre-test, the participants were found at A1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference. The intervention period lasted eight weeks comprising sixteen sessions of two hours each. The competency-based course design was taught by internalizing eclecticism. The three competencies were customized according to the participants and five modules were created to equip the participants both with the desired language and language skills. Every module was designed to help students practice and internalize the competencies with an admixture of listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks.

Data Collection

Test

Two question papers were prepared to check the effectiveness of internalizing eclecticism in a competency-based course design to enhance the first semester students' English language proficiency. Both the tests were in the same format that is the learners were asked questions to evaluate their English language proficiency. The first test was conducted before internalizing eclecticism in the teaching and learning process. The second test was conducted after internalizing the eclecticism in the classes. The tests were set in all the three chosen competencies required to improve the participants' English language proficiency. The answer scripts were evaluated.

Data Analysis

The data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Paired sample statistics were employed to compare pre-test and post-test scores, thereby facilitating the examination of whether the differences observed between the two sets of measures reached statistical significance. Data from 29 participants (N=28) were entered into the SPSS software, and a paired-sample t-test was conducted to assess the differences. A 95% confidence interval was applied during the analysis. The pre-test and post-test scores were identified as paired variables 1 and 2, respectively. Upon completion of the analysis, essential statistical indices—including the mean, standard deviation (SD), t-value, and p-value—were generated to facilitate interpretation of the results.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of this investigation provide robust evidence supporting the efficacy of the intervention. A paired-sample t-test was conducted to statistically compare the mean scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test administered before and after the intervention. The analysis revealed a significant improvement in learners' proficiency levels. As illustrated in Table 4, the mean post-test score ($M = 68.6207$) was notably higher than the mean pre-test score ($M = 44.7241$), indicating substantial progress. The paired-sample test yielded a p-value of 0.000, which falls below the conventional threshold of 0.05, thereby confirming statistical significance. In line with Beers (2022), a lower p-value denotes stronger statistical evidence. Accordingly, the results affirm that the competency-based course produced a measurable enhancement in learners' proficiency.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre.Total	44.7241	29	6.63000	1.23116
	Post.Total	68.6207	29	12.27123	2.27871

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre.Total - Post.Total	-	8.28120	1.537	-	-20.74655	-15.540	28	.000
		23.89655		78	27.04655				

Table 5: Paired Samples Test Values of Pre-test and Post-test scores

Paired Samples Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the students' performance before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the implementation of the instructional intervention.

A total of **29 students** participated in both assessments. The **mean pre-test score** was **44.72** ($SD = 6.63$, $SE = 1.23$), indicating that the participants had a moderate level of proficiency before the intervention. After the intervention, the **mean post-test score** increased substantially to **68.62** ($SD = 12.27$, $SE = 2.28$), demonstrating a marked improvement in students' performance.

The increase of approximately **23.90 points** in the mean score suggests that the instructional treatment had a positive effect on students' learning outcomes. Although the post-test standard deviation (12.27) is higher than that of the pre-test (6.63), indicating greater variability in students' post-intervention performance, the overall increase in the mean score reflects significant learning gains. The larger standard error in the post-test is also attributable to the increased dispersion of scores. Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate that the intervention considerably enhanced the receptive language skills of the participants.

Paired Samples Test Values of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Table 5 presents the results of the **paired-samples t-test**, which was conducted to determine whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant.

The **mean difference** between the pre-test and post-test scores was **-23.90**, indicating that the post-test scores were, on average, **23.90 points higher** than the pre-test scores. The **standard deviation of the differences** was **8.28**, with a **standard error** of **1.54**, reflecting relatively consistent improvement among the participants.

The **95% confidence interval** for the mean difference ranged from **-27.05 to -20.75**. Since this interval does not include zero, it provides strong evidence that a genuine difference exists between the pre-test and post-test scores.

The calculated **t-value** was **-15.540** with **28 degrees of freedom**, and the associated **p-value** was **.000** ($p < .001$). This probability is well below the conventional significance level of **0.05**, indicating that the observed improvement is statistically highly significant and is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is rejected. The findings confirm that the instructional intervention was highly effective in improving the participants' language proficiency. The substantial increase in mean scores, coupled with the highly significant t-test result, provides strong empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the teaching approach employed in the study.

Conclusion

Given that not every student responds well to a specific strategy, method, or practise, language teachers should use a range of strategies. To teach vocabulary, grammar, and language skills, ELT teachers should use a comprehensive plan that combines all available strategies. Undoubtedly, the Eclectic Approach succeeds in its objectives and inspires students to study the language carefully. The Eclectic Approach makes grammar instruction effective, fulfilling, and fun so that students learn more from it and strive to gain an intuitive understanding of the English language, enabling them to use it naturally. Language teachers can effectively employ the Eclectic Approach to enhance students' language proficiency because it has many benefits. Teachers should focus on a few factors when using the eclectic approach in language classes, especially ELT. Teachers must be well-versed with various methods, approaches, and strategies to adequately implement the eclectic approach in the classroom because it is one of its fundamental tenets. Overall, it can be said that using an eclectic approach improves the quality of teaching and allows teachers to work on other areas, such as course design, lesson planning and classroom teaching.

The study carried out in implementing eclecticism in competency-based course design proved that there is a significant improvement in the proficiency level of the learners. The intervention of this study provides a model for the teachers to customize their teaching using the eclectic approach.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare "No conflict of interest".

APPENDIX

(Appendix: questionnaires & data collection and analysis)

All the data collection/questionnaires and result analysis have been verified and the same is available at the Corresponding Author, **Dr. Mohammed Tausif ur Rahman** (tausif.rahman@igntu.ac.in).

Authors' Individual Contribution

Mohammed Tausif ur Rahman made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. He developed the research concept, designed the research methodology and intervention framework, and supervised the implementation of the intervention throughout the study. He also interpreted the statistical findings, conducted the data analysis, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript to ensure its intellectual content, coherence, and overall academic quality.

Aditi Chandra made substantial contributions to the systematic literature review and the acquisition of data as part of the research team. She was responsible for conducting the statistical analyses using SPSS, ensuring the accuracy of data processing and computation. She also contributed to the interpretation of the statistical outputs and reviewed the manuscript during its preparation.

Sankalp Goswami made substantial contributions to the literature review and data collection in collaboration with Aditi. He assisted in organizing and executing the research data and was responsible for formatting the manuscript in accordance with the target journal's guidelines. He also reviewed the manuscript and contributed to its final preparation for submission.