

A Critical Review of Methods and Approaches in English Language Teaching

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Abstract: This paper provides a comprehensive review of the various methods and approaches employed in English Language Teaching (ELT). The study traces the evolution of language teaching methodologies from the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) to more communicative and interactive approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Each method is examined in terms of its objectives, principles, techniques, advantages, and disadvantages. The study highlights that no single method is universally effective, emphasizing the need for an eclectic approach in ELT to cater to the diverse needs of learners. The paper concludes by underscoring the importance of adapting methodologies to the learner's context and proficiency level.

Keywords: *English Language Teaching, Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Total Physical Response, Silent Way, Communicative Language Teaching*

Introduction: The teaching and learning of foreign languages have been a notable aspect of human interaction for centuries. With the advent of globalization, the need to learn English has become most important for communication across cultures and nations. Over the years, various methods and approaches have been developed to facilitate the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language. These methods have evolved in response to the limitations observed in previous methodologies and the changing goals of

language education. This paper reviews the prominent methods and approaches used in ELT, analyzing their theoretical foundations, objectives, principles, and techniques.

The Grammar-Translation Method: The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is one of the aged and most traditional methods used in language teaching. Originating in the 16th century for teaching Latin and Greek, GTM draw attention to the explicit teaching of grammar and vocabulary through translation exercises (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), GTM views language learning as the memorization of grammatical rules and vocabulary lists, with a focus on developing reading and writing skills. The method employs a structural syllabus where language content is sequenced based on grammatical complexity. This method primarily focused on reading skills, writing skills, vocabulary, and translation which eventually weakened the communicative aspects of language learning.

Direct Method: The Direct Method emerged in reaction to the limitations of GTM, focusing on engaging learners in the target language. Developed by Maximilian Berlitz in the late 19th century, this method emphasizes speaking and listening skills by using only the target language in

the classroom (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Grammar is taught inductively, and vocabulary is presented through association with objects, actions, and situations. The Direct Method aims to develop communicative competence by encouraging students to think and respond in the target language without translating (Harmer, 2007), however the formal accuracy was neglected.

Audio-Lingual Method: The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) emerged during World War II when the United States military needed rapid language acquisition for soldiers. Rooted in behaviorist psychology and structural linguistics, ALM emphasizes habit formation through repetition, mimicry, and pattern drills (Skinner, 1957). According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), ALM uses dialogues and drills to develop accurate pronunciation and grammatical structures. However, the method has been criticized for its lack of focus on communicative competence and creativity in language use.

Total Physical Response (TPR): Total Physical Response (TPR) was developed by James Asher in the 1960s, drawing on principles from first language acquisition. TPR involves teaching language through physical activity, where students respond to commands given by the teacher using body movements (Asher, 1969). The method emphasizes listening comprehension and aims to reduce learner anxiety by creating a stress-free learning environment. Asher (1977) highlights that TPR engages kinesthetic learners and promotes retention through physical engagement. This method faced challenges

with Advanced Language and also lacked Creative Expressions.

The Silent Way: The Silent Way, developed by Caleb Gattegno in the 1970s, emphasizes learner autonomy and discovery. The method advocates for minimal teacher intervention, allowing students to develop their hypotheses about language structures through experimentation and self-correction (Gattegno, 1972). The Silent Way uses Cuisenaire rods and color-coded charts to represent linguistic elements, encouraging learners to internalize language patterns through problem-solving and interaction. This method also had potential for Anxiety and Confusion and can be perceived as cold or impersonal due to the teacher's relative silence dismissing the Affective factors in learning.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of traditional methods, emphasizing the importance of meaningful communication in language learning. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence involves not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in various contexts. CLT encourages interaction, role-plays, group work, and task-based activities to develop learners' fluency and accuracy. The method doesn't pay much attention to grammatical accuracy and can be time consuming, difficult to implement, and would need efficient teachers for practice.

Conclusion: The evolution of ELT methods and approaches reflects a shift from a focus on linguistic accuracy to communicative competence. While each method has its strengths and weaknesses, the effectiveness of a method depends on the learner's context, proficiency level, and learning goals. An eclectic approach that combines techniques from multiple methods may offer a more comprehensive and adaptable framework for language teaching. As language education continues to evolve, teachers should remain flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of their learners.

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