

Teaching English between Communicativism and Eclecticism: Challenges and Difficulties Encountered by Teachers of English Inside the Classroom of Secondary Iraqi Schools

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ABSTRACT

The current research-work is presented to investigate the challenges and difficulties encountered by the teachers of English inside the classroom of secondary Iraqi schools during using both the Communicative and Eclectic methods then we try to discover which one of them is effective to be followed. Arriving at this result, could be done by adopting a questionnaire to teachers of English in order to check their attitudes towards the two used methods. The aim objective is attained through proposing a null hypothesis which denotes that teachers of English are not good enough at using one effected method in the classroom and therefore the teachers may have no awareness about the means to select between these methods. The study is directed to the teachers of English at the secondary schools in Basra for the year, 2020-2021. Results have shown that there is a statistical significance in the teachers' attitudes regarding the application of the eclectic method. Based on the above results, some conclusions have been given.

Keywords

Eclectic Method (Mixed Method), Communicative Method, Advantages of Eclectic Method, Adoption of Eclectic Approach.

Introduction

Since the early 20th century, methodologists in ELT have been trying and seeking for the best way in teaching English as foreign language. Accordingly, various methods and ways have been introduced, tried out and unfortunately these attempts have been unsatisfactory and proved failure to achieve the desired primary objective of language communication. Consequently, methodologists have arrived at the idea that the most successful teacher is the one who follows no one single method.

The communicative method has been accepted as one of the best ELT methods adopted by numbers of methodologists according to its main concerns with developing learners' communicative competence. So, it is important to focus on the teacher's role in such a method and the most crucial teaching techniques used to implement it.

In pedagogy, many teachers prefer to use an eclectic way which can meet all ELT needs, thus teachers need to apply a set of teaching principles to be followed in order to achieve the best techniques to attain the goal of communication. In teaching terms, Eclecticism has been given

different names: integrative eclecticism, successful eclecticism, new eclecticism, etc.

The evaluation of this research is based on analyzing the results obtained from the given questionnaire concerning the principles of the communicative and the eclectic methods in ELT. The research continues to investigate the ways of methods effect on the teachers of English at the secondary Iraqi schools.

Problem

It is quite evident that desired goal of teaching English is to achieve the objective of using language in daily communication. But this goal seems to be less convincing and not well-attained from the part of the learners. In fact, not all teachers like to use different methods in teaching English inside the classroom. Some of them tend to use one particular way only. It is observed that there is always a relationship between the language teaching methods and teacher's role and how these methods have great influence on the teachers at the Iraqi schools. The present research is devoted to investigate the challenges and

difficulties encountered by teachers of English inside the classroom of secondary Iraqi schools through using both Communicative and Eclectic methods. This eclectic trend in ELT is somewhat ignored in the academic schooling studies at this level. So, this study finds it important and essential to shed light and discuss it.

Objectives

This research-work aims at:

1. Showing the learner's inability to use language communicatively by adopting one single old method.
2. Identifying the major principles and techniques used for the eclectic method at the secondary schools in language learning and teaching of English.
3. Evaluating the possibility of the eclectic method at the Iraqi schools by presenting the major advantages of it.
4. Investigating the effectiveness of the eclectic method from the teachers of English points of view.
5. Developing the learners' level of English at the secondary schools in Iraq through finding a reasonable balance between the use of the techniques of the communicative method and the proposed eclectic method.

Scope

The research is confined only to evaluate the effectiveness of the eclectic and the communicative methods in teaching English at the secondary stage and the challenges and difficulties faced by teachers of English in implementing the techniques of the methods inside their classroom teaching.

Procedures

The following procedures are adopted in the current study:

1. Presenting introductory remarks about the theoretical and pedagogical at the secondary schools background of both methods.

2. Conducting a questionnaire to teachers of English to examine their points of view about the current situation of teaching English, either communicatively or eclectically.

Theoretical Remarks and Previous Studies of CLT

In ELT, there are several methods such as Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method and Audio-lingual Method that have been tried out in classroom. However, these methods have not achieved the communicative goal which enable students to use English in a perfect and appropriate way. So, there seem to be a gap resulted between the theory and application in using those methods at our Iraqi schools. Therefore; in the recent years, many teachers of English have encountered much to arrive at the concept of CLT in order to meet their students desires to use English in their everyday life situations if needed.

Regarding this, Widdowson (1990: 159)⁽¹⁾ states that the Communicative method is used to:

Concentrate on getting learners to do things with language, to express concepts and to carry out communicative acts of various kinds. The content of a language course is now defined not in terms of forms, words and sentence patterns, but in terms of concepts, or notions, which such forms are used to express, and the communicative functions which they are used to perform.

Historical Background and the Main Principles of CLT

The main change has occurred in foreign language teaching through the shift in teaching methodology from concentrating on the structural features of the target language to an emphasis on the expression and comprehension of meaning. In other words, the most important point here in second and foreign language curriculum has changed from considering language accuracy to enhancing the learners' communicative competence for all daily life situations.

The Communicative Language Teaching initiated in Britain in the 1960s as an alternative method to the earlier Grammar Translation Method. The need to develop alternative method of language teaching was considered a high priority, therefore, “a group of experts began to investigate the possibility of developing language courses on a unit-credit system, a system in which learning tasks are broken down into portions or units, each of which corresponds to a component of a learner’s needs and is systematically related to all the other portions”. (Richards and Rogers, 2001:154).

Since the 1990s, the communicative approach has been widely used. It involves general principles grounded on the adoption of idea of the communicative competence suggested by Hymes as it is the fundamental aim of second and foreign language teaching. This new language teaching method adopted the communicative syllabus in order to implement its principles and techniques hoping to achieve its major objectives of language communication. Historically, the communicative language teaching has moved forward to evolve as our understanding of the processes of second language learning has developed. The current communicative language teaching theory and practice thus draws a number of different educational paradigms and traditions. (Richards, 2006: 22)⁽²⁾.

From a bird’s eye view, Larsen – Freeman (2000) states certain important principles regarding CLT, they are outlined as:

- a. The priority is given to the meaning. The main crucial point here is to enable learners to understand the intention of the writers and speakers.
- b. In this approach, it is believed that the linguistic structures are less important than communicative functions. The learner needs to be aware about the communication functions of those structures.
- c. The target language is used in the classroom; it is considered as a means for classroom communication, not just the object of study. If the learners do not use the target language, they will continue to use their native language, so the native language should be used carefully.
- d. A fundamental adequate use of language is emphasized rather than language accuracy. Accuracy is not a prior one. It is believed that when the learners master to use the language appropriately, accuracy occurs automatically.
- e. All language skills are demanded. That is to say, one skill like speaking is not workable in CLT.
- f. Communication in the target language is very important. Errors are tolerated.
- g. CLT encourages teacher-student and student – student interaction. It helps to encourage the cooperative relationship among learners.
- h. CLT encourages and makes learners know how to say rather than what to say.
- i. Situations should be created by the teacher in order to promote language communication.
- j. Language teaching techniques should be designed in such way that it encourages the learners to use the target language. Functional aspects of language should be given its due importance. Dramas, role plays, games should be used in the class room to promote the real communication. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 125-128).

Advantages of CLT

The implementation of CLT gives a lot of advantages for Teaching English as a foreign/second language. Unlike other methods, CLT focuses on “task-oriented, student-centred” role and it provides learners with a comprehensive use of English language, for communication of opportunities (Richards, 2006: 20)⁽²⁾. Other scholars (Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2007; Richard, 2006)^(5,7,2) also suggest certain advantages of CLT as shown in the following:

- a) It motivates students to enhance their capability of using English by themselves since it concentrates on fluency in the target language. That is to say, it provides students with assignments that allow them to enhance their own thoughts about what they are going to tackle and how they are going to talk. This enables the learners to be more confident when interacting with

other people and they also enjoy talking more (Brown, 2001)⁽⁵⁾.

- b) CLT concentrates on and aims at achieving the communicative competence. Thus, enabling the students to use the language in a communicative situation to obtain their needs in real-life communication is considerable a priority in CLT (Richards, 2006)⁽²⁾. This means that it brings the real life situation of the native English in to classroom activities such as role-play and simulation (Harmer, 2007)⁽⁷⁾.
- c) The major task of the learning process does not depend upon the teacher only, but also on the it depends on the learners themselves, thus CLT classes have moved from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness. Basically, there is much more time should be given by the learner to use language rather than by the teacher. The role of the teacher is only a facilitator. Thus, the learner should exercise and communicate enough in the CLT classroom to achieve the communicative competence (Brown, 2001)⁽⁵⁾.

Disadvantages of CLT

There are some various disadvantageous points concerning the communicative approach to teaching /learning language, they are listed as follows:

- a) The approach gives priority to the meaning rather than grammar and rules of structure. In other words, there is not enough emphasis on the correction of pronunciation as well as grammar error. This is done because of the too much concentration paid to the meaning. It is believed that in CLT there is less attention be given to reading and writing skills; the great focus should be given to oral skills.
- b) Fluency is more important than accuracy in grammar and pronunciation. This leads to a result of "fluent but inaccurate" learners.
- c) The CLT approach is suitable for intermediate and advanced students, but for beginners some controlled drills are needed. Students with low level of proficiency in the target language may find

it difficult to take part in oral activities and, if the exams are implemented by any institution which considering grammar based, communicative fluency could not be sufficient.

- d) The teacher's ability of observing must be very good. Despite teachers' great efforts, classroom activities are not indeed real-life ones and it can be hard to reproduce truly authentic language use and to facilitate actual interaction. This implies that much more effort is considered.
- e) CLT is sometimes difficult to be implemented in an EFL classroom according to the lack of sources and materials such as authentic tools and native speaker teachers as well as the existence of large size classes.

Major Points of Criticism against CLT

There are some major points of criticism raised against CLT. In this respect, Didenko and Pichugova (2019)⁽⁶⁾ state that:

There is quite an astounding amount of criticism which is based on the evidence that CLT failed to fulfill its many promises to innovate educational environment in the world. The first and foremost issue, widely outspoken in literature, is the lack of communicativeness in the approach that contains the very word 'communicative' in its name. For instance, Kumaravadivelu doubts that CLT is able to promote 'authentic communication', because various studies, his own included, have failed to describe CLT classroom interaction as genuinely communicative. As Nunan writes in his much-cited article - even CLT enthusiast teachers did not manage to recreate real-life communication in their classes as well as to create conditions conducive for developing communication skills.

The Teacher's Role in CLT

Harmer (2003:58-62)⁽⁷⁾ explains that the role of the teacher changes from one activity to another, or from one stage of an activity to another. The teacher's role in the communicative language

teaching is that of a facilitator or a guide. This can be done by tracing the following points:

1. **Controller:** controller takes the role, organizes, read aloud, informs the learners things, gives drills.
2. **Organizer:** organize the students in different actions. This often includes giving the students information, advising them on how they are going to do the activity, making them work into pairs or groups, and finally finishing things down when it is needed.
3. **Assessor:** offers feedback and correction and grading learners in different ways.
4. **Prompter:** offers words or expressions, and let the student to tell something.
5. **Participant:** takes turn in an activity not only as a teacher, but also as a participant.
6. **Resource:** says or writes something or to tell what a word or phrase expresses.
7. **Tutor:** works with individuals or small groups, guides them to the right directions that they do not think about yet.
8. **Observer:** observes what the learners do with another group in order to obtain a useful feedback.

Historical Background of the Emergence of the Eclectic Method

The eclectic method (EM) is a method of language teaching that combines various approaches and methodologies to teach language depending on the goals of the lesson and the abilities of the learners. Different teaching methods are borrowed and adapted to suit the requirement of the learners. It breaks the routine of the class. Additionally, it is a conceptual approach that does not only involve one paradigm or a set of assumptions.

The eclectic method initiated in the 1970s and 1980s as a revolt against of the prevailing existence of teaching methods and the arbitrary results of such methods (Jiang, 2000) ⁽⁹⁾. The climax of these methods lasted until the late 1980s (Richards & Renandya, 2002) ⁽⁸⁾. One of the strongest criticisms against the old methods of the 1970s and 1980s was that they were typically top-down which was opposite to the now more

common bottom up (Xu, 2006) ⁽¹⁰⁾. Additionally, even the supporters of the eclectic method were exposed to a certain criticism in that eclecticism does not offer any guidance on what basis and by what principles aspects of different methods can be selected and combined.” (Stern, 1983: 512).

Continually, Xu ⁽¹⁰⁾clarifies that ELTs “find themselves straddling two methodological worlds: one that is imposed on them, and another that is improvised by them” (Xu, 2006:36) ⁽¹⁰⁾. Further, Rivers (1981:55), shows that the main proponent to EM, is that method has the ability to allow language teachers "to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known language-teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purposes for which they are most appropriate". This is a necessary and crucial pedagogical requirements when they are faced with the daily task of helping students to learn a new language cannot afford the luxury of complete dedication to each new method or approach that comes into vogue (Rivers, 1981: 54) ⁽¹¹⁾.

Theoretical Background and the Main Principles of Eclectic Method

Rivers (1986: 54) ⁽¹¹⁾ states that the origins of this method began with the work of British applied linguists in 1920s and 1930s. They developed a method to methodology that included systematic principles of selection. It involved the procedures by “which lexical and grammatical content was chosen.” (Rogers, 1986: 33) ⁽²⁾. This method has an honorable ancestry which involves such highly glints of language-learning profession as Henry Sweet (1845 – 1912) and Harold Palmer (1877 – 1949). So, Sweet believes that the eclectic method must be based on a thorough knowledge of the science of language. It is believed that the general principles on which language learning should be based rather than one absolutely invariable method. These general principles should be supplemented by special principles concerning teaching of special language.

Similarly, (Palmer,1921) published a book named (the principles of language study). In this book, he discussed the matter of accepting more than one separate item in the programme, so as to achieve

its function, he calls this the multiple line of approach. He thinks that varying the practices and tools may push us near from our immediate purpose and bring us to our ultimate aim. Brown (2002)⁽⁵⁾ states that "eclecticism gives the solution to teaching language because it allows teachers to follow what types of ways they can find within their own dynamic contexts".

Continually, Al-khuli (1981:7)⁽¹²⁾ sums up that the eclectic method is characterized by the following principles:

1. Giving teachers a chance to choose different kinds of teaching techniques in each class period to reach the aims of the lesson.
2. Flexibility in choosing any aspect or method those teachers think suitable for teaching inside the classroom.
3. Giving a chance to pupils to see different kinds of teaching techniques that break monotony and dull on one hand and ensure better understanding for the material on the other hand.
4. Solving difficulties concerning presenting the language.
5. Using different kinds of teaching aids which leads to better understanding.
6. Saving a lot of time and effort in presenting language activities.

Advantages of the Eclectic Method

There are certain advantages referred by (Sager, 2019: 756)⁽¹³⁾ of regarding the eclectic method. They are shown as follows:

1. Learners become attentive and respondent.
2. It offers multiple opportunities to students to develop their own skills.
3. It enhances active participation.
4. It makes learning lively and enjoyable.
5. It breaks classroom monotony.
6. It promotes class control and students could have interest in class and it allows class discussion.

Causes of the Teacher's Adoption of the Eclectic Method in Secondary Classroom

Luo, He and Yang (2001)⁽²⁾ as cited in Mwanza (2020: 261)⁽¹⁴⁾, sum up the five features of successful eclectic teaching as in the following:

1. Determine the purposes of each individual method.
2. be flexible in the selection and application of each method.
3. make each method effective.
4. consider the appropriateness of each method.
5. maintain the continuity of the whole teaching process.

The teaching procedure should be divided into three stages namely: (a) teacher-centred at the input stage; (b) learner-centred at the practice stage; and (c) learner-centred at the production stage. This means that the application of the eclectic method is systematic. In it, the teacher should have a thorough understanding of the method and how it works in order to apply it appropriately and correctly in the classroom situation. The teacher should be aware of how s/he can recontextualise this method to the teaching of English Grammar in his/her unique classroom situation.

Recontextualisation is a very important skill in which teachers should develop during their teacher training; they need it in their lesson preparation and delivery in the school. The interpretation of the syllabus requires that the teacher knows how to recontextualise education knowledge and the means (teaching methods) by which knowledge can be transferred from the syllabus to the learner in the classroom. In this sense, Larsen-Freeman (2000:181-182) was right when she stated the following about the nature of methods:

Methods themselves are decontextualised. They describe a certain ideal based on certain beliefs. They deal with what, how and why. They say little or nothing about to who/whom, when and where.

This gives an idea that a teacher has the responsibility of recontextualising the methods in the classroom relying on the learners, their background and the general context of teaching and learning. Further, Larsen-Freeman (2000:82) continues to state that "there can be no method for everyone...methods should not be exported from one situation to another". This needs that a teacher decides what to do according to his/her particular classroom situation. To put certain justification to

this proposition, Larsen-Freeman (2000:xi) notes that the “Decisions that teachers make are often affected by the exigencies in the classroom rather than by methodological considerations”.

All in all, we can propose that the best and adequate way to use in teaching is the eclectic method which practically blends different methods, depending on the teacher, learners linguistic backgrounds, materials available, the learning objectives and social cultural background of the learners. This requires that the teachers should be well- trained in order to have full understanding of the eclectic method and how it can be recontextualised in the classroom to be applicable to the target learners. So, teachers’ understanding of such a method of eclecticism in education becomes an important prerequisite in the teaching/ learning process.

Methodology

This section shows the research methodology which involves the procedures adopted in this research and the practical part which is concerned with the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire given to the teachers of English at the secondary schools.

The present section includes; sampling and population, the instruments used, face validity, a description of how the questionnaire was constructed and how the data of it was gathered and the statistical procedures used to arrive at the result required. Concerning the practical section, the researcher tried to analyse the questionnaire; that is, the teachers’ responses of questionnaire were statistically investigated by using the frequency and percentage depending on the SPSS programme. The section ends up with a discussion of the results.

The Instrument

The instrument applied for collecting data depended on conducting a given questionnaire to teachers of English. Since the application of this kind of instrument is useful and practical in gathering data as Sataya, (2012: 273) states that “a questionnaire is the main means of collecting quantitative primary data”.

Questionnaire Validity

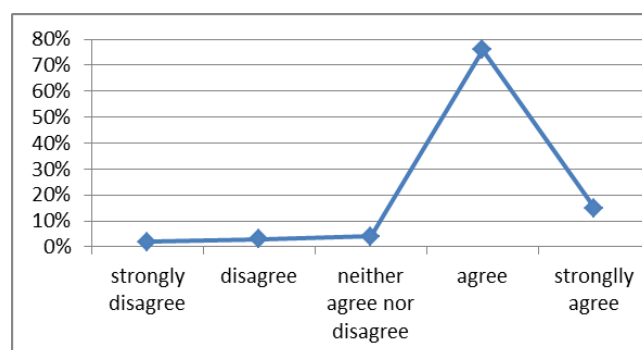
Validity is one of the most important characteristics of a good test or questionnaire. In this sense, Harris (1969:21) ⁽¹⁵⁾ explains that “validity refers to the ability of the test to measure what it claims to measure”. In order to assert that questionnaire has gained its face validity, it has been consulted with Prof. Dr. Ayad Ismai’l Saleh, College of Education for Human Sciences, Department of Guidance and Educational Counselling who specialised in statistics, so he scientifically enriched the content of the study with his comments and suggestions, and have made some improvements for it.

Results and Discussion

Teachers were randomly selected from those schools. The total number of them was 25 including male and female who were chosen from ten schools in Basra Governorate. The items of the questionnaire were designed in the form of a structured questionnaire. In order to validate the proposed hypothesis, the researchers made use of Google Drive Device in order to collect and then to analyze their data. The following table indicates the statistical results of the questionnaire.

Table 1.

Participants	Items	Mean	St-Deviation	Percentages
25	21	78.722	5.144	76%



Main Figure 1. Analysis of the Questionnaire has Shown the Following Main Points

1. The study indicates that the majority of teachers wanted to teach English by using the eclectic method (mixed method). The responses assure that most of the teachers

focused more on using the mixed methods, (76%) as opposed to their English Teaching Skills used. Table 1 and Fig. 1 show that clearly.

As the teachers were required to be ready with perfect English communication methods to brighten their students prospects, so teachers should have emphasized skill development as opposed in different techniques.

2. Language teaching can be made more purposive to teachers by allowing them to create a good learning environment in which the learner – learner relationship is improved and motivated. In general, the data proved that 48% of teachers agreed on that.
3. Using mixed methods in teaching English is an essential way which is preferred by most of the teachers. The data revealed that 52% of teachers wanted such a way to be conducted in their classroom because it strives to respond to diversities which normally exist in the classroom.
This means that when there is a good number of teachers are opting for applying mixed method, there is a sign of healthy phenomenon in language teaching process.
4. Teaching students by using the eclectic method will help the students not to distract from the task and the teacher can also solve many problems. This can be done by presenting the language teaching materials of the learner's textbook in a more practical and suitable way. Accordingly, the data shows 76% of the teachers should have more interaction with their students while they use the eclectic language teaching method.
5. The teacher's Focus on not adopting one single way of teaching language to their students. The data indicate that 80% of teachers focused on some systematic relation among the different language activities rather than mixing up different language teaching methods. For these teachers, the mixed method is considered a representative method and dominant one that can help students to use English for expressing their real life situations.

Therefore, it was a preferable language teaching method that most of the teachers like to use the mixed method on a wider scale.

6. Mixed Method concentrates on the use of the skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) to be taught in combination with each other and thus this method could save time and effort. When teachers teach language by using a mixed method, students will learn the language holistically. The data revealed that 72% of teachers used the skills of LSRW in combination, whereas 18% of teachers did not. By this method, teachers can provide in more varieties into their classroom teaching by integrating these language skills. Wider use of this method was warranted in the view of this fact.
7. Authenticity is one of the most important factor that helps students to experience the impression of feeling that the language is considered as a real means which is used for conveying real life-situations. The data reveals that 68% of participants agree that this method encourages learners to work co-operatively. Failure to use authentic materials could probably be attributed to teachers' over dependence on only the prescribed textbook. Since the authentic language teaching materials provide the students with the samples of language used for real life communication much wider use of them was expected.

Conclusion

The results of this study have come up to some pedagogical implications in terms of how teaching methods have to be dealt with while following the mixed method in the classroom and what do teachers need to do in order to facilitate and offer better language teaching process. The pedagogical implications are outlined as follows:

- a) Teachers should exert effort to emphasize the use of the eclectic method (mixed method) rather than on depending to follow the traditional methods rigidly.

- b) Teachers do not use only one single method. Most of them concentrate on the systematic relation followed among the different language teaching activities to be practiced in their classroom and therefore they are taught.
- c) Teachers need to provide language teaching clues that could be useful for helping their students in practicing the language and using it in expressing their real life situations.
- d) Teachers use more different language activities for enhancing their students' listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW) abilities.
- e) The mixed method is a more preferable and purposive one to be arranged in a very concise text-book and to be studied as a course of language teaching and learning.
- f) Methodologists should conduct certain programs of trainings such as the "In-service Training" periodically so that teachers can share their successes and difficulties with the implementation of the Eclectic Method principles.

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