

Eclecticism and Language learning

By:-

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1.1 Introduction

Language learning is qualitatively different from other types of learning , because special qualifications and training are required for the English language teacher. Each of the well – known methods (e.g. grammar – translation , reading , audio – lingual and communicative) has its own features concerning language learning . Some of these approaches and methods are better or more effective than others . yet they all have some weaknesses and some strengths . Methods may supplement one another especially when there is no one method which can fulfil all language goals and programme objectives.

Since the early 20th century ,experts in FLT have been seeking the best method for FLT. Different methods have been introduced ,tried out and found unsatisfactory. They have realized no single method seems good enough to be universally accepted as best.

In teaching practice, many have to come to favor of eclecticism, which generally holds that although no single ELT method can meet all teaching and learning needs ,thus teachers need a set of principles to adapt their teaching procedure to the specific circumstances.

When linguists thought to improve the quality of language learning they often did so by referring to general principles and theories concerning how languages are learned and how knowledge of language is presented and organized in memory or how language itself structured.

There is a call nowadays to move towards eclecticism in language learning especially at the primary stage since it is the first stage in foreign language learning . This objective of teaching English for the 5th grade at the primary stage in Iraq devoted to develop the foreign language skills :- listening , speaking , reading and writing (Darwash : 2002 : 9)

Eclecticism has given a variety of names: effective or successful eclecticism, enlighten eclecticism, integrative eclecticism, new eclecticism,

etc. The fact that it had many names testifies to the influence and popularity of this theory. Evaluation of this study based on analyzing the principles of the eclectic method in the field of language learning / teaching, the study will investigate on how much this approach is adequate to the learners needs.

Results of such analysis would help to make decisions about the adequacy of other methods of teaching other subjects at different levels and justify suggesting new methods of different approaches of different levels . Eclectic method is used as one of the main methods in language learning inside the classroom.

1.2 The value of the study .

The value of this study can be explained in the following points:

1. The theoretical value is hoped to be existed by providing knowledge concerning new and fruitful techniques and methods in language learning and teaching.
2. Analyzing of the eclectic method to those who work in the field of FLT like trainees , teachers ,supervisors and curriculum designers, and
3. Evaluating the eclectic method may open the door to discuss the role of the methods of teaching different subjects at different levels of language learning secondary and college levels.

1.3 Limits .

The study is limited to analyze the effectiveness of the eclectic method at the primary stage.

1.4 Aims .

This study aims at:

1. Identifying the main principles and applications of the eclectic method in language learning and teaching .
2. Evaluating the applications of this method by presenting the merits and demerits .
3. investigating the effectiveness of this approach from experts of FLT point of view .

2. Procedures

The frequent shift of methodology have made teachers feel that it is better to have a combination of elements from all of the teaching methods . The eclectic method is , therefore involving procedures and techniques drawn from various methods (AL.Mutawa and AL.Kailan 1989:27) . Teachers need techniques , that work in their particular situation with specific objectives that meaningful for the kind of students they have in their classes on the other hand teachers need the stimulation of a new method or approach from time to time to encourage them in participating in various class activities .

Teachers can use other concept and procedure , deriving from other theories and methods (Crystal ,1985:104) . Thus , experienced teachers` are very sensitive to limitation of different methods , so they reject the weak points of each approach and retain only those aspects that are applicable in the particular learning situation in which they find themselves . Teachers have to work with the daily task of helping pupils to develop their language skills on one hand and learners have to listen and perform attentively and respond physically to commands given by the teacher on the other hand .

An effective way is for teachers to provide a variety of activities to meet the needs of different learning styles so that all students will have at least some activities that appeal to them .Brown (1994:74) insists that teachers should take an approach that includes most if not all of the principles he has concluded. Teachers ought to take all the principles in the respects of cognition affection and linguistics into consideration at the same time.

Teachers play an active and direct role . They are considered as directors of a stage while pupils are considered as actors . Teachers of course to be well prepared and well organized so that the lesson flow smoothly and predictably.

Eclectic method is used as one of the main methods in language learning inside the classroom.

Not all pupils respond to a dealing situation in the same way , so , teachers may try other techniques from other approaches .

Eclecticism is defined as a type of methodology that makes use of the different language learning approaches instead of sticking to one standard approach (AL Hamash 1985 : 22) .

It should be pointed out that making use of the positive aspects of different approaches helps the teacher achieve his aim with his pupils in different learning situations when presenting his material.

In Iraq , English textbook at the primary stage teach English language by depending on eclecticism in language learning. This paper will analysis in detail the reasons this method in language learning and the main principles and techniques that are used in language learning

2.1 – Theoretical Background

The origins of this method began with the work of British applied linguists in 1920s and 1930s . They developed an approach to methodology that involved systematic principles of selection (Rogers R 1986 : 33) . It included the procedures by which lexical and grammatical content was chosen.

This approach has an honorable ancestry which includes such highly glints of language of the language – learning profession as Henry Sweet (1845 – 1912) and Harold palmer (1877 – 1949) Sweet believed that a good method most before all be comprehensive and eclectic (Rivers M.1886 : 54) . It 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.

In 1921 , Palmer 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 fulfil its function and he calls this (the multiple line of approach). He thinks that varying the drills and devices which may further and make us near from our immediate purpose and bring us nearer to our ultimate goal .

Teachers may adopt every good idea and leave the door open for all further developments . They can also reject nothing except useless , and harmful forms of work . The multiple line of approach embodies the eclectic principle which gives us the opportunity to choose judiciously and without prejudice all that is likely to help teachers in their work . Thus , eclecticists try then to absorb the best techniques of all well – known language – learning methods into their classroom procedures using them for the purpose for which they are most appropriate .

Eclecticists seek the balanced development of all four skills at all stages , while retaining an emphasis on the early development of aural – oral skills .

These techniques are appropriate to the type of pupils who pass through their classes they gradually involve a method which suits their personality . To be successful , an eclectic teacher needs to be imaginative , energetic , and willing to experiment for the purpose of keeping lessons varied and interesting.

2.2 Previous studeies (China:2004)

1- Yang.Z.Zhi Study .

The study included two levels - macro and micro levels. The level(1) contained a pilot study and an extensive survey to examine the attitudes of English teachers towards foreign language teaching.(155) teachers from (20) universities in (7) provinces in China was conducted to investigate the attitudes of college English. Teachers in intensive English language program towards Eclecticism in language learning .

Eclecticism their teaching principles and techniques which are analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The level(2) used a case study approach consist of qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis . In 2005 , the author observed , taking field – notes and video typing in a college English class at a Key state university in Shanghai – China for twelve weeks. The teacher held Eclecticism in her teaching . There were (51) students registered in the class . in the early stage of the field the (51) students were surveyed with a questionnaire vthat elicited their English learning motivation .

The attitudes of the English teachers toward Eclecticism and principles of Eclecticism the (35) teachers who participate in the pilot study . (33) of them said took am eclectic approach in their English language teaching .

According to the results of the questionnaire in the extensive survey (81.3) percent of the College English Teachers held a positive attitude and perception towards eclecticism,(9.7) percent were uncertain about it, and only (9.0) percent opposed it.

The lectures , the researcher observed were reasonably well planned and efficiently executed , it is not of course necessary perfect .

The teacher managed everything with no major problems and carried out the various activities with worth and enthusiasm , The researcher spoke clearly and reasoning and verbal encouragement and complement were often

According to the interviews, all the students have made great progress in English Learning especially vocabulary, reading and listening.

2.3 The main principles of the eclectic method

Al-khuli M. Ali (1981 :7) presents that Eclectic method contains 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 that 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 material in the pupils textbook.
- 5- Using different kinds of teaching aids which leads to better understanding , and
- 6- Saving a lot of time and effort in presenting language activities.

2.4 Weakness of Eclecticism

Brown .D (1994:74) gives some of the weak points of eclecticism as follows:

- 1- Teaching English by eclecticism urged that practical eclecticism does not meet the criterion of efficiency.
- 2- Theoretical eclecticism is suspicious on logical and theoretical grounds.
- 3- The fault of eclecticism in language teaching lies in that attempts to make a kind of all-purpose language teaching out of existing methods and to persuade that eclecticism is the only right idea in foreign language teaching methodology.
- 4- Without principles eclecticism is likely to fall into a state of arbitrariness.

2.5 Conclusion:

One of the major premise of eclecticism is that teaching should serve pupils not methods . Thus , teachers should feel free in choosing techniques and procedures inside the classroom . There is no ideal approach in language learning . Each one has its merits and demerits . There is no loyalty to certain methods . Teachers should know that they have the right to choose the best methods and techniques in any method according to pupils needs and learning situation . Teachers can adopt a flexible method and technique so as to achieve their goals . they may choose whatever works best at a particular time in a particular situation.

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