

METHODS AND APPROACHES OF TEACHING ENGLISH

A method is a way of presenting the subject matter to the students or it is a tool for making the teaching effective. Different methods help the teacher in teaching different languages. They assist the teacher in teaching learning process that is why they are our assistants. They can not be called as our masters because a teacher is free to use any method or combination of methods while teaching a language, keeping in view the existing conditions. He neither depends exclusively on a single method nor these methods can help the learners in learning the language without him.

In the modern age of science and technology, teachers have become more particular about the selection of the method of teaching as they are considered accountable for the poor performance of the students. For making their teaching and learning of the students effective, they have to use an appropriate method of teaching.

An American applied linguist, Edward Anthony, proposed a three- level discrimination among approach, method and technique in 1963. According to him, an approach is a set of basic assumptions and beliefs dealing with the nature of language of teaching and learning and it also forms the basis of any method to be formulated; method is the level at which an overall plan for the orderly presentation of the language material based on the principles of the approach takes place; technique is the level at which actual implementation of a method takes place to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, which in turn must be in harmony with an approach. In a method, many techniques can be used. According to W.F. Mackey, "A method determines what and how much is taught (selection), the order in which it is taught (gradation), how the meaning and form is conveyed (presentation) and what is done to make the use of the language unconsciously (repetition)." Thus we see that a method deals with four things i.e. selection, gradation, presentation and repetition.

THE IMPORTANT METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

1. Grammar-Translation

method

2. Direct Method.

3. Bilingual Method.

GRAMMAR – TRANSLATION METHOD :-

It was the most popular method of teaching foreign language in the ancient times i.e. (1830-

1880). Now a days also it is being used by most of the school teachers for teaching English although it has become obsolete.

In Grammar – Translation method teaching of the target language (i.e. the language to be learnt also called T.L/L₂) is done by translating into their mother tongue, (i.e. native language or first language called L₁) using the rules of grammar. The main philosophy behind this method that it makes the learning of the target language easy and fast as it is based on the fundamental psychological principle i.e. proceeding from known unknown and the unit of teaching in this method is a word and not a Sentence.

(1) Advantages: The grammar – translation method has many advantages which can be described as under:

(i) Most suitable: This method is most suitable in Indian classrooms as the number of students in each section are many.

(ii) Most reliable: This method is the most reliable for giving the Students practice of reading for comprehension.

(iii) Easy: It makes the learning of the language easy as the teacher can at once make the students understand the meaning of each word, phrase or sentence in the mother tongue.

(iv) Good for testing comprehensive ability: This method is also good for testing the comprehensive ability of the students.

(v) Convenient Method: This method is also convenient for those teachers who are of average caliber and moreover no Material aid is required for teaching English by this method.

(vi) Good for ensuring accuracy of language: This method is good for ensuring accuracy of the target language as each word is translated into the mother tongue. Moreover both the teacher as well as the students make the teaching-learning process easy as teacher has to put less labour and students already know their mother tongue. Besides this, the comparison of the structural patterns of the two languages makes the understanding easy.

(vii) Psychological method: It is a psychological method of teaching the language as the fundamental principle of proceeding from known to unknown is followed throughout.

(viii) Economical: This method is more economical as there is no need of using the teaching aids for making the learning effective.

(ii) Disadvantages: The major disadvantages of the grammar- translation method are:

1. Neglection of spoken English: Spoken aspect of English is neglected which is very important in the learning of a language.

2. Problem of exceptions and explanations: The problem of grammatical rules i.e. exceptions and explanations is often seen in English e.g. in the use of 'will', 'shall', change of number etc. This method

lays more emphasis on grammatical rules, the use of which is not so important in learning the language.

3. Prepositions cannot be translated word to word.

4. Not natural: This method is not natural one as the reading comes first and speaking afterwards. But the natural sequence of learning the skills is listening, speaking, reading and writing.

5. Time-consuming: This method is more time-consuming as each and every word, phrase or sentence has to be translated in the mother tongue and also the unit of teaching the language is a word and not a sentence.

6. Not helpful in using the language: This method helps the students in learning the language but not in using the language in their own way. Moreover, exact translation of any language is not possible as the words convey their meaning in the context and situation in which they are used.

7. Ignores fluency: This method does not help in acquiring fluency in English due to the influence and interest of the students in their mother tongue. The child thinks in mother tongue and then translates into English and thus ends up confusing himself and the language.

8. Not helpful in learning pronunciation: This method does not help in learning the correct pronunciation of the words because the students become habitual of speaking the English words just like that in their native language.

9. Undue emphasis on rules then use. Dr. Ballard says, "To speak any language, whether native or foreign, entirely by rule, is quite impossible."

10. Sentence based : The exercises of translation are sentence based and not text or discourse based.

11. Not good for teaching idioms: This method is not good for teaching idioms because idioms convey a different meaning of words than of which they are made.

12. **Uninteresting:** This method is uninteresting as the students remain passive listeners during teaching. Boredom and mechanical set up does not leave any scope for activity.

13. **Translation with its accessories, swallow up so much time that there is none left for speaking English.**

(III) Techniques used in Grammar – Translation Method

(i) Generally, students are asked to translate a reading passage of the target language into their mother tongue.

(ii) Comprehension questions are asked to test the student's understanding ability

(iii) Key words are given and students are asked to write synonyms and antonyms.

(iv) Some words are given and students are asked to make sentences of their own.

(v) Precise or a composition can be given for writing on the basis of the passage read.

(vi) Fill in blank exercises based on grammar rules can be given.

DIRECT METHOD

In direct method of teaching a language, teaching of the target language is done using the same language and not the mother tongue or any other native language. This method does not permit the use of translation. It is also referred to as 'Reform method' or 'Phonetic method' by the reformers. In this method, the target language is presented before the students just like their mother tongue through actions, demonstration, use of pictures etc. and a natural environment for learning is created in the classroom that is why it is also called as natural-method of teaching.

According to Webster's New International Dictionary, "Direct method is a method of teaching a foreign language especially a modern language through conversation, discussion and reading, in the language itself without the use of pupil's language, without translation and without the study of formal grammar. The words are first taught by pointing at unit of teaching object or picture or by performing actions."

(I) Fundamental Principles of the Method: The following fundamental principles and procedures are used in this method:

- (i) **Teach grammar inductively:** Grammar is to be taught inductively by the teacher i.e. examples are given first and then laws or rules are induced.

- (ii) **Emphasis on correct pronunciation:** In this method, the Emphasis is laid on learning the correct pronunciation.
- (iii) Stress on oral teaching precedes any form of reading And writing.
- (iv) **Use of only one language:** Only one language is used in this method. All instructions are given in the target language. Concrete words are taught through the demonstration of objects and pictures and abstract words are taught through association of ideas.
- (v) **Listening and speaking practice:** Both listening and speaking practice of sentences is given to the learners based on their own vocabulary. This is done in a carefully designed question and answer exchanges taking place between teachers and students in small groups.

(II) **Advantages:** The main advantages of this method are:

- **Better pronunciation:** This method helps in learning better Pronunciation as the emphasis is laid on listening and speaking Practice and correct articulation.
- **Psychological:** This method is based on the psychological principle of proceeding from general to particular, from Concrete to abstract and practice to theory.
- **Less time-consuming:** This method is less time-consuming As it helps the teachers and the students to finish more syllabus in less time.
- **Helps in using the language:** This method helps in learning as well as using the language as emphasis is laid on functional grammar which deals with the use of the language.
- **Improves fluency:** This method helps in improving the fluency of the language as the students listen and speak the same language and use of mother tongue is not allowed. According to H. Champion, "To teach directly is to establish a direct or immediate association between experience and expression, between the English word, phrase and its meaning."
- **Helps written English:** Generally who speak well can write well. The Expression always facilitates.
- **Good for teaching idioms:** This method is good for teaching Idioms of English.
- **Interesting:** This method is more interesting as different types of audio-visual aids are used by the teacher to make his topic interesting.
- **Discourse based:** This method is discourse based which is done Between students and the teachers in small groups. It not Mix English easy but develops love for it also.

• **No problem of rigid rules of grammar:** In this method there is no problem of following rigid rules of grammar a emphasis is laid on functional grammar which concentrates more on the use of the language rather than the rules of the language.

• **Oral practice:** Emphasis is laid on oral practice which is essential in learning the language. Kittson has rightly pointed out, "Learning to speak a language is always by far the shortest road to learning and to write it."

• **Sentence and note the word is the unit of speech.**

• **Progressive teaching of new vocabulary:** The stress is on quality and not quantity.

• **Alertness:** It is activity based so it is living knowledge and Not dead one.

(III) **Disadvantages:** The direct method has many disadvantages which are given below:

• **Not suitable:** This method is not suitable in Indian class Rooms as the number of students in each section is very large.

• **Not reliable:** This method is not reliable for giving the students practice of reading for comprehension as reading and writing do not get due attention.

• **Difficult:** It is a difficult method for teaching English as the mother tongue is not used.

• **Not good for ensuring accuracy of the language:** This method is not good for ensuring accuracy of the language. Accuracy comes to the children only if the meaning is clear which is possible if told in their mother tongue. But mother tongue is completely prohibited.

• **Not economical:** This is not an economical method as the teacher has to use some objects, expensive audio-visual aids for teaching thus lot of time and effort go waste. Audio-visual aids for truth, honesty etc. is not possible.

• **Not good for average students:** This method is not good for average and below average students as the students find difficulty in understanding the language.

• **Not good for teaching abstract words:** This method is not Good for teaching abstract words as the use of mother tongue is not allowed at all.

- **Over emphasis on listening and speaking practice:** This method lays more emphasis on oral practice.

Reading and writing aspects of the language are paid less attention which is equally important for learning a language.

- **Need of competent teachers:** It is a kind of round peg in a square hole. Competent teachers are required for teaching this method. But there is a shortage of such teachers as most of the teachers also lack correct pronunciation so they can not have command over language.

- **Not good at early stages of learning:** This method is not good for teaching at the early stages of learning the language because at that time the students do not know even the ABC of the target language. The habit of thinking in English comes after a lot of practice.

(II) Techniques used in the Direct Method :-

- Learners are motivated to think and communicate in English.
- Learners are to ask questions and give answers only in English.
- More emphasis is laid on vocabulary rather than grammar.
- Oral practice is a must and pronunciation is seriously taken care of.
- Testing is done by asking questions. For this purpose, interviews may be conducted. Students are also asked to write the answers.
- Exercises for practice are also given without explaining the Rules of grammar to the students.
- The teacher reads passages and uses pictures, gestures, actions or other means to make them understand. Then Students are asked to write down what they have listened, Mother tongue is not used in making the students to understand the passage.
- There is no need to explain the rules of grammar. Emphasis is given on the use of the language.

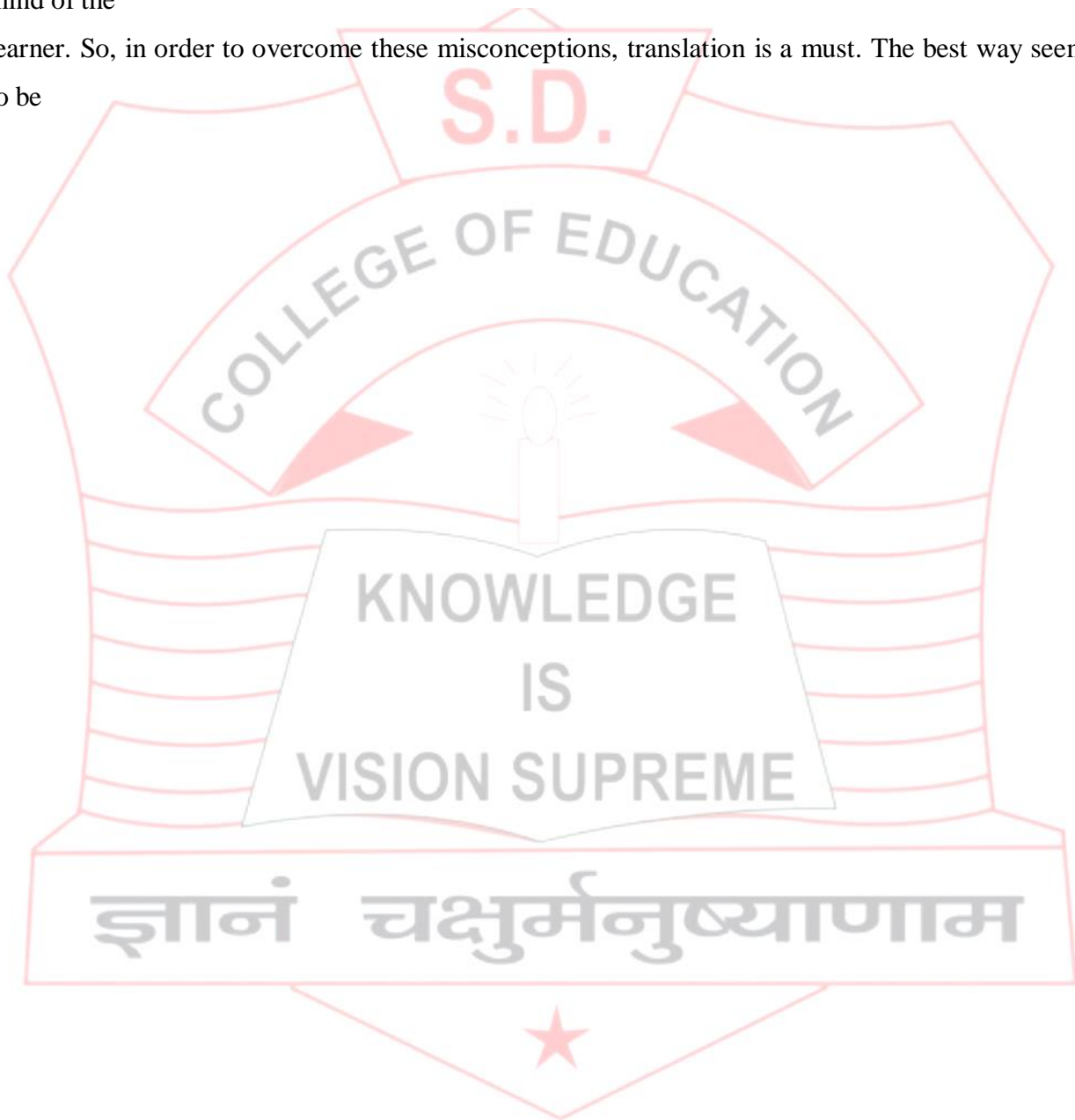
BI-LINGUAL METHOD

Bilingual word is made of two words, first is “Bi” which means two and second is “lingual” that means language. Bilingual method is method in which two languages are used i.e. the mother tongue and the target language. In this method mother tongue is used to teach the target language if the situation demands.

We have discussed earlier, the old grammar – translation method suffers from number of drawbacks and difficulties like accuracy in translating words, phrases, idioms and expressions, and other problems

related with associations between thought and expression. Even in direct method, one can say, there is no surety that explanations given in English alone produce accurate perceptions in the mind of the

learner. So, in order to overcome these misconceptions, translation is a must. The best way seems to be



that where translation assists in removing the problem and saves time, it should be done; otherwise, it should be avoided.

To overcome the problems of accuracy and fluency and to expediate the inter-communication between the teacher and the student, C.J. Dodson advocates the method that must be within the capacity of a teacher I Bilingual method.

C.J. Dodson of the University of Wales wrote a pamphlet 'The Bilingual Method' (1962) in which he says that "The amount of time required to learn a language 'naturally' is, of necessity, large, and the present school curriculum does not allow the time requirement for such a learning process". He further adds that in the direct method a teacher employs a technique that wastes a lot of time. So, Dodson emphasizes the need of a completely new attitude of mind in our approach to language teaching and learning. He cites a quote from an earlier pamphlet published by the faculty of education, University College of Wales, that says different attitude is necessary towards the place and function of the mother tongue in the process of learning a second language.' Dodson postulates the following rules regarding the use of mother tongue:

- Mother tongue is used only by the teacher for the words and sentences that are being learnt and for classroom instructions.
- In the early stages, mother tongue is used more liberally by the teacher in asking questions and in giving explanations. But, in the later stages, the use of the mother tongue is reduced gradually and the teacher and the learner use only target Language.

D) **Advantages**

- **Ensures accuracy:** Meanings of the words, phrases and Expressions are conveyed in the mother tongue otherwise the teacher has to use a number of devices, for making the meanings of words clear to the students like pictures, charts, gestures, actions etc. This helps the students in understanding the meaning of words easily.
- **Ensures fluency:** This method also ensures fluency in speaking English as the mother tongue is used only by the teacher and the students have to think and express themselves in the target language itself. The association between thought and expression increases fluency in speaking.
- **Economical:** This is an economical method as no expensive teaching aids are needed for teaching English by this method. In case of any difficulty, mother tongue is used by the

teacher.

- **Easy for the teachers:** The use of this method is easy for the teachers as they need not do any extra labour for making their teaching effective. They just make use of the already learnt language.
- **Good for average students:** This method is good for average and below average students as the students already know their mother tongue and in this method only situations are created by the teacher.
- **Good for teaching abstract words and idioms:** Idioms of English and abstract words can be taught easily by this method as meanings are conveyed in the mother tongue and sufficient pattern practice is given.
- **Suitable:** This method is most suitable in Indian classrooms Where strength of the class is large.
- **Less time-consuming:** This method is less time-consuming as the meanings of the words and sentences are conveyed in mother tongue and there is no need to waste time in using aids and performing actions.
- **Good at early stages of learning:** This method is also good for teaching English at the early stages as the teacher can use the mother tongue liberally in asking questions and in giving classroom instructions and the students do not find any difficulty in understanding.

(II) Disadvantages: This method has the following disadvantages:

- **Not good for minorities:** In a class where students come from Different language communities, the teacher cannot use the dominant language as their first language. If he does so, the minorities in the class will be at a disadvantage.
- **Competent teachers:** Competent teachers having the sufficient knowledge of both the languages are required.
- **Inculcates bad habits:** This method inculcates the bad habit of learning every new thing of target language by thinking first in the mother tongue.
- **Conscious use of mother tongue:** The teacher should be conscious in making the use of mother tongue and he should not allow the students to use the mother tongue in any case otherwise it leads to confusion on the part of the students.

(III) Which Method is the Best:

Many language teachers, even the most competent and dedicated ones, know that no single method has all the answers to all the problems in all possible situations because each method has something interesting to offer. So, it is suggested that the teacher should adopt eclectic and pragmatic approach.

Having discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods of teaching English, we conclude that the selection of the method depends upon a number of factors which are given below:

- The learner – his age, capacity, level of learning, mother tongue etc.
- The teacher – his efficiency, insight, education etc.
- Class in which the study of English is introduced
- Availability of teaching aids.
- Strength of the class.
- Location of the institution.
- Social background of the learner.

That is why one method works successfully in one situation and the same may face an utter failure in some other situation. What is new is not essentially better or what is followed abroad is not necessarily more effective than what is locally experimented and evolved. All the different methods and approaches have put the teachers in a buyer's market and they are free to select any method from a wide variety of ideas available in the market of language teaching depending upon the local conditions. It would be better if the teachers should be empowered and motivated to use local resources and to look for alternatives- alternative ideas, alternative methods and approaches. Because India is a multi-lingual country that is why methods and approaches used in the foreign country can not be blindly followed. The need of the hour is to evolve our own effective methods for handling the problems of English language teaching.