An Exploratory Study on Eclectic Method in Higher Education Through ICT Tools in India

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ABSTRACT

As we have done away with the chalk-and-talk method and shifted to virtual classes though by force not by choice, we need to think of new ways of engaging students in the changed mode of instruction. As such this paper focuses on exploring eclectic methods or eclecticism through a conceptual approach backed up by previous research as one of the best approaches in education. A few combined methods which were found helpful such as lecture cum discussions, demonstrations and question & answer sessions, sharing information & debates, peer instructions & flip teaching, learning by doing & task-based activities, LSRW activities & follow-up assignments, are being dealt with in detail here. It is a multidisciplinary approach that caters to various instructional methods and each of the clubbed methods mentioned can be implemented separately as well.

Keywords: Eclectic, flip teaching, learning by doing, LSRW, Information and Communication Tool

Introduction

• The paradigm shift in teaching brought in by the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be a blessing in disguise. To incorporate and introduce virtual classrooms in all educational institutions across India would have taken at least half a century to implement. When used effectively, ICT tools can greatly help the best learning outcome. Needless to say, the possibilities of virtual classrooms in helping students attend classes anywhere, anytime and take examinations stress-free. Having said that, this paper advocates the use of the eclectic method of teaching. 'Eclectic approach is a method that combines various approaches, and methodologies to teach depending on the aims of the lesson and the abilities of the learners'. Earlier research on eclectic methods was not very uncommon. However, in the present context, its relevance has to be emphasized. In this connection, some of the methods which seemed to have good educational outcomes like lecture discussion Method through Peer Instructions & Flip Teaching to Learning by Doing & Task Based Activities were analyzed in detail. It would show the need for this particular approach in achieving better learning outcomes.

Exploring Eclecticism in Higher Education in India

Bertrand Russell, a renowned British philosopher, logician and social critic said, "More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching and the spirit in which the teaching is given". Also at present, Education all over the world has undergone unprecedented changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers by now must have been accustomed to new demands, and changes in pedagogy as we are entering into the third year of virtual classes. Initial resistance, restraint and negative feedback of online classes

is a natural outcome to any novel mode of teaching or in other words, revolutionary changes to conventional teaching. The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education across all levels of educational institutions in India would only benefit in giving better classes needless to mention the other advantages of time, space and quick share of resources. Therefore, it is not an overstatement to state that online or e-learning is a blessing in disguise.

The question that arises next is what methods of innovative teaching will be the need of the hour. What would be the best pedagogical practices that would have a positive impact and influence? This is precisely the prime area of study the present article tries to answer by advocating the Eclectic method of teaching in general and English language teaching in particular. Eclecticism is common in many fields of study such as psychology, martial arts, philosophy, teaching, religion and drama (Alizadeh, Farideh; Hashim, Mohd Nasir, 2016). Eclectic teaching is a new method that has its origin in post 20th century as a reaction against a single approach. One of its proponents, Kumar(2013) defined, the eclectic method as a combination of different methods of teaching and learning approaches. More precisely, according to Lazarus &Beutler (1993), Eclecticism is a strategy of teaching that would create a suitable environment for achieving the learning objectives by fusion of different methodologies and approaches according to the student's needs and as far as the tutors are concerned, it provides liberty to choose from different teaching methodologies in a given circumstance (Sultan H. Alharbi,2017).

Methodology

A thorough investigation was carried out on the best-combined teaching methods in English language teaching through several research papers and published reports. Further secondary sources related to information and technology were thoroughly examined and analyzed to have a clear understanding of the respective areas.

Lecture cum Discussion Method

As mentioned earlier, an eclectic method is a process of combining two right methods, techniques (styles) or even approaches for the best pedagogical practices. The success of an eclectic method lies in the successful and right combination of two methods. Due to this, the Lecture cum Discussion Method is being suggested here. When it comes to education, a teacher's lecture is very vital. In the traditional way of teaching, the teacher was given an important role but there was little or no room for students' interactions. Therefore, a lecture when followed by discussion will give a chance for students to put forth their understanding of the lesson besides grasping the lesson well. On top of that, it would serve as feedback for both the teacher and the learners . According to a study by Eggen & Kauchak, 2007; and Rosenshine, 1987, discussions especially group discussions help students to understand the organized body of knowledge, i.e. the topics relating to the facts, concepts, principles, and procedures, and make the relationship between them explicit and clear & the result of the findings was that discussion especially group discussion was more effective than a mere lecture. This said, in any kind of pedagogy, discussions can be introduced. The lecture must be followed by sound discussions of the content. To break away from the monotony of the lecture, this can be used alongside the teacher's lecture. The result is that the learners are drawn towards the subject and participate actively in the discussion. Additionally, a quiz can also be conducted and discussion and/or group

discussion alone can be implemented in class often.

Lecture & Question & Answer Session

As mentioned earlier, a lecture is indispensable, perhaps it has stood the test of time. When it comes to question-and-answer sessions, questioning is not something new in the teaching and learning process. Questions have long been used as a teaching tool by teachers and preceptors to assess students' knowledge, promote comprehension, and stimulate critical thinking. But, it's unfortunate that in the Indian education system, asking questions rather than students asking questions related to the subject are largely marginalized. In a classroom, a lecture followed by questions and answer sessions can make students involved and participate actively in the teaching-learning process. We must remember to facilitate a great Q&A Session.

Furthermore, we should motivate students to put forth sound and valid questions on the content given. It is needless to validate this technique. Nonetheless, a few research findings are given here. Very recent research on the effectiveness of Q & A sessions showed that questioning strategies modelled on Bloom's taxonomy up to Level 3, (C1, Analysis) improved both reading comprehension and critical thinking drastically(Untailawan, Franklin, 2020). Yet another research conducted by Questioning Strategies in English Literature Lectures at an Indonesian University indicated that the art of questioning helps the tutors to lead sound discussions and check students' comprehension. It gives more space to students' participation and to share thoughts and disseminate ideas to conclude the findings (Rido, Akhyar&Kuswoyo, Heri&Nuansa, Sandi, 2020). As said by Tofade, Toyin et al(2013) pointed out that Well-crafted questions lead to new insights, generate

discussion, and promote the comprehensive exploration of subject matter. In this light, it is praiseworthy to mention that elements of Bloom's taxonomy are of great value to ask in class and examination.

Sharing Information & Debates

The next method is Sharing Information and Debates which springs as a logical continuation from the two above-discussed methods. As the name suggests, along with sharing information, teachers can get students involved in healthy debates. A Debate as a learning strategy would be of great help in education. A Research Study conducted on Debate As A Teaching Strategy for Language Learning by Letizia CinganottoIndire in 2019 for a class of students in Italy found that debates in English Language Teaching (ELT) help foster both language skills and soft skills. A decade earlier in 2011, a report published jointly by the English Speaking Union (ESU) along with "CfBT Education Trust '' (Akerman, Neale 2011), discovered that debates in Education help attain academic attainment, obtain critical thinking and communication skills.

Flipped Classroom & Peer Instructions

A flipped classroom developed by Schell, J and Mazur, E (2015) is the process of shifting classes to recorded video lectures and assignments(homework) being done during class as well as doubts, concept clarification and related queries are explained by the teacher. If needed, reteaching of concepts is given before moving to the next lesson. In Flipped Teaching also known as reverse teaching or the inverted classroom, the age-old classroom practice is reversed where homework is done in class the in contrast, in the online mode or other words, in their own space and time, students being at home study the

instructional content.The MEF, a University in Istanbul, Turkey, claims to be the first university in the world that has adopted the "flipped classroom" educational model university-wide (FLGI 2018; ªahin and Fell-Kurban 2016.Interactive methods based on collaborative work have proven effective in areas such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Dumont,2014). This method is used in other educational approaches that include flipped learning and cooperative Learning, Flipped Adaptive Learning, Flipped Learning & Inclusive Learning etc.

In addition to flip teaching, peer instructions can also be clubbed. In Peer Instruction developed by Eric Mazur, a Professor at Harvard University, direct lectures or instructions take place outside the physical class. In this particular mode of instruction, the students go through the content as a pre-reading activity and in the class along with their peers answer the questions posed by the teacher mostly a carefully designed "concept" question, related to known areas of common confusion or misunderstanding. Peer Instruction as the name suggests, has peer-to-peer interactions at its heart where students work together to make sense of questions provided in the form of a quiz and articulate a response to demonstrate their understanding linked to a particular concept. This practice increases students' conceptual understanding and traditional quantitative problem-solving in the math and science disciplines (Crouch & Mazur, 2012). With online classes now a reality in India, this way of teaching can make online classes interesting across all domains and modes of education.

Interactive and Collaborative Learning An Overview

Interactive and Collaborative Learning is not an approach in a strict sense but an important strategy in many approaches of teaching. Students in collaborative learning, participate in small-group activities where they share knowledge and expertise. The tutor usually acts as a facilitator in these student-driven activities (Kirschner, 2001). Further, it encourages the learners to participate actively in the learning process. Collaborative learning and interaction between peers and active interaction with the tutor will yield better results for the teaching goals. The effectiveness of collaborative learning in higher education undergraduate life sciences proved such benefits as student autonomy and self-regulatory behavior among others (Scager, Karin et al, 2016). The crux of this learning function is to give students very just and challenging tasks and assignments in groups as well as there must be full room for sound interaction between peers and tutor. In addition, it fostered students' responsibilities and shared ownership of both the interesting process & products (end) of their collaborative work. It concluded that challenging and relevant tasks are to be designed where the learners showed immense interest towards the outcome of group tasks irrespective of their grades. The latest study titled 'Exploring the Role of social media in collaborative learning the new domain of Learning' examined that online social media used for collaborative learning had a significant impact on interactivity with peers, teachers and online knowledge-sharing behavior and subsequently led to better students' academic performance. It found that the use of online social media for collaborative learning facilitates students to be more creative, dynamic and research-oriented (Ansari, J.A.N., Khan,2020). Interactive and collaborative learning has a wide scope and use across all domains of education. It is a student-driven activity and has been used as an effective strategy. As we witness a new era of pedagogical practices, collaborative and interactive learning cannot be discarded whether it be online or offline or blended mode.

Learning by Doing and Task-Based Teaching

Learning by Doing and Task Based activities are interrelated and it's specific to Second-Language Acquisition(SLA), sometimes Second-Language Learning. To put it simply, in Task-Based Language Teaching, learners learn by doing the students perform communication-related tasks like attending a telephone call, having conversation based on real-life situations, conducting an interview etc the objective is aimed at communication in L2 (Language 2). Therefore, this domain in English Language Teaching (ELT) was classified as a branch of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which was developed by N.S.Prabhu in his Bangalore project. It is under the Task task-based approach, that learners or students learn the instructional material by doing it practically. Hands-on -training is a hallmark in task-based classes. Here, the meaning of what comprises the task has to be emphasized. Skehan in 1996 defined Tasks in TBLT as "Primarily focusing on meaning and resembling real-life situations. Since tasks are goal-directed activities, participants decide which language forms to use to achieve the goal. On the other hand, Prabhu, N. S. (1987), pioneer of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)thought that such tasks helped his students take part in language learning more effectively than learning about the language. (Oxford, Rebecca. (2006). Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning: An Overview). What else can be the outcome of good classes when students learn by practising or doing what they are learning? As with other methods mentioned in this paper, this would make classes interactive, engaging, interesting and above all, it will help the students master the content. To cite a few examples of this method's application, for language mastery, several communication-related activities such as Just a Minute, Block & Tackle, Snap Talk, and Language games if given, student communication will develop. In a cooking class or driving class, the learners will cook dishes and know how to drive a car rather than learning about theories. For yet another instance, in the science stream, practical knowledge has to be inculcated in students rather than spending hours and hours in giving lecture presentations.

LSRW(Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) Activities & Follow up Assignments

It is a known fact that the English language is spoken by almost 1/3rd of the world's population consequently English language Teaching has gained immense popularity therefore innovative and effective ways of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) & English as a Foreign Language(EFL) becomes quite a prerequisite. The eclectic method though applied to teaching, in general, it's distinct to the ELT domain. It's in this connection, that many exponents of this method voiced for using any methods, techniques, or approaches depending upon learners, lesson, or aim but not necessarily one method. The methods in ELT have their origin in the Grammar-translation Method derived from the classical method of teaching Latin & Greek starting from 1800 where the sentences or texts are translated from the Source Language(SL) to the Target Language(TL) & vice versa. Roughly after a century, in ELT, the Direct Method and from it, the Audiolingual method(Aural Oral) or Structural Approach was brought into effect, focusing on the natural way of language teaching by the use of monolingual way of Teaching (use of only L2 in class).In the Audio-lingual method, the acquisition of sentences & patterns in daily conversation of L2 as well as vocabulary, tone, pronunciation and intonation are of paramount

significance (Parupalli Srinivas Rao,2018) . While GTM ignores speech, the Direct Method ignores writing. Similarly, the Structural approach ignores the communication and functional aspects whereas CLT ignores accuracy & grammar (N. Krishnaswamy, Methods of Teaching English, P 50). This is one of the main reasons for the paradigm shift to the Eclectic Method thus in Foreign Language Teaching more than one method gained value. For instance, in ELT, both the audio-lingual method and communicative method are merged to give an effective language learning process and product rather than teaching with one method. To give another example, LSRW(either one) activities followed by Assignments will yield higher-order Language mastery since all four skills are fundamental. In considering the Eclectic approach to four language skills, Erica Maria Muramoto, Angela MarliKarsten, Luzinete de Lima Nagatani, and Yukiko Nakajima(2018) research shared that the alternative forms of teaching (Eclectic Pedagogy) might meet the different needs of the students and motivates them in their learning LSRW skills in an L2(second/foreign language) which eventually leads to communicative competence.

Within the Indian context, a study investigated by N. Sagar, and Thahiya Afzal (2019) proved that the eclectic method improved students' language skills and communication skills. These researchers established that an educator's role is immensely crucial resulting in a rich set of language activities making class interesting and engaging. In the end, the teacher takes up different roles like facilitator, and motivator by being active & enthusiastic.

Moreover, teaching English has become easier with the help of technology. As far as SLA is concerned, technology has always been a rich resource even before online classes. At present, when virtual classes related words are added to our everyday vocabulary, educators can make use of Online videos, recorded lectures, YouTube videos, and podcasts in particular to inculcate LSRW skills. It must be noted that any activities must have follow-up activities and assignments for better comprehension of the lesson.

Make Teaching more interesting via the Eclectic Method

As stated at the outset, the crux of good teaching lies in the way one teaches a subject. Education in the 21st century is a paradigm shift from the traditional ways of teaching whether it be a learner-centred approach, availability of e-learning resources and facilities and the like. The COVID-19 pandemic has only strengthened its needs. In a context like this, it becomes of paramount importance to teach or rather engage students in friendly, enthusiastic yet effective ways. The teachers had to adapt to several ways to teach today's Z-Generation students. To make all the above things possible, teachers can make use of eclectic methods in education in general.

Teachers can employ several techniques, strategies, methods, and approaches which suit the learners and the lessons. Some of the old ways of teaching strategies of offline techniques and blended teaching can be thought of. A most recent survey from Gujarat argued for the continuation of online in the post-pandemic era. To conclude, the use of ICT in education for teaching and evaluation practices, and new ways to teach instructional content are to be implemented and incorporated in our present approaches in education and there can be no right time than now.

Conclusions

The eclectic method advocated here is carefully crafted after the findings of the earlier research studies. All the above sources serve as proof of this method's validity and consistency. As we look forward to physical classes, blended learning, and integrated, inclusive learning will gain momentum. Within this scenario, the Eclectic method and the uses of ICT will offer needed solutions. For the want of time and space, the use of ICT in testing & evaluation and several other methods have been omitted. The Eclectic method in the Indian context has a wide scope and several action research outcomes are unexplored. In conclusion, the spirit and eclectic method of pedagogy, this paper recommends lies with the teacher and the way he/she chose to go about teaching. If not for the tutor, these methods will not be fruitful. The teacher may now look like a facilitator, and guide but an important assent in education.

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