The Eclectic Approach with ICT to EFL Learners

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Abstract

This paper aims the analysis of using Eclectic Approach with the collaboration of ICT to EFL learners in every university, especially in all universities of computer studies. It is the latest innovative approach on teaching and learning English in Education System around the world as a new paradigm due to the demands of new age and new generation. The Eclectic Approach itself is a conceptual approach by extracting and applying the intrinsic worth of various approaches and methodologies in order to get the profound awareness of the language. Thanks to the use of Eclectic Approach integrated with technology it has been expected not only to comprehend the target lessons but also to arouse the motivation and intention of the learners. It also encourages the performances and abilities of the learners to achieve the expected outcomes or skills on the current assessment system. The course of the paper is composed with the integration of the views of the researchers and just over sixteen-year experiences of the author as a language teacher in several Universities of Computer Studies (UCSs). In this paper it is widely expressed the impacts of Eclectic Approach for the learners and the teachers, the challenges of applying this approach in the classroom and the encouragement to the language teachers to use alternative approaches instead of using traditional methods. In this paper the term students and learners are interchangeably used.

Keywords: collaboration, acquisition, paradigm, technology, methodology, intrinsic worth

1. Introduction

In Myanmar English has been taught as a foreign language. The term EFL means English as a foreign language and EFL Learners are the English language learners. Since the role of English language is prominent and essential, it has been taught and learnt not only a foreign language but also a compulsory subject from kindergarten to the tertiary level for a long time at all schools, colleges, institutions and universities. Nowadays the essence of English has become more and more remarkable and protruding in every sector with the changes in economy, politics, education standard and technology together with the development of international relationship.

Today English has been on the preparing stage to transform from a foreign language to second language acquisition and it has currently been taught as a foreign language and a compulsory subject in all universities in Myanmar. As a result the students from all universities of computer studies have to learn English although they have specialized in the computer studies.

Despite the fact that all the learners have recognized, English is an international language, a reflection of professional life, a window to look through the world, a key to all knowledge, and an essence skill for their career choices, the results of teaching and learning process haven't reached to the satisfactory level. The possible reason for this problem is the combination of the unconscious or conscious attitudes to English as minor subject, and consequently lack of active motivation and effective teaching-learning environment at all.

On the other hand, in this age of complexity and diversity a single curriculum or a single teaching methodology is inadequate to be active teaching-learning environment, and there have been the demands of integrating several approaches and methodologies with the aids of available institutional technology, to achieve the expected learning outcomes with the least pressure or without pressure. Since Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has been a well-known concept or theory in academic area around the world in this century, all teachers should not emphasize on how well the skills in techniques but on the ways the students achieve the expected learning outcomes.

There are various and obvious approaches and methodologies in the English language teaching area. Some have been very popular until the recent decades and some have been using today.

Grammar-Translation Method
The Direct Method
The Audio-Lingual Method
Suggestopedia
The Silent Way
The Community Language Learning
The Total Physical Response Method
Structural-Situational Approach
The Communicative Approach
Exam-Oriented Approach
The Eclectic Approach

Every approach or methodology has its own merits and demerits. The followings are the explanations of the above methods in brief.

Grammar Translation Method, the so-called classical method, is known as teacher-centered method which has been very popular in the late nineteen and early twentieth centuries, and it has still been applied in today classrooms. Although the searchers point out that the learners are always passive only focusing on the explanation of grammar rules and instructions by the teacher from native language to target language during the lecture. It depends on the skills, the knowledge and the experience of the teacher and the principle of this method emphasizes the accuracy and grammatical analysis but lacks of interaction and communication skills.

Direct Method aims the learners to communicate properly with good pronunciation, accuracy and fluency of the target language without using mother tongue. The teaching-learning process may be full of challenges if the learners are lack of the basic skills to participate the activities and energetic enthusiasm. It demands mutual understanding between the teacher and the students and it is the most suitable for adult learners.

Audio-Lingual Method is similar to the Direct Method communicate to properly comprehend and actively participate in the lessons and activities without using mother tongue. However, the weakness is that there may be a little confusion and difficulty to reach comprehensive level. As a result, it cannot be applied for all levels of the learners.

Suggestopedia is such a popular and expensive method in foreign language acquisitions. The main element of this method is music and rich sensory learning environments. Since the creation of the classroom with dim light, soft music and decorated walls with scenes of the target country is a bit difficult and expensive. Although music makes learning be easy and pleasant and learners become activated, it is afforded. Therefore, it cannot be applied for all levels of the learners and classroom environments.

Silent Way can be applied by the teacher who acts as the mentor and manager in the classroom. However, he or she has a wider range of responsibilities: to have well-prepared the target lessons; to give the clear instructions to the learners; to handle the class silently during the activities. In this style of teaching, the form of peer to peer and friend to friend balancing is reinforced and the final step is to support the learners who are unable to self-correct or peer-correct. In this method the learners need to cultivate self-attempt and have the opportunities to practice cognitive skills. As a result, it is not suitable for the beginners.

Community Language Learning (CLL) is a general counseling-learning approach and the role of the lecturer is just monitor or counselor. Subsequently, this method demands the use of target language with self-expression, self-learning, cognitive ability and substantial attempt of the learners. One of the most important points is that it is neither student-centered nor teacher-centered method, and it may be described as teacher-student centered method.

Communicative Approach has been effectively used as a teaching tool to train the learners to be competent communicators. The learners can learn through activities with the use of authentic materials. The students can learn unconsciously and participate emotionally in the activities or competitions. Despite of its popularity and usefulness, the weakness of this method is time consuming when doing activities individually and it only prefers to small group or small numbers of group.

Total Physical Response in which the teacher is director and the learners are imitators. The objective of applying this method is to make learners enjoy while sharing the knowledge and experience in their learning using the target language. The native language of the students is used during the instructions but the target language is adopted while doing the activities and then the meaning is made clear through body movement.

The Structural-Situational Approach is an approach without using the native language of the learners but using the target language directly to give the instructions and explanations. The teaching and learning processes have been accomplished with vocabulary and structural activities based on the situations and the needs of the learners.

Exam-Oriented Approach is useful to tackle questions and vocabulary problems in any examination so that it is the most favorite approach among the learners who try to get good marks in the examination. However, the merit is the lack of knowledge and skills to cope with the target language in proficiency.

The Eclectic Approach is not a standalone approach but a combination of various and obvious approaches and methodologies in teaching and learning language acquisition depending on the needs of the learners, the purposes of the target lessons, the skills and experiences of the teacher, the well-preparation of the teacher for the lessons, the choice of the teacher on the teaching techniques, the abilities and levels of the students and the current available facilities and technologies to achieve the intended goals with active motivation and enthusiasm but with least stressor without stress.

1.1 Objectives

Since this paper focuses on Eclectic Approach along with the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), its objectives can be described as follow.

- To share the knowledge and paradigm of methodologies and approaches
- To remind the nature and usefulness of Eclectic Approach
- To present the prominent role of ICT in teaching and learning situation
- To discuss the impacts of Eclectic Approach integrating with ICT
- To encourage the use of the alternative approaches instead of using traditional methods
- To encourage the language teachers to in touch with ICT
- To emphasize Outcome-Based Learning
- To increase the approval rate

2. The Eclectic Approach With ICT In EFL Classroom

According to the definition of many researchers around the world, the Eclectic Approach is not an individual approach but a collection of various methods or the combination of two or more approaches based on the skills,

experiences and knowledge of the teacher, the, the level of the students, the size of the class, the aims of the lessons and the time allowance. It is neither teacher-centered nor learner-centered method but both may be possible in some ways.

In this approach the role and responsibility of the teacher is crucial because of the founder or director in the planning stage, then the leader, the participant, the counselor, the advisor, the supporter, the mentor or the manager during the lessons and the corrector or decision maker at the end of the lessons. What the most important thing is to achieve the expected outcomes of the students.

On the other hand, ICT means Information and Communication Technology, and it is also a significant tool in this age of complexity and diversity. It has become an essence for various purposes such as to communicate, to feel relax, to make money, to share and exchange knowledge, to deliver experiences, to share the tasks, to look for the job, to create imagination, to advertise the product, to disseminate idea and knowledge, and to store and manage the information.

As a result, it has become major contribution in the success of teaching and learning acquisitions.

The areas of ICT refer to a wide range of technology as the use of hardware, software and network along with any electronic devices for the information management.

Consequently, the integration of institutional technology and the right choice of teaching methods has become an innovative approach to increase the scope of teaching and learning as a new genre. In spite of the diversity of the technology, the followings are the useful organizational or institutional technologies.

- Audio-Aids
- Audio-Visual Aids
- Computer Aided Teaching and Learning Devices
- Mobile Phone
- E-learning

2.1 Audio-Aids (AA)

The following Audio-Aids (AA) is the available institutional technology in every university of computer studies for language practices and developments.

- Radio
- Tape Recorder/ Cassette
- MP-3 Player
- Language Lab

These electronic devices are the useful and currently functional teaching aids in the language teaching process in all UCS(s) to practice and improve the listening skill by completing the listening tasks and activities through the analysis of pronunciation, intonation and assent of the native speakers. Consistently, one of the productive skills, speaking skill, can be practiced as a further extension of listening tasks. As a result, communication can take place between the learners as well as between the teacher and the learners.

2.2 Audio-Visual Aids (AVA)

These electronic devices play an important role in the teaching and learning progress to reach the expected outcomes. By applying these ICT devices the intended lessons can be delivered and shaped with a clear sense of awareness within a short time.

- Television
- Computer / Laptop
- Projector
- MP-4/ VCD/ DVD/ EVD player

These devices are very useful and applicable tools in language acquisitions for both teachers and students, to avoid paradox, confusion and misunderstanding but to promote both receptive and productive skills. The well-searched video clips and photographs related to the target lessons can give a clear sense of information to the learners thanks to the use of these effective media and the techniques chosen and prepared by the teacher.

2.3 Mobile Phone

There is no university student without mobile phone in this technological era, and as by product most teachers are bothered with the uses of mobile phones by the students during lecture period without paying attention to the lecture or mind drifting. It can be unwilling accepted as the strong threat of social media, the influence of social media or the misuse on the latest technology.

However, it is the responsibility of the teacher to change the habits of the students by means of applying the power of these useful devices in teaching and learning process as *the pocket dictionary* to study new vocabulary and collocation, as *the mini-computer* to text and mail, as *the camera* to take the photographs of lecture notes such as instructions and explanations, as the *mini-recorder* to record the important facts of lectures, as *the mini-television* to watch video clips related to the lessons or as *the small surf engine*.

It may be the best way of changing on the styles of using mobile phones to be effective ones. Consequently it is also the way of cultivation of self-learning individually, in peers or in groups, without conscious awareness on teaching-learning process.

2.4 Computer Aided Teaching and Learning Devices (CAD)

The following teaching aids are useful in language acquisitions, and the responsibility of the teacher is to extract the potentials of these aids with well-preparation of the lessons for the sake of the learners.

- Computer and its peripherals
- PowerPoint Slides
- Over-Head Projector (OHP)
- Digital White Board (Interactive Whiteboard)

These devices will minimize the negative impacts of language teaching and learning process as a whole: to give a clear explanation and comprehension of the target lessons within a short time; to overcome the so-called major problem, time constraint; to teach indirectly how to prepare slides consistently and how to take notes. With the help of the technology, this is the opportunity of giving extra information and exercises to be practiced for prosperous future. These teaching aids will help the teacher to have more flexibility and the classroom atmosphere to be more dynamic.

2.5 E-Learning

To meet the challenges of knowledge age and to harvest the power of technology whenever and wherever, the followings are the effective ways to reinforce the learning practices of the students individually, organizationally and in distance.

- E-book
- E-library
- Video-Conferencing
- Online Examination

In other words, these forms of teaching-learning are emphasized for distance education, self-learning to fill the knowledge gap, self-improvement and expectation extension.

These ways of teaching and learning language have positive impacts for both inside and outside the classroom; from subject learning achievements to professional achievement for future workforce. However, there is, mostly, lack of human interaction in online learning and demands self-direction and self-discipline.

3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Eclectic Approach with ICT

There are a variety of advantages as well as several disadvantages in this innovative approach for the teachers as well as for the learners.

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3.1 Advantages of Eclectic Approach with ICT

There are a wide range of advantages for both teachers and students by using Eclectic Approach collaborated with the help of ICT.

For the teachers: The teacher may have the following advantages by using the suggested approach.

- Increase scope of knowledge
- Intact with technologies
- Have confidence to deliver lessons
- Access the internet efficiently for lessons planning
- Be a decisive manner to choose more adaptive approach
- Overcome time constraint in the class due to a lot of preparation
- Give a lot of intended information to the students within a short time due to well-developed preparation
- Control/manage the class well
- Enable to attract the attention of the students
- Persuade all the students to participate individually, in pair, in peer or in groups
- Focus on the lessons and the students entirely
- Support the students especially who need help
- Be a reliable teacher for the students
- Create good relationship with the students
- Have the opportunity to get the different ideas of the students
- Get the feedback of the students instantly
- Check and balance the process
- Adopt and adapt new approaches of teaching

For the students: The students can have the substantial amount of benefits as follow.

- Have a clear sense of the lessons with the help of audio/ audio-visual aids
- Get the chance of using teaching/ learning aids
- Learn unconsciously the target lessons through games and activities
- Be interested in the lessons
- Focus on the lessons without wandering
- Attend the class regularly
- Enjoy in learning
- Enable to catch all the target lessons
- Actively participate in activities individually or collaboratively
- Empower individuality
- Improve cognitive skills
- Be unconscious or conscious self-learner
- Be self-confidence
- Create a good relation with both classmates and teachers
- Extend the scope of group power
- Extract the merits of team spirits
- Have the habitation of learning through technology
- Be satisfied with the current learning outcomes
- Improve approval rate
- Apply these experiences in real world

3.2 Disadvantages of Eclectic Approach with ICT

There is no rule without exception so that this suggested approach, Eclectic Approach with ICT, has its own demerits due to the inadequate and unavailable modern innovative technologies. The most influenced fact to adopt this approach is inadequate facilities in several Universities of Computer Studies for all students and teachers at the present situation.

The next challenge is time constraint. In all universities in Myanmar the present assessment system to evaluate the skills and competence of the learners, as the expected outcomes of the learners and the institute, is only measured with the approval rate of the examination, which may be the obstacle and difficulty to teach the students to be competent learners until to apply

the target language in the examination as well as in real world. To reach the expected outcomes of the target language, it is time consuming.

The third challenging point is the current assessment system which is not efficient way and other reliable ways to evaluate the assessments of the students with consistency and coherence are urgently and officially needed.

The fourth point is lack of opportunity to create language learning environment outside the classroom as the second language learners because English is a foreign language and most people use mother tongue. It has been the challenge for most learners to practice and apply it in authentic world.

The final challenge but causes to great impacts on language teaching-learning process is the profound unconscious attitudes to English language as minor subject. This concept has been outcome not only from the students but even from the teachers. As a result, there is an urgent need to change the mindset towards English to become the competent users.

4. Conclusions

There is a question whether teaching language is an art or science. Probably it is art because teacher acts as an artist creating the best colorful students by choosing and mixing the colors from the color palette; on the other hand, it is partly science because teaching is based on the combination of the exact data with knowledge, experiences and experiments throughout the life.

Therefore, it should not be accepted that the process of language learning and teaching is just the course of teaching-learning process. The progress can be determined with two types of outcomes. The first one is the short term outcome which is the expected learning outcomes of the target lessons. The latter is the long term outcome which is the expected curriculum outcomes from the high approval rate of the students to the achievement in the future workforce.

Moreover, teaching language is a life-long process which demands regular research work. The responsibility of the teacher is to create an active teaching-learning situation which offers both techniques and technologies. The teacher should not emphasize on the way he/ she can teach but focus on the ways the students can learn easily and effectively. Since the success of the teacher can only measure with the products or the outcomes, the teachers, especially the language teachers, should have the optimistic point of views to face with the challenge of knowledge age and new innovative technologies and new born techniques without staying comfort zone.

Acknowledgements

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