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## **From Methods through Technology to Effective Strategies in English Language Teaching (ELT)**

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### **Abstract**

A teacher's choice of a method or a combination of methods depends on a variety of factors including the course book. The success of a lesson largely depends on the innovation and adaptability of the teacher. In fact, the emergence of different methods points to a dialectical process where new methods are constantly evolving. Every ESL/EFL class, in this context, has the potential to create a new method, depending on the intuition and innovation of the teacher and the response of the students. Teachers should make use of the possibilities of technology in English language teaching and learning. For a motivated techno-geek learner, a Luddite teacher is a slowcoach. The active, joint engagement of students and teacher leads to a dynamic classroom environment in which teaching and learning become rewarding and enjoyable.

This paper examines the need for teaching and learning strategies coupled with technology in ELT.

### **Keywords**

ELT Methods; Socio-Cultural Background; Personalization; Student-Centred Learning; Technology; Effective Strategies



As every classroom is unique in a number of ways, it is up to the teacher to decide on the method to be employed in the classroom. In contrast, a child is thrown into the acquisition of its native language with no choice, whereas the second or foreign language learner has chosen to study the language in a classroom. External compulsions or pressures may have played a role in the case of some ESL or EFL students. The ESL or EFL learner is conscious of the fact that he/ she is learning another language: a coloured glass with which he/she tries to view the world – both known and unknown.

It is in this context that teachers should make use of the treasure of experience that an ESL/EFL learner brings to the classroom. The success of a lesson depends mainly on the teacher – the way he/she teaches and also on how the students are learning. No method can be rejected as totally useless because of the very fact that they were practiced by teachers and found to be effective for a period of time. The frame works of these methods were defined by the socio-cultural background of the times. The way in which teachers think and act, differs across the world. A variety of factors, related to economic, political and demographic context, result in this difference.

There are other factors like the development of human knowledge that influence the emergence of new methods and approaches. The developments in the fields of human and educational psychology necessitate the evolution of new methods of English language teaching. What becomes a method is a successful lesson taught in a class at a certain place and time. When it is found to be successful on a number of occasions, it is defined. Methods do not

just spring out of nowhere. They were tried and tested over a period of time in different sociocultural settings and found to be successful. In fact, the emergence of different methods points to a dialectical process where new methods are constantly evolving. Every ESL/EFL class, in this context, has the potential to create a new method, depending on the intuition and innovation of the teacher and the response of the students.

It is not right on the part of the teacher to impose a method of his or her choice on a class. The multimillion ESL/EFL course book publishing business makes teachers in different parts of the world follow the methodology advocated by the author of the course book. Teachers in many parts of the world are asked to follow imported, readymade and alien methodologies and textbooks blindly in many EFL contexts. The needs, moods and the backgrounds of students are often forgotten. Teachers are asked to mention the method they would follow in the classroom. Freeman and Johnson describe ELT education programs as “discrete amounts of knowledge usually in the form of theories and methods that were assumed to be applicable to any teaching context” (399). As course books often dictate what occurs in the classroom (Littlejohn 180) it is essential that claims made by the publishers about objectives are met, if learners and teachers are to achieve what is required of them. The fact that course books are created for keeping in mind the students in general necessitates adaptation, alteration, deletion and creativity on the part of the teacher who teaches a unique group in a classroom. Forcing stories, which come from a strictly British context, on learners from a very different culture results in alienation rather than engaging the learners. It can even have distorting effect on the learners’ perception of self-recognition. The teacher has to understand the background of the students. It is important especially for inexperienced teachers to plan their lessons within the framework of a method or methods. An experienced teacher will have to employ different methods in his/her classroom as the situation demands. As Scrivener rightly points out, “There may be serious dangers in trying to ‘export’ en masse an

approach that works in one place and assuming it will also work elsewhere. The right methodology is the right methodology for a context. "(Scrivener 144) Kumaravadivelu observes 'neither the suggested micro-strategies nor the proposed projects can be used without suitably modifying them to meet the linguistic, conceptual, and communicative capacities of a given group of learners.' (3)

The efforts made at the policy level are not always enough and do not guarantee successful or efficient teaching practice. There is much literature on how, in many cases, pedagogical or methodological innovations and reforms often fail to be realized in actual classrooms (Coskun 19) The reasons for such failures can vary from one context another.

It is only the teacher who goes into the classroom knows the students - their learning style and their level of motivation. The teacher has to adapt his/her lessons based on the intricacies of a particular classroom. Students for whom the learning contexts are personalized, through the incorporation of incidental individualized information about their backgrounds and interests, display larger gains in motivation, involvement, and learning than their counterparts for whom the contexts are not personalized (Cordova & Lepper 726). The students of a monolingual local group might like to be taught differently. Students in certain cultures do not interact with the opposite sex in the classroom. There are also students who are unwilling to talk about family or political topics due to cultural and political restrictions. It is for the teacher to address all these issues.

No one can pretend not seeing the transformation of English language classroom coupled with what the students are able to know and learn outside the classroom context. Teachers cannot turn their backs to the technology revolution that encompasses every sphere of human activity. For a motivated techno-geek learner, a Luddite teacher is a slowcoach. Students have smart phones that can access any information at any time. There are loads of applications that help with any of the language skills, pronunciation and

vocabulary. Game-based learning could be an integral part of our education systems allowing a variety of contemporary pedagogical approaches to co-exist and interplay.

Therefore, it is imperative for the teachers to equip themselves with the use of technology and innovation. It doesn't mean that a teacher should immerse himself/ herself in the ocean of technology. The rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has had a profound impact on language education where interaction has been a central concept since the 1980s, both in sociocultural and cognitive approaches to learning (Hampel 131). As classrooms are slowly getting equipped with computers, internet, projectors and smart boards, teachers need to prepare their lessons in a way that benefits the learning of the students that addresses their needs and styles. The language labs make it easy for the teachers to address the needs and styles of different types of learners. Research evidence (Bisson & Lunckner 111) has shown that fun and enjoyment are important in the process of learning as learners can be more relaxed, motivated and willing to learn. It is the responsibility of everyone involved especially the teachers themselves to create congenial and supportive environment for learning to take place. In a student-centered approach, both student and teacher are active participants who share responsibility for the student's learning. The active, joint engagement of students and teacher leads to a dynamic classroom environment in which teaching and learning become rewarding and enjoyable. Such an environment will promote effective strategies for both teaching and learning.

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