

The Efficacy of the Eclectic Approach on Students Language Performance in ESL/EFL Classrooms: An Overview (2019 - 2023)

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Abstract

Eclecticism combines various approaches and methods based on learner requirements and classroom circumstances since relying on a single conventional method may not maximise learning outcomes. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the eclectic approach in improving students' language performance and examine the commonly paired combination of English Language Teaching (ELT) methods. This traditional literature review selected a total of 18 articles. The findings highlight the effectiveness of the eclectic approach in enhancing the learning experience, speaking skills, and communication skills. Besides, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based Learning (TBL), Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), and Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) were commonly blended in language teaching and learning. This study increases the literature and serves as guidelines for teachers in implementing eclecticism in English as a second language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. It emphasises the importance of providing adequate training to educators to enhance their pedagogical skills and effectively use the eclectic approach.

Keywords: Eclectic Approach, Eclecticism, ESL/EFL Classroom, English Teaching, Efficacy

Introduction

The majority of countries utilise English as their second language (L2) and a means of communication between individuals whose mother tongues (MT) or first languages (L1) are different from their own. As a result, comprehending and grasping English is now more important than ever, especially when it comes to achieving personal goals like furthering one's education, moving up the corporate ladder, or just conversing with friends. The interests of the community or nation, such as those involved in political discussion or trade, also depend on it. In Malaysia, for instance, English has been acknowledged as the country's second language, and the educational system has subsequently attempted to integrate the constitution into the curriculum. Because of this, the necessity of continuing to enhance

English learning and teaching (ELT) to meet the needs of the educational system and learners has been emphasised.

In past centuries, educational institutions typically picked just one method or approach to use in the classroom. However, focusing on a single approach is insufficient because it is impractical, one-dimensional and inflexible (Hakim, 2019; Rao, 2018; Summa, 2021). Besides, Nunan (1991); Larsen-Freeman (2000) agreed that there would never be a method for all, in which one method is insufficient to cater to everyone. Conventional methods for teaching languages, such as Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), the Direct Method (DM), the Structural-Situational Method (SSM), the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), the Bilingual Method (BLM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the Total Physical Response (TPR), and The Silent Way, cannot be fully utilised singly. While each approach is effective on its own, combining them would add variety and improve the lesson. Hence, the eclectic approach was proposed to overcome the limitations and use all the advantages.

According to Gilliland et al (1994); Brown (2002), the use of eclecticism has been stressed since it is independent of any specific teaching methodology or approach. A multifaceted approach enables teachers to select the best methods in their unique dynamic context. Hence, this paper aims to study the effectiveness of the eclectic approach in improving students' language performance and examine which combination of ELT methods opted by the teachers can be utilised to maximise the benefits of eclecticism in English teaching.

Significance of the Study

Two values can be gained through this study. First, teachers will be exposed to the effectiveness of eclectic approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT) and its appropriate implementation in the classroom. It follows that the teachers' pedagogy will be enhanced if various ways are used rather than sticking to one while delivering their lesson. Second, enhancing how teachers convey the subject matter develops not only their skill set but also the comprehension and learning experience of the students. Therefore, this study will benefit both teachers (instructors and educators) and students.

Theoretical Framework

The Eclectic Approach

Eclecticism is characterised as an approach that draws on a variety of methods for learning languages as opposed to following a single, established strategy (Al Hamash & Younis, 1985). It is a blend of different methods and approaches used to teach language based on the classroom circumstances and the abilities of the learners (Hakim, 2019; Rao, 2018; Sarifa, 2020; Nikolarea, 2020), as well as integrating strategies and activities from each into the classroom setting (Al Jarah et al., 2019). The primary tenet of this approach is that the language instructor can select any approaches or methods that best suit the needs of the students and the learning environment (Summa, 2021). Here, it is essential to combine all the methods already in use and integrate them into English teaching and learning (ELT) while employing the many advantages of each method, approach, and technique and constraining its limitations.

The eclectic approach is characterised by its flexibility and the incorporation of elements from various teaching strategies. Ali (1981), as cited in Al Khasawneh (2022), outlined several key features of eclecticism. Firstly, teachers have the autonomy to select from a range of

teaching methods based on the learning objectives. Secondly, teachers are free to choose the approaches or features that work best for their classroom instruction. This includes using different teaching tools, which adds dynamism and fascination to the classes. Additionally, teachers and students benefit from the eclectic approach as it equips them to overcome challenges posed by the textbook materials. Moreover, the presentation of language exercises becomes more efficient in terms of time and effort when employing the eclectic approach. It is important to note that the eclectic method is subjective since it is tailored by teachers to suit the specific learning setting. The features of the eclectic approach largely depend on the instructors' influence in shaping how the material is taught, granting them the freedom to select the most suitable approach based on the teaching situation and the needs of the learners.

Methodology

A traditional literature review (TLR) is employed, as done appropriately, a review article represents powerful information sources for instructors or practitioners looking for a guideline to assist their decision-making and work practice (Pare et al., 2015). Thus, this study uses the traditional literature review to provide the authors with an overview of the effectiveness of teaching English using eclecticism and a blend of suitable methods in eclecticism. Various databases, such as Semantic Scholar and ResearchGate, were utilised for this TLR. In addition, Google Scholar also serves as an online search engine.

This review manoeuvred specific search terms to facilitate identifying and analysing any potential amalgamation of the eclectic method and language teaching. The keywords used are 'the eclectic approach', 'eclecticism', 'the eclectic approach and language teaching', 'the eclectic approach to teaching language', 'eclecticism in teaching English' and 'the eclectic approach in ESL/EFL classroom'.

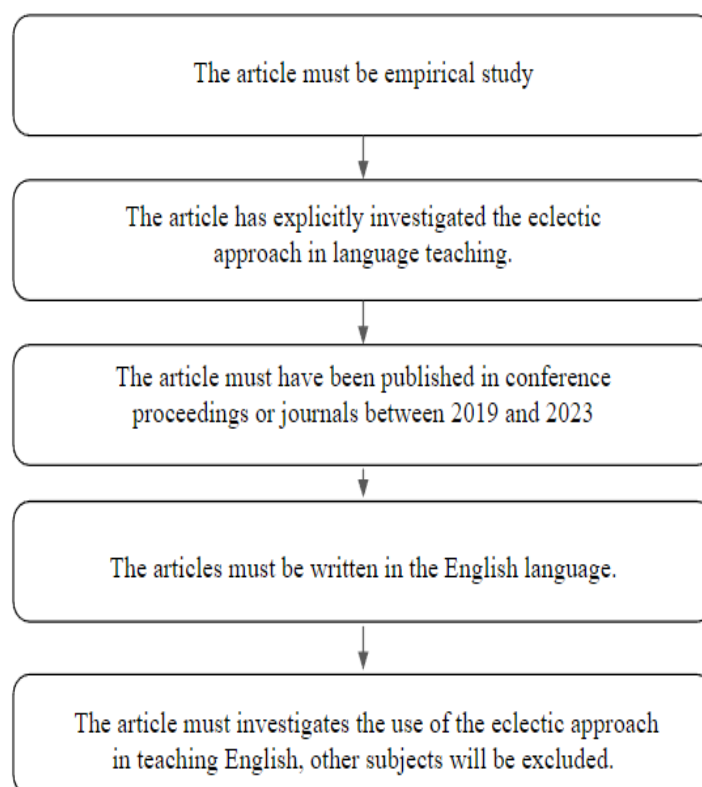
Selection Criteria and Process

Figure 1: Selection criteria and process for the literature review (Al-Khasawneh, 2022)

After selecting articles based on criteria in Figure 1, 18 articles made the cut. Other articles were not selected mainly due to it being non-empirical studies (library research, literature review), are written in other languages, such as Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Thai, or focus on using eclecticism in teaching other languages, not English, such as the eclectic approach in teaching the Indonesian language. The articles that were selected are shown in the table below.

Table 1

Selected research article on eclectic approach from 2019-2023

| N | Author/year | Title |
|----------|------------------------|---|
| 1 | Hakim (2019) | Effect of teaching English with the eclectic approach on Saudi Arabian students' communicative skills |
| 2 | Dabon et al. (2019) | An Eclectic Method: A Cooperative Task-Based Learning Method in Developing Students' English-Speaking Skills at Phitsanulok Pittayakom School |
| 3 | Sagar and Afzal (2019) | English Language Teaching Through Eclectic Approach for Engineering Students |
| 4 | Al-Jarrah et al (2019) | The Eclectic Approach as a Therapy for Teaching English as a Foreign Language to the Arab Students |
| 5 | Puspitasari (2019) | Exploring English Language Teaching Method of the Second Grade |

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|----------------------------|---|
| | Students at SMA MBS Yogyakarta |
| 6 Mwanza (2020) | An Analysis of Teachers' Classroom Application of the Eclectic Method to English Language Teaching in Multilingual Zambia |
| 7 Sarifa (2020) | Enhancing EFL learners' English Proficiency and Intelligence by implementing The Eclectic Method of Language Teaching |
| 8 Brett (2020) | Principled Eclecticism in the Classroom: Exploring the use of Alternative Methodologies in ELT |
| 9 Ullah et al (2020) | Effects of Teaching Vocabulary at Elementary Level through The Eclectic Approach |
| 10 Biggs et al (2020) | Principled Eclecticism: A Mix and Match Solution for Rural Thai Classrooms? |
| 11 Kiswati (2020) | Eclectic Method: An Alternative to Support Grammar Mastery to Twelve Graders |
| 12 Alam and Sultana (2021) | Challenges and effectiveness of eclectic method at higher secondary level in rural Bangladesh |
| 13 Summa (2021) | Application and Justification of Eclectic Approach (an Innovative Teaching Style) for ELT Practitioners in both Private and Public Universities in Bangladesh |
| 14 Chernus et al (2022) | The Eclectic Approach to Learning English |
| 15 Asif and Khan (2022) | The Eclectic Approach in Teaching English for Communication |
| 16 Ali (2022) | An Eclectic Approach: Enhancing Adult Learners' Oral Fluency in English with Special Reference to Phonological Awareness |
| 17 Dozie et al (2023) | Impact of eclecticism on Nigerian ESL Learners' communicative competence: A comparative study |
| 18 Sooria and Prabu (2023) | Exploring the significance of Eclectic Approach: Perspectives, Difficulties and Development of Effective Speaking Skills among the Undergraduate Learners in Kerala |

Table 1 displays recent studies conducted between 2019 and 2023, all focusing on English language teaching in ESL or EFL classrooms. It included a wide range of topics, such as approaches to instruction, vocabulary building, and communication skills. Researchers looked at how the eclectic method was applied in various circumstances and how it affected students' learning performance. For example, Hakim (2019) explored the eclectic approach's applicability to teaching communication skills in Saudi Arabia. Al-Jarrah et al (2019) investigated its applications in English learning among male students in the seventh grade. Meanwhile, Dabon et al (2019) assessed its effectiveness in developing English-speaking skills in Thai students. Sagar and Afzal (2019) focused on implementing the eclectic approach to improving engineering students' communication skills in India.

Additionally, researchers investigated specific areas of language learning and teaching. Mwanza (2020) explored how teachers recontextualised the approach to teaching English grammar in Zambia. Kiswati (2020) examined its use for enhancing grammar proficiency

among grade 12 students in Indonesia. Ullah et al (2020) investigated its impact on vocabulary building and pronunciation in eighth-grade students in Pakistan. Furthermore, researchers also delved into the effectiveness of a principled eclectic approach in specific contexts. Brett (2020) examined its validity in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction in Oman's higher education. Sarifa (2020) analysed teaching principles and techniques for EFL in Saudi Arabia. Biggs et al (2020) experimented with an eclectic curriculum to enhance English learning achievements in Thailand.

Alam and Sultana (2021); Summa (2021) conducted studies regarding eclecticism in Bangladesh. Alam and Sultana's study focuses on the challenges of a single English teaching method, while Summa's study explores the implementation of pluralism. Asif and Khan (2022) investigated the role of the eclectic approach in teaching English for communication by surveying English teachers who teach undergraduate students in Pakistan. Ali (2022) focused on improving the oral fluency of adult participants, with a specific emphasis on phonological awareness. Dozie et al (2023) conducted experiments with first-year university students in Nigeria to identify effective teaching strategies for enhancing Nigerian ESL learners' writing proficiency. Lastly, Sooria and Prabu (2023) employed an experimental approach involving Indian Arts and Science college students to explore effective strategies using the eclectic approach to improve vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall speaking skills.

Findings and Discussion

Effectiveness and benefits of eclecticism

Table 2

Eclectic Approach Implementations' Advantages

| Advantages | Authors |
|------------------------------|---|
| Improve learning experiences | Sagar and Afzal (2019); Al-Jarrah et al (2019); Biggs et al (2020); Alam and Sultana (2021); Summa (2021) |
| Improve speaking skills | Dabon et al (2019); Ali (2022); Sooria and Prabu (2023) |
| Improve communication skills | Sagar and Afzal (2019); Summa (2021); Asif and Khan (2022) |
| Improve four language skills | Hakim (2019); Sarifa (2020) |
| Enhance memory | Ullah et al (2020); Alam and Sultana (2021) |
| Improve academic performance | Chernus et al (2022) |

Table 2 foregrounded the advantages of implementing eclecticism in ESL classrooms, as emphasised by the authors in their papers. The review has uncovered that all 18 selected articles agreed that eclecticism is effective in the classroom. From the compiled data, one clear advantage that various researchers have repeatedly emphasised is improving the learning experiences. Five papers that have been reviewed shared the same view that eclecticism enables students to learn better. Sagar and Afzal (2019); Alam and Sultana (2021) highlighted in their paper that as the instructor integrated eclecticism in the classroom, boredom while learning was prevented, and the ambience of the classroom improved a lot. Similarly, modern teaching aids were usually included through this approach, and due to the blended techniques and approach, it will keep students interested in the lesson (Al-Jarrah et

al., 2019). Indeed, when the teachers manage to capture the students' attention, the teaching and learning process will be enhanced, and students can receive more knowledge.

Furthermore, the eclectic approach implementation also improved speaking and communication skills, as pointed out by three articles for each skill. Dabon et al (2019), who focused the study on a group of Thai students, discovered that this method is effective in developing the student's speaking skills. This discovery also resonated with the findings of (Ali, 2022; Sooria and Prabu, 2023). Additionally, the students performed better as vocabulary and pronunciation were involved when eclecticism was applied (Sooria & Prabu, 2023). Students displayed improvement in communication skills as the advantage of the eclectic approach. The study by Asif and Khan (2022) discovered that by including various activities from different approaches, for instance, dialogues, role-plays, presentations, and others, students could communicate better. Not only limited to the oral form, Summa (2021) also emphasised that giving students writing practices positively impacted their communicative performance with accuracy and fluency. Considering that CLT was frequently used across the multiple reviewed papers, it is unsurprising to see improvement in students' communication and speaking skills among the approach's advantages.

Other advantages like improvement in four language skills, enhancing students' memory, and improvement of academic performance were also gathered from the review. The eclectic approach that put equal emphasis on all four language skills - reading, writing, listening, and speaking resulted in the overall language performance (Hakim, 2019; Sarifa, 2020). Moreover, as students actively engage in classroom activities, they can retain and recall what they learned in class, enhancing their learning. This advantage has been discovered in the study by (Ullah et al., 2020); Alam and Sultana, 2021). The advantages mentioned above will ultimately lead to improved academic performance, as Chernus et al. (2022) emphasised. All in all, there are limited arguments that can counter the effectiveness of eclectic approach implementation in ESL classrooms.

Fusion of Approaches, Methods, and Strategies in Eclecticism

Table 3

Combination of approaches, methods and strategies used in eclecticism

| Author/year | Eclecticism |
|-------------------------|---|
| Dabon et al (2019) | TBL, Cooperative Learning, Contextual Learning |
| Hakim (2019) | Peer-tutoring method, Mother-Tongue Equivalence, Repeat-after-me method, Gestures and Mimes, Games, Error-correction method |
| Sagar & Afzal (2019) | ALM, Reading method, CLT, TBL, BLM |
| Puspitasari (2019) | Cooperative Learning Method, Reading method, GTM |
| Biggs et al (2020) | TPR, Guided dialogues, Speech Memorization, Role-plays |
| Brett (2020) | Affective-humanistic approach (Suggestopedia), CLT, GTM, TBL |
| Ullah et al. (2020) | Mother-tongue Equivalence; Repeat-after-me method, Gestures and Mimes |
| Kiswati (2020) | GTM, Group discussion, Demonstration, Mind-Mapping |
| Mwanza (2020) | Cognitive Code approach, ALM, Situational approach, Question-and-Answer technique, CLT |
| Sarifa (2020) | Direct Method, TBL, Simulation & Games, CLT, Natural approach, Critical Thinking strategy |
| Alam & Sultana (2021) | GTM, ALM, CLT |
| Summa (2021) | ALM, GTM |
| Ali (2022) | Interactive approach, Multimedia Case Based Learning approach (MCBL), Challenge Based Learning approach (CBL) |
| Asif and Khan (2022) | Experiential approach, Dialogical Method, Presentation strategy |
| Chernus et. al (2022) | CLT, Textual approach |
| Dozie et al (2023) | Conventional method, CLT, TBL |
| Sooria and Prabu (2023) | ALM, CLT, TBL |

Notes: 1) CLT refers to Communicative Language Teaching, 2) TBL refers to the Task-based Learning approach, 3) GTM refers to the Grammar Translation Method, 4) BLM refers to the Bilingual Method, 5) ALM refers to the Audio-Lingual Method, and 6) TPR refers to Total Physical Response approach

Researchers have examined a range of approaches and methods in language teaching, as outlined in Table 3. One common pairing is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with Task-Based Learning (TBL), which has been emphasised by multiple researchers (Sarifa, 2020; Dozie et al., 2023; Sooria & Prabu, 2023; Brett, 2020; Sagar & Afzal, 2019). This combination in language teaching is effective as it enhances students' communication, grammar, and language learning outcomes. While CLT emphasises authentic and meaningful activities, TBL provides opportunities to practise language that the students have learned through task completion (Lin, 2020). Combining CLT and TBL allows learners to develop communicative competence and meaningful language use in diverse contexts. Moreover, CLT has been paired

with traditional methods like the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to improve students' communication and grammar skills (Alam & Sultana, 2021; Brett, 2020; Dozie et al., 2023). As GTM pivots on explicit grammar teaching, with little to no emphasis on oral performance, combining it with CLT focusing on meaning-based activities may develop and strengthen learners' communicative competence, grammatical structures and meaningful language use (Kiran, 2021).

The integration of the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) with CLT has also been explored to enhance language learning outcomes (Mwanza, 2020; Alam & Sultana, 2021; Sagar & Afzal, 2019; Sooria & Prabu, 2023). ALM anchors on sentence-type practice (Qin, 2019); thus, combining it with CLT provides a balanced focus on grammar and communication, leading to improved language performance. In addition to these combinations, researchers have investigated unconventional methods in ESL/EFL classrooms. These include combinations such as Mother-tongue Equivalence, Repeat-after-me method, Gestures, and Mimes (Ullah et al., 2020; Hakim, 2019). Another approach, Gamification, which employs games and simulations, has been recognised as an effective method to enhance students' competence (Hakim, 2019; Sarifa, 2020). Gamification in language teaching has been discussed frequently due to its potential to stimulate interest, motivation, and attention among ESL/EFL learners (Luo, 2023). Pairing games with other methods may result in increased productivity in the classroom.

Next, the Dialogical Method and questions-and-answer techniques have proven to be a versatile combination for language learning (Mwanza, 2020; Asif & Khan, 2022; Biggs et al., 2020). Including this method in eclecticism is essential as it allows students to practise their grammar, evokes critical thinking skills and promotes active student participation. Moreover, researchers have highlighted the importance of cooperative learning (Dabon et al., 2019; Puspitasari, 2019), the reading method, and the textual approach (Sagar & Afzal, 2019; Puspitasari, 2019; Chernus et al., 2023) in language teaching. The studies also delve into less common combinations, such as the inclusion of the Interactive approach, Multimedia Case-Based Learning approach (MCBL), and Challenge-Based Learning approach (CBL) in Ali's (2022) study, as well as Suggestopedia in Brett's (2020) study. Not to mention, Sarifa (2020) highlights the Natural and Direct approaches, while Asif and Khan (2022) shed light on the Experiential approach.

Furthermore, supporting strategies like discussion, mind-mapping, demonstration, peer-tutoring, presentation, and critical thinking strategies have been identified as effective components in an eclectic approach (Kiswati, 2020; Biggs et al., 2020; Asif & Khan, 2022; Sarifa, 2020). These studies collectively demonstrate the effectiveness of diverse methods and approaches in English language learning and teaching, showcasing the potential for enhanced language acquisition in educational contexts.

Contributions

To summarise, these studies collectively enhance comprehension of the eclectic approach in English language teaching by providing valuable insights into its applicability, effectiveness, and influences in diverse educational contexts. These findings contribute to the existing knowledge base and inform educators about the potential advantages of utilising the eclectic approach in their language instruction practices. It also provides policymakers with an overview supporting the pedagogical capacity of eclecticism for students' English learning compared to relying on a single conventional approach.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Implementing the eclectic approach in ESL classrooms delivered positive results, as all 18 articles reviewed shared the same view that this approach can enhance students' English language skills. Six main advantages are recognised from the data analysis: improvements in learning experiences, speaking skills, communication skills, four language skills, memory retention, and academic performance. This paper also discovered that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the most highly sought-after approach applied multiple times across the studies. Some popular combinations under the eclectic approach are CLT - TBL, CLT - GTM, and CLT - ALM. Hence, it is highly suggested that teachers and educators adopt the eclectic approach in developing their teaching plans since it is proven that this particular application enhances students' language abilities.

It is recommended for future research to extensively investigate the challenges teachers face in applying the eclectic approach in their lessons, along with suggestions on how to manoeuvre the issues. Additionally, as long-distance learning (LDR) has become widely common nowadays, it is beneficial for the teaching communities to have some guidelines in order to plan their lesson with eclecticism as the basis. By addressing these areas, educators can enhance their understanding and implementation of the eclectic approach; thus, the learning and teaching process can be advanced.

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