
A Compact Decoding of ELT Methods

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ABSTRACT

Today, ELT world has a range of ELT methods but half of them are either unused or impracticable in most of the African countries. It is an irony that most of the ELT practitioners in Eastern Ethiopia are unfledged in terms of theoretical insight and practicality of many pivotal ELT methods. Therefore, the paper set three prime objectives: (i) Exploring the major ELT methods used globally, (ii) Exploring the methods used locally (in Ethiopia), and (iii) Giving an easily comprehensible compact account of the ELT methods in terms of their theoretical bases, skill(s) to be mastered, expected activities, Role of T(eacher) and L(earners), and suitability of the methods for different levels of learners. As for the method of data collection, document analysis served as a key source; whereas analysis of data was made using content analysis.

Key Words: ELT, Methods, Theoretical Base, Skills, Levels, Activities, Role of T and L

1. INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that English has not only become a lingua franca for us globally, but more importantly it has become a language of progress or a key to success in every walk of life (Jha, 2013). Although Ethiopia's need for English language is more intensified as globalization is the agenda of the time, the 'depressing picture of English language teaching' never improved (Eshetie, 2010). There is a grave concern among the EFL learners in the eastern Ethiopia that they have been learning English for several years but they are not able to master it. There are several linguistic and non-linguistic factors such as *wrong use of ELT methods, erroneous syllabus design, sloppy curriculum, thoughtless language policy, invalidity of test, communicative and pedagogic incompetence of the teachers, spatial issues of class and classroom size*, etc. which can be accountable for the poor state of English. But this paper hypothesizes that unawareness of pivotal ELT methods and their proper execution is one of the chief causes of deteriorating state of ELT in the eastern Ethiopia. Therefore, the paper limits its scope by raising three research questions as follows.

1.1 Questions of the Study

- What are the major ELT methods used globally?
- Which ELT methods are often used in the Ethiopian classroom?
- How to decode the complexities of ELT methods and make them executable.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Although ELT world is flooded with exhaustive literature on ELT methods, but a prospective EFL teacher and learners often face disappointment due to unavailability of a combined and compact account of all the ELT methods. This study tries to fill that gap as a primary research. From global perspective, this study is unique in that it is the first compact compilation of 19 ELT

methods in a chronological order with respect to their focus on *theoretical base, skill(s) to be mastered, expected activities, teacher's role, learner's role, and suitability of the methods for different levels of learners*. From local perspective, this study is important as it will prove an eye-opener for the local EFL teachers and learners in terms of gaining pedagogical awareness of several new ELT methods, experimenting them for better outcome in learning and mastering the language, and exploring new areas of research using new ELT methods in the Ethiopian context.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research is a primary ethnographic study as it conducts a preliminary analysis of text, perception, and observation. The perception and observation were sought from both *emic* perspective in which subjects' learning experience is investigated and from *etic* perspective in which researchers interpret from their own perspective in order to validate the findings.

2.1 Subjects and Sampling

Two kinds of subjects were selected for this study. The first was artifacts in the form of online and offline ELT resources and the second was a group of 15 TEFL instructors of *Haramaya University, Dire Dawa University, Jijiga University, and Harar secondary school*. Artifacts were selected using available sampling technique; whereas purposive sampling was used to select the subjects of 15 TEFL instructors as they were expected to have unique ability to explain, understand, and yield information about the problematic discourse.

2.2 Data Collection

Document Analysis, Unstructured Interview, and Participant Observation were used as three data gathering instruments. Document analysis was used to meet the needs of the first research question, i.e. exploring the major ELT methods used globally. For this, both online and offline ELT resources were accessed and extracted for the sake of internal and external validity of the data. To meet the needs of the second research question, unstructured interview and participant observation were employed as a part of primary and core research respectively. Unstructured interview, which allows the respondents to answer freely and the researcher to probe the exact and emerging problem(s) during the interview, was used to seek firsthand views of the teachers' as to uses of ELT methods in the classrooms. Next, participant observation was made as it enables researchers to assess what their subjects actually do, rather than what they say they do (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Participant observation (as a part of triangulation) was employed in the form of observing 6 EFL classrooms to see whether the teachers are indeed practicing those ELT methods which they had claimed to practice during unstructured interview.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis was made through *content analysis* which intends to look for latent and overt emphasis and relative prominence of textual themes in focus.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section has been divided into two parts. The first part gives a comparative brief account of ELT methods used globally and locally in response to the first and second research questions;

whereas, the second part attempts to answer the third research question by decoding the complexities of 19 ELT methods from five pertinent perspectives.

3.1 Methods of ELT Used Globally and Locally (in Ethiopia)

As for the ELT methods used globally, 19 ELT methods were explored in chronological order as shown in the first column of table 1.

Table 1. Methods of ELT Used Globally and Locally

The ELT Methods Used Globally	The ELT Methods Used Locally (in Ethiopia)	
	AOM	DOA
1. Grammar Translation Method (1850s)	+	Frequently
2. Montessori Method (1870s)	-	Rarely
3. Direct Method (1890s)	+	Sometimes
4. Audio Lingual Method (1960s)	+	Sometimes
5. Community Language Learning (1970s)	-	Rarely
6. Silent Way (1970s)	-	Seldom
7. Suggestopedia (1970s)	-	Never
8. Total Physical Response (1970s)	+	Sometimes
9. Communicative Approach (1970s)	+	Often
10. Audio Visual Method (1970s)	-	Rarely
11. Cooperative Learning (1970s)	-	Rarely
12. Semiotic Approach (1970s)	-	Unfamiliar
13. Task-Based Approach (1980s)	+	Often
14. Natural Approach (1980s)	-	Unfamiliar
15. PPP (1980s)	-	Unfamiliar
16. Multiple Intelligences (1980s)	-	Unfamiliar
17. Lexical Approach (1990s)	-	Unfamiliar
18. Learner Autonomy (1990s)	-	Rarely
19. Principled Eclecticism (2000s)	-	Unfamiliar

As for the application of these methods in the Ethiopian classrooms, the selected teachers were asked as to their uses of the ELT methods; and all of them gave an unexpected identical response that that they follow learner-centred approach. As a matter of fact, there is no particular approach called *learner-centred approach*; rather, it is an offshoot of methods like *Learner Autonomy* and *Multiple Intelligences* in which learners are autonomous with full responsibility of self learning or it refers to those methods in which learners’ role is maximal and teachers’ role is minimal (Jha, 2013). Furthermore, the reality of classrooms in Eastern Ethiopia depicts different picture as the learners are fully dependent on the teachers for any activity and are reluctant to develop a sense of responsibility for the outcome of their learning. In other words, neither the teachers encourage the learners in a quest for self learning activities nor the course components favour autonomous learning. Viewing this paradoxical stance on the uses of ELT methods, 6 EFL classrooms were observed to see the uses of possible ELT methods. For this, two parameters: *application of method (AOM)* and *degree of application (DOA)* were set. AOM was ascribed two values (+) and (-) which respectively imply presence and absence of any method, whereas DOA was ascribed six temporal values in descending degree: {*always, often, sometimes, seldom, rarely, and never*}. The first three temporal values: *Always, Often, and Sometimes* were assigned (+) to affirm the application of any method, whereas, *Seldom, Rarely, Never, and Unfamiliar* were assigned (-) to negate the application of any method regardless of their DOAs (ibid: 45). The results of AOM and DOA in table 2 show not only the absence of effective methods but also the teachers’ unawareness of important methods like Natural Approach, PPP, Lexical Approach, Multiple Intelligences, Semiotic Approach, and Principled Eclecticism.

3.2 The Compact Decoding of ELT Methods

To decode the complexities of aforementioned 19 ELT methods, the paper recapitulates each of the methods from the following five pivotal perspectives.

1. What is the **theoretical base** of a method?
2. What **role** teachers and learners are expected to play in an EFL classroom?
3. Which **skill(s)** get main focus in a method?
4. What are the effective **activities** involved in a method?
5. What is the relevance between **ELT method(s)** and **level** of learners?

Before we decode the complexities of 19 ELT methods, it is desirable to state that the following five levels of learners, as classified by Krashen & Terrell (1983), were used in the present study.

Table 2. Levels of Learners

Level-1: (PP) Pre-Production	PP level spans from 0-6 months in which learners know up to 500 words and communicate with ‘yes/no’ cues.
Level-2: (EP) Early Production	EP level spans from 6-12 months in which learners know up to 1000 active words and communicate at word and phrase level.
Level-3: (SE) Speech Emergence	SE level spans from 1-3 years in which learners know up to 3,000 active words and communicate with simple phrases and sentences.
Level-4: (IF) Intermediate Fluency	IF level spans from 3-5 years in which learners know up to 5000 active words and use complex sentence with few grammatical errors.
Level-5: (AF) Advanced Fluency	AF level spans from 6-10 years in which learners know up to 6000 communicative words and they acquire utmost proficiency in L2.

3.2.1 Grammar Translation Method (GTM):1850s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of GTM is based on deductive learning which gives grammar rules explicitly to the learners then the rules are reinforced with examples (Larsen, 2000).

Role of T and L: The teacher is the manager of classroom activities. The learners play a passive role by simply memorizing the grammar rules and translating English into their mother-tongue.

Skills: GTM focuses mainly on two language skills: writing and reading.

Activities: It employs mainly six activities: translating L2 into L1, reading comprehension, vocabulary drills (finding synonyms, antonyms, and cognates), deductive application of grammar rules with examples, using missing or new words to make a sentence, and composition.

Level(s): GTM is ideal for EP and SE level learners.

3.2.2 Montessori Method (MM): 1870s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of MM developed by Dr Maria Montessori is based on careful observation of what children reveals about their developmental needs. L2 is presented like L1.

Role of T and L: The teacher has to adjust the usage of Montessori materials according to different ages of the learners. Learners are expected first to learn vocabulary through different activities followed by pinking materials.

Skills: MM focuses mainly on Speaking and Writing followed by Reading.

Activities: Repetition, Rhymes, Stories, Songs, Finger-plays, Phonics, Opposites, Memory Cards, Life Experience, etc.

Level(s): MM is Ideal for PP level learners

3.2.3 Direct Method (DM): 1890s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of DM is based on inductive learning which gives direct exposure to L2 to improve learners' spoken communication.

Role of T and L: In DM, teacher and learners play equal role using L2 in classroom activities.

Skills: DM focuses mainly on speaking and listening followed by writing and reading skills.

Activities: It employs mainly ten activities: everyday speech, teaching vocabulary using visual aids, reading aloud, question-answer exercise, self correction, conversation practice, fill-in-the-blank exercise, dictation, drawing (for listening comprehension), and paragraph writing.

Level(s): Ideal for SE and IF level learners

3.2.4 Audio Lingual Method (ALM): 1960s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of ALM is based on the principles of Behaviourism. ALM advocates learning a language through habit formation with immediate positive results.

Role of T and L: Teacher controls classroom activities as a role model. Learners play the role of imitators by imitating teachers or recorded audio of native speakers.

Skills: ALM focuses on listening and speaking skills followed by reading and writing.

Activities: It mainly employs six activities: memorizing and completing dialogue, minimal pair drill of pronunciation, grammar games, repetition drill, chain drill, and substitution drill.

Level(s): Ideal for all levels of learners

3.2.5 Community Language Learning (CLL): 1970s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of CLL is based on a holistic approach which views learner as a 'whole person'. Learners sit in circle to share their feelings, intellect, relationship, and reaction.

Role of T and L: Teacher plays the role of a counselor and minimizes any threatening factors in the classroom. Gradually, learners become independent in classroom activities.

Skills: It focuses primarily on listening and speaking followed by reading and writing skills.

Activities: It mainly employs six activities: lexical translation (L1 to L2), sharing learning experience, reflective listening (recording and listening own voices), teachers' repeating correct form as many times as the learners need, and small group tasks to know one another.

Level(s): Ideal for SE level learners

3.2.6 Silent Way (SW): 1970s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of SW is based on Cognitive Psychology and learning is not habit-formation rather rule-formation.

Role of T and L: Though teacher plays a silent role, s/he facilitates learning by knowing what learners already know and what should be the next step for them. Learners play the role of self-learners by learning the rules inductively from known to the unknown facts.

Skills: It focuses mainly on reading and writing followed by speaking and listening.

Activities: It employs five activities: teaching pronunciation with fidel charts, cognitive coding with colour rods, teacher's silence, structured feedback, practicing daily happenings.

Level(s): Ideal for PP and EP level learners

3.2.7 Suggestopedia: 1970s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of suggestopedia is based on the hypothesis that mind has great potential of retaining new knowledge using relaxation and suggestion. The aim of suggestopedia is to enhance learning by lowering anxiety (negative thoughts) of the learners.

Role of T and L: Teacher controls entire activities by desuggesting or removing learners' negative thoughts and instilling positive thoughts in them to make any lesson or activities totally relaxed and playful. Learner assumes new identity in L2 to become more suggestible.

Skills: The main focus is on listening and speaking followed by writing and reading.

Activities: It mainly employs six activities: direct or indirect positive suggestion, peripheral learning, visualization, choosing a new identity, concert, and activation.

Level(s): Ideal for all levels of learners

3.2.8 Total Physical Response (TPR): 1970s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of TPR is based on **Innate Bio-Program** (to develop "a cognitive map" of the language during learning process), **Brain Lateralisation** (to activate both hemispheres of brain for effective learning), and **Stress-affective filter** (to enhance learning by lowering the stress).

Role of T and L: In the first half of learning, the teacher directs and learners act accordingly; but in the second half, the learners - after having confidence in speaking - start directing the teachers.

Skills: The main focus is on listening and speaking followed by writing and reading.

Activities: It employs three activities: commands for action, role reversal, action sequence.

Level(s): Ideal for PP, EP, and SE level learners

3.2.9 Communicative Approach (CA): 1970s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of CA (also known as *Communicative Language Teaching*) uses real communication by prioritizing function rather than form.

Role of T and L: The role of a teacher is to manage and facilitate classroom activities and learners are the real communicator as they assume responsibility of self learning.

Skills: It focuses mainly on listening and speaking followed by reading and writing.

Activities: It employs mainly five activities: Authentic Discourse, Scrambled Sentences to teach cohesion and coherence, Language Games, Picture Strip Story, and Role Play.

Level(s): Ideal for SE and IF level learners

3.2.10 Audio Visual Method (AVM): 1970s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of AVM is based on using any technology which facilitates teachers to teach less and the learner to learn more to expedite learning. It creates native atmosphere in the classroom with audio and visual devices making learning more enjoyable and effective. Audio and video aids are indispensable to substantially accelerate mastering of English grammar (Shelby, 2012).

Role of T and L: The role of a teacher is to avoid the use of mother tongue and orient the learners towards native pronunciation, intonation, and other supra-segmental aspects of English through video lessons. Learners are expected to imitate native speakers through visuals.

Skills: It focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: It employs pronunciation drills, sentence patterns, fluency, spelling, reading with speed, handwriting, composition, everyday speech by using rotating charts, slides, films, video tapes, posters, tape recorders, radio, TV, computerized language lab, and language software.

Level(s): Ideal for all levels of learners

3.2.11 Cooperative Learning (CL): 1970s

Theoretical Base: The learning theory of CL is based on the three cognitive theories: Piagetian, Vygotskian and Social Learning which center largely on the development of human's cognition. CL is a structured and systematic instructional approach in which a group of learners work together by sharing responsibility for a task to maximize everyone's learning to reach a common goal (Brown, 1987).

Role of T and L: The role of a teacher is to create cooperation rather than competition among the learners and the learners are expected to accomplish their tasks as a group.

Skills: There is an equal focus on all the four language skills.

Activities: It employs activities like interaction based on social and conflict-resolution, think-pair-share, numbered heads together, jigsaw, and circle the sage.

Level(s): Ideal for SE and IF level learners

3.2.12 Semiotic Approach (SA): 1970s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of SA is based on the premise that language learning is sign learning with the help of different signs, symbols, icons, body language, and visual communications. Levi Strauss, Geertz and Michael Silverstein, who mainly studied SA, claimed that culture was a system of signs and has important contributions to ELT (Şenel, 2007).

Role of T and L: The teacher manages the entire classroom activities to convey the meaning of any vocabulary items and grammatical structures through visuals such as pictures, film strips, video, body language, and real objects.

Skills: It focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: It employs activities like visual illustration, dialogues, and role-play.

Level(s): Ideal for all levels of learners

3.2.13 Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP): 1980s

Theoretical Base: According to Harmer (2006), learning theory of PPP is based on three principles: **P**(resentation), **P**(ractice), and **P**(roduction). Here, the teachers present a context say

of 'robot' by explaining what it can and can't do. Thereafter, the learners practice making sentences based on the pattern of *can* and *can't*. Finally, the learners produce their learned knowledge by relating it to other contexts.

Role of T and L: Initially, classroom is teacher-centred as teacher provides a pattern of language items to the learners for practice. Thereafter, classroom becomes learner-centred as the learners develop confidence in using the target language.

Skills: PPP focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: Along with information gap, dialogue creation, pairwork, it follows all the activities of TPR method.

Level(s): Ideal for SE, IF, and AF level learners

3.2.14 Task-Based Approach (TBA): 1980s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of TBA is based on the hypothesis that we learn a language when we use it. The emphasis is on the task rather than the language (Harmer, 2006). TBA helps learners use their language best by speaking as fluently and flawlessly as they can because the focus is on function rather than form.

Role of T and L: Teachers' role is to give a task to the learners to complete by hearing or seeing someone else do it. The learners are also given hints to clear up any language problem they encounter while completing the task. The role of learners is to report their completed tasks to pair, group, class, and larger audience.

Skills: It focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: It employs activities like completing a task in groups, (e.g. putting items in order of importance, comparing two versions of the same story, a class survey, or writing a poem), making the accomplished task public, problem solving activities (information jigsaws), etc.

Level(s): Ideal for SE, IF, and AF level learners

3.2.15 Multiple Intelligences (MI): 1980s

Theoretical Base: MI was proposed by Gardner (1983). Learning theory of MI is based on nine types of intelligence: *linguistic, logical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial-visual, naturalist, and existential*. MI shares some similarities with other methods like CLT, TPR, and Suggestopedia in terms of laying emphasis on communicative competence and learners' needs.

Role of T and L: Teachers' role is central as s/he addresses the great diversity in learners, develops learners' intelligences and "create an individualized learning environment" (Christison, 1996). Simply speaking, teachers are involved in inventing multisensory activities for the learners and learners are active in using their particular intelligences to accomplish the activities.

Skills: It focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: Most of the activities are those of CLT, TPR, ALM, AVM, and Suggestopedia.

Level(s): Ideal for all levels of learners

3.2.16 Natural Approach (NA): 1980s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of NA is based on "naturalistic" principles which emphasizes on exposure, or *input* (Krashen, 1987). It aims at developing basic communication skills by exposing comprehensible input and different topics in a given situation for using the target language. NA believes that a language is essentially its lexicon (words) for perceiving, producing, and interpreting any message.

Role of T and L: The role of teacher is to provide as much comprehensible inputs to the learners as possible and the learners are expected to listen to the teacher and use target language only.

Skills: The main focus is on speaking and listening followed by writing and reading.

Activities: It employs activities like situational dialogues using pair, group work followed by whole-class discussion led by the teacher, asking simple questions and eliciting one-word answers, yes/no, either/or questions using charts, pictures, advertisements, and other realia.

Level(s): Ideal for SE and IF level learners

3.2.17 Learner Autonomy (LA): 1990s

Theoretical Base: Learning hypothesis of LA, proposed by Henri Holec in 1979, is based on the “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981). The development of autonomy in language learning is governed by three basic pedagogical principles: (1) *Learner Development*: engaging learners to share responsibility for the learning process, (2) *Learner Reflection*: helping learners to think critically when they plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, and (3) *Appropriate Target Language Use*: using the target language as the principal medium of language learning (Little, 1991).

Role of T and L: Teacher's role is merely to involve students in search for interesting materials, e.g. surfing the Internet, finding pen-friends on the Internet, taking part in competitions, chat-clubs, encouraging to read authentic materials, etc. The autonomous learner shows initiative regarding learning, and shares in monitoring progress and evaluating the extent to which learning is achieved (Schunk, 2005).

Skills: It focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: It employs activities like pair work, grammar games, crosswords, written work, audio and video recordings, translation, etc.

Level(s): Ideal for IF and AF level learners

3.2.18 Lexical Approach (LA): 1990s

Theoretical Base: Lexical Approach, which was proposed by Michael Lewis in 1993, believes that the building blocks of language learning and communication are not grammar but lexis ‘the total word stock’ with lexical rather than grammatical meaning. Simply speaking, language learning is possible through vocabulary in the form of collocations, idioms, phrasal verbs, fixed and semi-fixed expressions. LA uses authentic corpus for showing natural word frequency.

Role of T and L: The role of teacher is to avail lexical corpus to the learners as vocabulary is considered as the heart of language.

Skills: It focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: It employs activities like gap-fill vocabulary worksheets, word-clouds, role play, and corpus study to know and use most frequent words.

Level(s): Ideal for all levels of learners

3.2.19 Principled Eclecticism (PE): 2000s

Theoretical Base: Learning theory of PE is based on the premise that language learning is a combined process of structural and communicative activities. Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000) have used the term principled eclecticism to describe a desirable, coherent, pluralistic approach to language teaching. The term Eclecticism subsumes a variety of language learning activities as there are strengths as well as weaknesses of single theory based methods.

Role of T and L: The role of teacher is to facilitate the learner to conduct the class and make the process of teaching and learning systematic. The learners are expected to communicate, correct each other, and raise questions on the given activities.

Skills: It focuses on all the four language skills equally.

Activities: It employs activities like reading comprehension, fill-in the blanks, writing story, etc.

Level(s): Ideal for all levels of learners

4. CONCLUSION

In its compact exposition, the paper has adhered to answering its three research questions under sections 3.1 and 3.2. Based on the exploration of 19 ELT methods, four conclusive remarks are apt to be made here. Firstly, the EFL teachers in Ethiopia do not keep themselves informed of the ongoing activities and developments in the ELT world. Secondly, there is an immediate task ahead of the Ethiopian EFL teachers to know how to use right methods and how to use them rightly for the right level of learners. Thirdly, a deep insight is needed to explore the level of learners. In the Ethiopian context, neither the teachers strive for determining the levels of the learners nor have the course contents or activities been designed in such a way that could fit with a particular level of learners (Jha, 2013). To measure the levels of learners, one can make use of several online and offline level-tests such as:

<http://www.esl-lounge.com/student/level-test.php>

<http://www.dllr.maryland.gov/gedmd/cs/eslcslevel.pdf>

<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-exams/levels-test-wc-start.htm?>

Finally, there is an urgent need to explore an empirical ELT method like Principled Eclecticism that could meet the holistic needs of different levels of EFL learners from psycho and socio-linguistic perspectives in the local ghetto.

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