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## The Eclectic Approach application: A review study of English teaching experiences

*La aplicación del Enfoque Ecléctico: Un estudio de revisión de las experiencias de enseñanza del inglés*

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### ABSTRACT

This article aimed at providing a review study of English teaching experiences where the eclectic approach could be used to support language teaching. The analytical-synthetic, inductive-deductive and hermeneutic-dialectical methods are used for the analysis and interpretation of the data processed, derived from the bibliography consulted and pedagogical experiences in this field. The document study method and a registration instrument were also used for the review study of English teaching experiences. English teaching experiences were selected from a group of 21 professors that attended the Masters' Degree Program Pedagogy of English as a Foreign Language at the University of Ecuador (UBE) since 2022, they were all members of Group 1. From 72 practical tasks developed in the course Second Language Acquisition, 21 were selected from Unit 1, dealing with methods, approaches and techniques in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT). They were selected for the review study using some inclusion criteria and coded into the methods integration dimension, the language skills integration dimension and the didactic dimension. The indicators permitted to verify quantity of methods integrated in the classrooms, integration of linguistic skills, and didactic planning. The review study showed the tendencies to integrate several methods as a way to use an eclectic approach. It also provided useful information for


participants regarding the application of the eclectic approach in English language teaching. The study contributes to highlight positive learning outcomes with the use of the eclectic approach to be considered in future research.

*Keywords:* methods, eclectic approach, experiences, english teaching

## RESUMEN

Este artículo tuvo como objetivo proporcionar un estudio de revisión de las experiencias de enseñanza de inglés donde el enfoque ecléctico podría usarse para apoyar la enseñanza de idiomas. Para el análisis e interpretación de los datos procesados se utilizan los métodos analítico-sintético, inductivo-deductivo y hermenéutico-dialéctico, derivados de la bibliografía consultada y experiencias pedagógicas en este campo. También se utilizó el método de estudio documental y un instrumento de registro para el estudio de revisión de experiencias de enseñanza de inglés. Las experiencias de enseñanza de inglés fueron seleccionadas de un grupo de 21 profesores que cursaron la Maestría en Pedagogía del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera de la Universidad del Ecuador (UBE) desde el año 2022, todos integrantes del Grupo 1. De 72 tareas prácticas desarrolladas en la asignatura Adquisición de Segundas Lenguas, se seleccionaron 21 de la Unidad 1, que trata sobre métodos, enfoques y técnicas en la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras (FLT). Fueron seleccionados para el estudio de revisión utilizando algunos criterios de inclusión y codificados en la dimensión de integración de métodos, la dimensión de integración de habilidades lingüísticas y la dimensión didáctica. Los indicadores permitieron verificar cantidad de métodos integrados en las aulas, integración de habilidades lingüísticas y planificación didáctica. El estudio de revisión mostró las tendencias a integrar varios métodos como una forma de utilizar un enfoque ecléctico. También proporcionó información útil para los participantes sobre la aplicación del enfoque ecléctico en la enseñanza del idioma inglés. El estudio contribuye a resaltar los resultados positivos del aprendizaje con el uso del enfoque ecléctico para ser considerados en futuras investigaciones.

*Palabras clave:* métodos, enfoque ecléctico, experiencias, enseñanza de inglés

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## INTRODUCTION

In the current globalization scenario the English language has attained a universal status being widely used around the world. There is a need for everyone to learn this global language to communicate with other states, regions and countries.

As a result, English is taught as a foreign language and second language in schools, colleges and universities around the world. In English Language Teaching (ELT), teachers have adopted many methods, approaches and techniques for training the students to develop the basic linguistic skills in English: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Such methods have been widely recognized and applied by English teachers since the 19th century: Grammar-translation that provides scraps of comprehensible input; Audio-lingualism provides comprehensible input; the Natural Approach that captures students' interest by using affective acquisition activities; the Total Physical Response which consists basically of obeying commands given by the instructor that involve an open physical response; the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), to develop meaningful communication, among others.

In this context, the Eclectic Approach has been advocated in ELT as a distinctive approach that can incorporate all the existing methods, approaches and techniques in making English language learning more flexible for students who attend English classes in different educative institutions.

The Eclectic Approach uses all the available methods, approaches and techniques depending on the classroom circumstances, as it integrates the language-teaching methods depending also on the abilities of the learners. In reference to this, Brown (2002) argues that eclecticism finds the right solution as this approach permits the teacher to select what works well in their classrooms within their own dynamic contexts.

Some theoretical tenets about the eclectic approach corroborate the existence of learning activities that propitiate benefits on the learners. Contemporary sources underline the advantages and role of eclectic approach in language teaching.

Nevertheless, it is still insufficient the knowledge about the way English teachers applies this approach in their classroom practice. Accordingly, this review study aims at registering some English teaching experiences for investigating the use of eclecticism as an approach in daily practical activities.

The current review study was conducted at the University Bolivariana of Ecuador (UBE). Analyzing the existing English teaching experiences, it can be noticed that generally professors pay attention to the practical application of this method.

The reviewed English teaching experiences propitiate knowledge about methods and approaches in English learning. They focus on the theories and factors that support the English language learning and the knowledge of the teachers' functions to lead the students' learning.

However, there is a need for a thorough comprehension of the Eclectic Approach to teaching in a real educational environment. Hence, the experiences compiled are useful for the analysis on the tendency of integrating methods in English language teaching and the application of the Eclectic Approach.

The research was motivated by the fact that some teachers apply more than one method without being really aware of the use of the eclectic method in English language teaching. The following research questions guide this article:

1. What are the theoretical tenets that support the eclectic approach in language teaching?
2. What are the major methods usually integrated in classroom practice?
3. What are the various linguistic activities included?
4. What are the main didactic implications?

At present times in Foreign Language Teaching there are educational innovations in reference to the use of several methods in classroom practice. The application of those which can keep the students' motivation towards the learning of a foreign language are managed by the teachers, in correspondence with the objectives, content, teaching aids, and ways of assessment, fundamentally.

In the attempt to use the major methods that contribute to the students' learning, the Eclectic Approach is a useful one in teaching languages in a comprehensive way. This one integrates all methods, approaches and techniques and applies certain method, approach or technique which is suitable to the classroom environment. In English Language Teaching (ELT) the Eclectic Approach is being used successfully in achieving the objectives in English Language (EL) classrooms.

The Eclectic Approach appeals upon multiple theories, styles or ideas to gain complementary understandings into particular educational environment. Gagné, R (1985) initiated his studies drawing on elements of the theory of behaviorism, and later on, incorporating theoretical issues of the theory of cognitivism.

From the behaviorist school of thought Skinner's concept of operant conditioning can help understand the way people behave and operate in the environment. (Skinner, 1953). This concept relates with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, cited by Morrison (1997): "it is the explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental determinants". (p. 431). The reciprocal interaction as referred by Bandura contains learning processes which require social interaction with the environment that presupposes at the same time the learners' observation, retention and modeling.

Moreover, from the construction theory, Krashen (1981) arguments about language acquisition and the fact that it does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and tedious drill were also considered, as It requires meaningful interaction with the environment to make communication effectively. (Krashen, 1981).

Thus, Gagné's integrative approach (1985) is organized in four parts: learning processes, analyses of learning results, learning conditions and Gagné's theory application in education, as explained by GottberG De NoGuera et al, (2012). For Gagné (1985) learning processes are structured into phases that involve: motivation, comprehension, retention, remembrance and transference and feedback to verify what has been learned.

The analyses of learning results are expressed by capacities that can be learned as: motor skills, which are very useful in FLT; verbal information based on a meaningful context; intellectual skills that improve the verbal skills with the learning of concepts and rules; attitudes that influence on emotional reactions and formation of values; cognitive strategies as internal organized skills that govern human's behavior concerning thought, attention, reading and memory.

Learning conditions are conformed basically by the initial attitude of the students and previous knowledge, that is the trainee or student must meet a new trainee entry profile.

In the teaching learning process the initial motivation is also accompanied by external phenomena that influence on the internal ones and activate mental disposition, attention and perception. Teaching also keeps expectations and promotes other processes until the students can feedback their learning. (GottberG De NoGuera et al, 2012).

One can also understand about this process considering the different issues that the Eclectic Approach can solve in classroom practice. As expressed by Hamash (1985): "Eclecticism is defined as a type of methodology that makes use of the different language learning approaches instead of sticking to one standard approach" (Hamash, 1985, p. 22). This valid assumption has also been corroborated by further researchers who agree that the Eclectic Approach has been accepted in English classrooms by many good teachers that use it to verify their teaching and learning outcomes. (Weidman 2001).

Moreover, Kumar (2013) supports the Eclectic Approach advocating that the eclectic method provides the connection of the students with life experiences while learning the foreign language. Brumfit (1984) emphasized that eclecticism was a right approach for language teaching and he further commented on language learning, and the importance of the programs and their activities for achieving accuracy and fluency.

Therefore, many teaching experts have sustained the Eclectic Approach for teaching languages, particularly ELT. The multiple line of Eclectic Approach embodies the principle that gives the opportunity to choose carefully and helps the teachers in their work. In this sense, the types of learning activities teachers select are often related to their life experiences.

Certainly, eclecticists must look for the stable development and integration of the four linguistic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing at all stages in the English classrooms. The application of the Eclectic Approach demands from the teacher creativity and didactic competence to manage the best procedures and techniques for keeping the class interesting and enjoyable.

In this sense, the application of the Eclectic Approach may contribute to:

- Teaching innovation to guarantee the attaining of the objectives
- Including multiple tasks connected with real life.
- Introducing various activities in the English classroom by using the innovative technology available
- Perform as facilitator by providing opportunities for students to express their ideas, without any fear, in English.
- Choose any suitable method or approach for teaching inside the classroom.
- Students' active participation through the interaction with the teacher and the rest of the students.
- Save both time and effort in the presentation of language activities.
- Introduce exercises of guided discovery for new grammar rules.
- Proposes a variety of exercises, both written and oral, in order to improve the learners' communicative abilities with accuracy and fluency
- Support natural order of learning, first listening, followed by speech and then reading and writing.
- The retention and building of confidence in language learners.
- Understanding of concepts and knowledge in an effective enjoyable way enabling learners to speak fluently and perform grammatically.
- Using a problem-based approach to teaching languages that solves the problems faced by the learners in the classroom.
- Testing and attaining good results without much pressure on the learner.

The contributions the Eclectic Approach provide to the English language learning corroborate its comprehensive way as it integrates all methods, approaches and techniques and applies certain method, approach or technique which is suitable to the classroom environment.

Then, it takes from the existing methods those issues that suit to the objective, content and resources to plan the classes and make the teaching learning process very effective.

For example, in teaching grammar, vocabulary, and language skills, it takes from Grammar-translation method its focus on form that enables the model sentences understandable. So, the reading selection is the primary source that demands the students to read word by word, being rarely interested on the message and its meaning.

Grammar is considered as the most important component of a language. A language can be spoken or written accurately by using grammatical rules properly. Grammar is nothing but a set of rules used in making sentences and arranging phrases and clauses in order for framing sentences reasonably and meaningfully. Eclectic Approach can be used in teaching grammar; particularly in combining sentences, separating sentences, identifying pronouns and their

antecedents, words and their synonyms and prepositional phrases, focusing on specific features of the language pertinent to learners' contextual needs.

Here a question is raised about the grammar lessons and how they are presented using the Eclectic Approach in the classroom. The grammar lessons used in this Eclectic Approach must be entertaining and educative. In this approach, the language teaching tends to be informative and learner-centered. While teaching grammar, this approach revolves round a communicative and interactive methodology. In the teaching of grammar, this Eclectic Approach focuses on the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Accordingly, Audio-lingualism can benefit the Eclectic Approach with the use of lessons beginning with a dialogue, which contains the structures and vocabulary of the lesson. The class practices the dialogue as a group, and then in smaller groups, followed by pattern drill on the structures introduced in the dialogue. The aim of the drill is to "strengthen habits" and to make the pattern "automatic", but there is a clear grammatical sequence based usually on linguistic simplicity, and influenced by frequency and predictions of difficulty by contrastive analysis.

To minimize the emphasis on memorization of the dialogue, and maximize the comprehension of the message, the application of free conversation is possible with sentences and patterns that will be occasionally used.

Then, advantages of the Communicative Approach can help the students create meaningful phrases instead of constructing grammatical structures perfectly correct or getting a perfect pronunciation.

In this respect, it can strengthen the students' capacity to use knowledge about formal and sociolinguistic aspects of the language for an adequate communication.

As Nunan,(1991) has denoted in his studies, the communicative approach, makes emphasis on the foreign language learning through interaction, permits introduction of real text in learning situation, offers opportunities to the students to think during the learning process, not only on the language, using personal experiences and relating the language learned in the classroom with activities developed outside. (Nunan, 1991)

With the incorporation of the above elements to the Eclectic Approach classroom activities are developed in pair, trio or group, with the students' negotiation and collaboration for getting fluency, precision and self-confidence, among them: interviews, surveys, linguistic games and role playing. Classroom activities can be reinforced and enriched with elements from the Natural approach and the Total Physical Response method.

The Natural approach provides comprehensible input. The teachers utilize realia, pictures, and students' previous knowledge to make their speech comprehensible from the first day. It captures students' interest by using "Affective Acquisition Activities", that encourage discussion of topics of personal interest to the students related to real life. In the early stages, classroom discussion focusses on personal information to establish a group feeling. Later,

students discuss their past histories, and eventually they are able to talk about their hopes and plans for the future.

The focus of the class is not on the presentation of grammar. The goals are to enable students to talk about ideas, perform tasks, and solve problems by means of communicative activities. In correspondence with the teaching level and objectives, some of the communicative activities can be supported by some aspects of the Total Physical Response (TPR). It consists basically of obeying commands given by the instructor that involve an open physical response. The commands become more complex as the class progresses. Asher (1977) claims that it is quite possible to insert vast amounts of syntax into the form of a command. Asher (1977b) lists the three principles of the TPR system:

(i) Delay speech from students until understanding of spoken language "has been extensively internalized" (p. 1041).

(ii) "Achieve understanding of spoken language through utterances by the instructor in the imperative" (p. 1041).

(iii) "Expect that, at some point in the understanding of spoken language, students will indicate a 'readiness' to talk" (p. 1041).

Total Physical Response can fill a class period with comprehensible input in the form of commands. The novelty and freshness of the Total Physical Response technique probably does a great deal to make the class experience interesting. It encourages the active participation of students, helps the teacher know when utterances are understood, and provides contexts to help students understand the language they hear.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The review study corresponds to a bibliographical study that includes theoretical grounds about teaching methods in FLT and the Eclectic Approach, as it has become an effective way in English Language Teaching. It also covered the review study on English teaching experiences as registered in the Master's Degree Program Pedagogy of English as a Foreign Language. The information compiled and interpreted helped qualitative and quantitative analyses for making clear the need to use the eclectic approach in classroom practice.

The general objective of the research was to provide a review study of English teaching experiences where the Eclectic Approach could be used to support language teaching.

This study involved 21 professors attending the course Second Language Acquisition in the Masters Degree Program, belonging to Group 1 since 2022.

Data compilation was available due to the practical activities they developed as part of the learning activities to be uploaded in the platform EVA from the University Bolivariana of Ecuador (UBE). The practical activity from Unit 1 was selected for the study as it deals with the selection and application of methods in the English classrooms.



A registration instrument was used for the review of experiences. Working with the three dimensions: methods integration dimension, language skills integration dimension and didactic dimension, permitted to verify the use of eclecticism, its influence on skills integration and some didactic implications.

The document study method helped compiling the data to review the English teachers' experiences in the educational environment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and synthesis of the theoretical grounds about methods in FLT, the literature defining the Eclectic Approach and the objectives of the practical task concerning methods and approaches were taken into account in the theoretical discussion.

This section presents results obtained from the registration instrument used to review the English teaching experiences.

**Table 1**

*Method Integration Dimension (MID)*

MID	Frequency	Percentage
From 1 - 2	12	57,14
From 5 - 6	5	23,81
From 3 - 4	4	19,05
Total	21	100

As shown in Table 1, the selected experiences correspond to 21 practical tasks, where the Eclectic Approach could be used. In 12 of the selected tasks, the professors applied from 1 to 2 methods (57,14 %), followed by 5 tasks where 5 to 6 methods were used ( 23,81%), and 4 tasks where 3 to 4 methods were applied ( 19,5%).

**Table 2**

*Language Skills Integration Dimension (LSID)*

LSID	Frequency	Percentage
1 Skill	8	38,1
2 Skills	8	38,1
3 Skills	4	19,05
4 Skills	1	4,76
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows language skills integration as reviewed in the selected practical tasks. In 8 of the selected tasks one skill is just practiced (38,10%), followed by two skills integrated: listening and speaking in 8 tasks (38,10%), listening, speaking and writing skills integrated in 4 tasks (19,05%) and the four skills integration in only one task (4,76%)

**Table 3**

*Educational Level*

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	11	52,38

Primary	5	23,81
Pre-university	4	19,05
University	1	4,76
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows the educational level where the experiences were carried out. The experiences in secondary school were registered in 11 tasks (52,38%), followed by the primary level in 5 tasks (23,81%), in the pre-university 4 tasks illustrated some experiences (19,05%) and one experience in the university (4,76%).

**Table 4**

*Didactic Dimension*

<b>Planning grill</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Planing main objectives, content and procedures	15	71,43
Acitivities, teaching aids	13	61,9
Skills practiced through language interaction	9	42,86
Time planned for the activities	0	0

Table 4 illustrates the didactic dimension. A planning grill (Cassany, 2021 ) was considered: planning objectives, content and procedures were registered in 15 tasks (71,43%), followed by planning activities and teaching aids in 13 of the selected tasks (61,90%), the skills practice through language interaction were reviewed in 9 tasks (42,86%) and in any of the tasks was observed the time planned for the activities.

The data show that the teaching experiences argued by the English teachers through their practical tasks lack of sufficient methods integration that could upsurge the application of eclecticism in their classes. The results of the review study highlights the need to use the Eclectic Approach for the integration of language skills, following an adequate didactic planning that could offer a solution to the problems of language teaching, because if teachers could plan rigorously the objectives, content, procedures, resources, communicative activities and the time needed, they could work in their own dynamic educational context effectively

### CONCLUSIONS

This review study highlights some current perspectives in the use of eclecticism by English teachers in Ecuador as registered in practical tasks elaborated from their experiences in the classroom practice.

The review study has been very useful to know the different methods the teachers combine in their classes when they are dealing with the basic linguistic skills. The selected teaching language experiences permitted the identification of the methods used, the linguistic skills integrated, and the didactic implications, which denote the need to incorporate a combining approach that integrates all methods, approaches and techniques.

Future studies would enrich the performance of teachers in using the Eclectic Approach and the students' benefits of learning due to its strengths in FLT. By implementing this approach students' language skills can be improved in their classrooms effectively.

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