

# Promoting Eclectic Method to Raise Learners' Language Awareness in Speaking Skill

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## *Abstract*

Speaking skill has been considered as the most challenging of the four language skills. This skill contains a complex process of constructing meaning and requires learners to produce utterances not only correct linguistically but also appropriate pragmatically. To achieve the target, the learners need to be trained to have knowledge about language consciously (language awareness). For this reason, there is a need for considerable amount of effort required to create an appropriate method for teaching speaking without depending on one specific method or approach of teaching. In this case, the use of eclectic method can be considered as one of alternative methods which involves the use of a variety of language teaching methods. The eclectic method was introduced in the beginning of 1990's and became fashionably popular these days. The appearance of method is enhanced by the fact that every method of language teaching has strength and limitation. The eclectic method is a combination of different method of teaching and learning. Several different teaching methods are used to be adapted based on needs and abilities of learners. Effectively, this method also belongs to any kind of learners' strength and learning style with the irrespective of age and level. This paper is aimed at discussing about the practical considerations of applying eclectic method in term of rising learners' language awareness in oral communication skill. The discussion is begun form the advances that have been made in teaching of speaking over the last decades. It then considers how this knowledge becomes the basis for teaching speaking based on eclectic method.

**Key Terms:** eclectic method, language awareness, speaking skill

## **Introduction**

Despite the inevitable debate on the language teaching methods, speaking skill is generally perceived as the major indicator to the judgment of a learner's success or lack of success in learning English. However, it is generally realized that achieving proficiency in speaking skill in the teaching-learning process is not an easy task. The fact indicates that those who have been studying for some years are not sufficiently prepared for speaking beyond the classroom. This difficulty results holistically from the individual's lack of strategy cognitively in producing and comprehending sentences and inadequate frequency of speaking opportunities in the classroom. Even, extensive knowledge of the target language's grammar and vocabulary which are often presented in the language classroom does not guarantee success in oral communication skill when this knowledge is not integrated or accessed appropriately. Other problems that are commonly observed in learners' speaking performance are related to the intervention of the learner's first language, personalities and attitude toward learning the language. These problems are noticeable in speaking class regardless of the level of proficiency or the number of students in the classroom.

In guiding the learners to achieve a good performance in speaking skill, the teacher may employ the concept of language awareness in the language classroom. The objective of language awareness is to make the learners have explicit knowledge about the target language and how to use such knowledge in language learning and language use. The proponents of language awareness assume that there is a direct relationship between learners' knowledge of formal aspects of language and how they use the language (Andrews, 2007). They believe that if learners can analyze and describe the target language accurately, they will

become more effective users of such language. Moreover, language awareness can help the learners to achieve positive attitudes toward English learning through raising their confidence to make an attempt and take a risk especially in practicing the target language.

Furthermore, there is a need to find a proper method which can be a vehicle to raise the learners' language awareness in practicing language orally and to mediate the various language teaching methods with their strength and weakness. To meet such targets, it is essential to inject eclectic method into the language classes. This method contains different teaching methods and adapts to needs and abilities of learners. The main focus of this paper is to discuss how to employ eclectic method in term of raising learners' language awareness in oral communication skill. The discussion is divided into three sections, which are: a review on approaches to learning and teaching speaking, and teaching speaking within eclectic method.

## Discussion

### 1. Approaches to Learning and Teaching Speaking

Since the development of language teaching method over the past decades has influenced significantly on how to learn and teach speaking, there are some approaches which should be reviewed to describe how speaking has been taught and learned. The approaches mainly are grouped into three categories, namely: environmentalist, innatist, and interactionist (Flor, et al, 2006:139).

#### 1.1 Speaking in environmentalist approach

Despite widespread acceptance of Grammar Translation, the Natural Method, and the Direct Method, it was overshadowed and virtually changed with the advent of environmentalist ideas to the field of language teaching at the end of the 1960s. Environmentalist ideas regarded language learning as a process which is conditioned by the external environment rather than by human internal mental processes. Thus, environmentalism emphasized the importance of external rewards as an attempt to motivate students extrinsically. Although such reward may decrease learners' inner motivation, the external support is still necessary for language learning and teaching (Rico, 2004:38). In term of educational psychology, environmentalist ideas are another term for behaviorism. Behaviorism regarded mind and thinking are irrelevant for the understanding and production of speech (Steinberg, et al, 2001:200).

In principal, environmentalist ideas (behaviorism) led to the development of the Audiolingual Method (ALM). Such method assumes that speaking must become the main focus in language learning and writing is on second priority. Within ALM, learning a language entails mastering the elements or building blocks of the language and learning the rules by which these elements are combined from phoneme to morpheme to word to phrase to sentence (Richard, 2001:55). Thus, ALM forced that mastering a series of structures in a linear way is paramount. Learning to speak in ALM is based on three main elements, which are: a stimulus, a response, and reinforcement (Steinberg, et al, 2001:200; Richard, 2001:56). A stimulus is set to elicit behavior; a response is triggered by a stimulus; and reinforcement marks to what extent the response is appropriate and not and encourages the repetition or suppression of the response in the future. In this pattern, learners are first exposed to linguistic input as a type of external *stimulus* and their *response* encompasses imitating and repeating such input. The successful responses are reinforced immediately by other language users within their same environment.

The audiolingual classroom activities are based on dialogues and drill activities, which focus on certain grammatical forms through intense repetition and memorization (Richard and Rodgers, 2001:59). Thus, after performing a dialogue, the learners are exposed with specific grammatical forms in the dialogue and trained to practice them through drill and pattern-practice exercises. In the principle of ALM, the audiolingual instruction is designed to create correct pronunciation in the target language through aural-oral practice. Teachers provide pattern drills based on graded grammatical forms in the target language. The main role of teacher is as controller, who controls learners' behavior, shows the correct model, reinforces accurate response, and corrects error immediately. Reading and writing skill are postponed until the

students gain satisfactory skill in perceiving and producing the major phonological features accurately and using the key grammatical pattern.

Another feature of ALM instruction is mastery learning. Within such concept, the material is graded into small units with specific objectives. Commonly, the starting point of material contains the key items of phonology, morphology, and syntax of the language arranged according to their order presentation (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:59). Learners are taught gradually to master each unit before proceeding to the next or from simple skill to more complex one. The concept of mastery learning provides feedback and reinforcement of learners' performance. Learners are strictly trained how to regulate their performance, and monitor their progress in acquiring the skill.

Unfortunately, rather than shaping spoken interaction, the aural-oral practice focuses merely on pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. Consequently, speaking tends to be associated with the performance of good pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Moreover, although this method is assumed to foster oral skill, speaking merely becomes a mean for providing language input and facilitating memorization rather than as a discourse skill. ALM even neglects the role of cognitive domain in learning how to produce new and complex grammatical forms.

However great popularity of ALM, such method evidently failed to lead learners to communicate spontaneously and fluently (Steinberg, et al, 2001:201; Rico, 2004:40). Nevertheless, the strength of the audiolingual method can be found on its focus on how to produce correct pronunciation. In addition, mastery learning is useful for mastering a highly structured curriculum and building discrete skills in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The concept of mastery learning also allows learners to control their own instructional pacing based on the syllabus. Finally, the tactic of ALM in providing rewards for those who can perform correct action may be considered as a proper way for behavioral management in the classroom. Balancing the strengths and weaknesses, it may be concluded that ALM surely has a limited role to teach learners to achieve a high performance in speaking skill.

## 1.2. Speaking within an innatist approach

The era of audiolingualism, with its focus on receiving the input and repeating it, began to fall down when the linguist Noam Chomsky introduced theory of language development in the 1950s and 1960s. This theory gradually turned linguists and language teacher toward deep structure of language. Chomsky's theory focuses on innate language processing, and the application of information-processing models to human thinking (Rico, 2004:41). The theory assumes that children are born with an innate potential for language acquisition. Thus, learning language is not solely through a process of behavioral reinforcement, but children's mind contains an active language processor which is called the language acquisition device (LAD) which generates rules through the unconscious acquisition of grammar.

Furthermore, Chomsky's theory becomes the basis for the innatist approach to language learning (Flor, et al, 2006: 141). Innatist approach does not tend to a series of procedures as the others approaches. Such approach is actually a reaction to ALM and emphasizes a conscious awareness of rules and their application to the target language (Brown,2001:24). Within such an approach, it is claimed that regardless of the environment where speakers produce language, they have competence or biological blueprint to produce and comprehend an infinite amount of discourse. The emergence of this language ability is possibly triggered by the fact that speakers had applied a series of cognitive strategies to internalize a system of rules and transform them into new structures. The teaching of grammatical rules is allowed through inductive and deductive ways. There is also no standard sequence in the language classroom to teach receptive skills and productive skills. In this case, speaking as a skill which must not precede the others skill. The teacher can integrate the skills by reading sentences firstly and write them on the board. This process can be explained through information-processing theory. In this case, the mind processes information by gaining and recognizing it, storing it, recalling it when needed, and generating responses. The whole system is managed by control processes which determine

how and when information will flow through the system. The sensory register (input/recognition), short-term memory (information encoding), and long-term memory (storage) operate together during learning the target language (Rico, 2004:43).

Through this process, there is a drastic change for the speakers' role from merely receiving input and repeating it, as formulated by the environmentalist approach, to think creatively how to produce language after having been taught the necessary grammatical patterns. Moreover, the main focus of cognitive method is how to enable language learners to create a hypothesis about language structures and grammatical patterns (Burns and Joyce, 1997: 43). Consequently, this process makes speaking is separated from context with its complexity and the functions of language since it just contains the mental transformation of such an internalized system of rules (Flor, et al, 2006:141). Unfortunately, the innovation in innatist approach cannot survive in the language classes since it tends to return to some modes of Grammar Translation. Moreover, overt cognition to grammatical rules surely bores learners.

### 1.3. Speaking within an interactionist approach

The important change in the field of language learning occurred in the range of the late 1970s and the 1980s through the influence of interactionist ideas that emphasize the role of the linguistic environment in interaction with the innate capacity for language development. Under this approach, there is an intensive effort to examine the complex cognitive processes which operate in producing speech from a more dynamic and interactive perspective. Moreover, such perspective divides speech into two main aspects: notions and functions. Brown (2001:32-33) explains that notions generally refer to **Abstract** concepts, such as existence, space, time, quantity, and quality. They are domains in which language is used to express thought and feeling. Functions correspond to language functions, such as request, denials, complaints, permission, apologizing, and etc. In short, interactionist perspective balances between the functions and notions in speech production.

Furthermore, by referring to cognitive psychology, Levelt in Flor, et al (2006:142-143) proposes a model of speech production under the basic assumption which concerns with the fact that messages are "planned." Thus, in order to be able to produce oral language, speakers must construct a plan on the basis of four major processes: (1) *conceptualization towards acquiring communicative competence through speaking* refers to the selection of the message content on the basis of the situational context and the particular purpose to be achieved; (2) *formulation*, which implies accessing, sequencing and choosing words and phrases to express the intended message appropriately; (3) *articulation*, which concerns the motor control of the articulatory organs to deliver the planned message; and (4) *monitoring*, which allows speakers to identify and correct mistakes in the speech. These processes indicate that speaking contains complex activity that should be required by speakers to possess a capacity to operate integrally between different interpersonal and psychomotor aspects during the production of oral communication skill. Such model of speech production views spoken language is not seen merely in terms of creating sentences linguistically, but also involves on the communicative acts which underlie the ability to use language for different purposes.

In line with the functional view on language, speakers have to learn how to use language in order to fulfill a number of functions given a particular cultural and social context. Therefore, speaking involves a contextualized process which influences the form of the language to be used. Flor, et al (2006:143) discuss two types of context which influence on how to use the language, which are the *context of culture* and the *context of situation*. The former type of context generates the notion of *genre* in order to describe the ways in which spoken language is used to achieve social purposes within a culture. Thus, genre is defined as a purposeful, socially-constructed, and communicative event (Nunan 1991: 43) which is shown through different communicative functions, such as a political speech, a religious sermon, a casual conversation, and etc. The second type of context elaborates the notion of *register* in which within the various cultural context, the speakers also use various language depending on the social situation in which they are interacting. Consequently, their choice of a particular register is based on the

interaction of three contextual variables: 1) the *field*, which concerns the topic of communication; 2) the *tenor*, which refers to the relationship of the participants; and 3) the *mode*, which involves the channel of communication (Flor, et al, 2006:143-144). In short, the way of speakers in selecting particular linguistic form depends on the context which surrounds their communicative events.

It is concluded that interactionist approach regards speaking as an interactive, social and contextualized communicative event. Such an approach provides scientific foundation for teaching this skill within a framework of communicative competence.

## 2. Teaching speaking within the framework of eclectic method

The eclectic method of learning was introduced in the beginning of 1990's and became fashionably popular these days. Carrasquillo (1994:125) states that the eclectic method encompasses a diversity of techniques in language teaching. In English language teaching, such method incorporates the most appropriate or useful parts of all existing approaches, principles, and theories from the field of language teaching. Moreover, the eclectic method appears as the mediator among various methods and approaches in English language with strength and limitations of their own. As a combination of different method of teaching and learning approaches, such method can be operated effectively for any kind of learners' irrespective of age and standard.

The use of eclectic method in raising learners' language awareness in speaking skill should consider the crucial principles which underlie eclectic method. Such principles are proposed by Carrasquillo (1994:125), which are: (1) the learners bring a great deal of experience and knowledge to their language learning situation; (2) using translation from native language to the target language may establish a basis for communication; (3) language learning may be taught in the target language whenever possible; (4) language learning must be meaningful and interesting; (5) subject-content enriches and provides a cognitive base to the language classroom; and (6) mimicry, memorization, and pattern practice serve the needs in the classroom at the teachers' discretion. These principles can be incorporated in the principles for teaching speaking, those are: (1) realizing the differences between English as a foreign language and as second language; (2) giving students the chance to use the language with both fluency and accuracy; (3) providing intrinsically motivating techniques; (4) encouraging students to use authentic language in meaningful context; (5) planning speaking tasks which involve negotiation for meaning; (6) providing appropriate feedback; and (7) designing classroom activities which involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking (Brown, 2001:275-276; Bailey, 2003:54-56). The balance in such principles becomes the underpinning to employ eclectic method in teaching speaking.

### 2.1 The eclectic feature for teaching speaking

In raising learners' language awareness in speaking skill, the teachers must not merely follow one method. On the contrary, they may engage their students in various methods in English language teaching. In this case, there is no method which is total failure since in all methods students may be given the opportunity to learn the target language (Steinberg, et al, 2001:216). In line with such view, the writer proposes the eclectic feature which can be found from various methods especially for raising learners' consciousness in oral communication skill, as presented in the following table:

Table 1.1  
The eclectic feature of various methods for teaching speaking

Method	Theory of Language Learning	Eclectic Feature for Speaking Skill
Grammar Translation	Using the native language as the reference system in the acquisition of the target	Getting students to speak correct linguistically through teaching grammar deductively. Knowing

	language.	about language and its rules is one of the ways to raising learners' consciousness in speaking skill.
The Audiolingual Method (ALM)	Language is learned through habit formation. The oral skill is learned first rather than the others.	Using audiolingual method for teaching pronunciation. Students are trained to monitor their progress in learning the target language. Practicing correct pronunciation is a part of accuracy in speaking.
Situational Language Teaching	Learning language through mastering grammatical patterns contextually. Grammar is taught inductively.	Establishing a clear context for applying new structures. The learners speak by using new structures contextually.
Total Physical Response (TPR)	Comprehending speech precedes speech production which is made through giving instruction.	Total Physical Response is appropriate for introductory phase of the target language. TPR is the reinforcement to memory which is provided through physical action.
Suggestopedia	Learning language through the inclusion of relaxation. The learners are engaged in elaborations of reading dialogue, songs, games, and conversation.	Suggestopedia is appropriate to reduce the learners' anxiety in learning language. Thus, reducing learners' anxiety is prerequisite to speak fluently and accurately.
Community Language Learning	Learning language should involve interactions among learners and interactions between learners and knowers (teachers/instructors).	Creating a community for language learning is best to stimulate the learners to use language contextually.
Lexical Approach	Mastering word and word combination is the basis for language learning and communication.	Mastering lexical chunks or collocations is important to speak accurately. Acquisition can occur through an accumulation of examples in which is generalized by the learners.
Communicative Language Teaching	Language learning can occur by involving any meaningful task, activities which use the target language and real communication.	Getting the learners to use the language independently focusing on the function of language. The learners can be encouraged to be meaning negotiator by applying speaking strategies.
The Natural Approach	Providing comprehensible input is necessary for successful language classroom. Thus, the Natural Approach teaching language inductively by emphasizing on comprehensible and meaningful practice activities, rather than production of sentences and utterances accurately.	Learning grammar inductively as it is used in actual communication commonly provides the learners with a communicative ability.

The table above shows some eclecticism which can be cultivated from the spectrum of varieties in language teaching methods. There is no magic method which can solve any problems in the language teaching perfectly. Teachers can afford the luxury of selecting a method by considering the learning objective. For instance, if speech and literacy become the objective, a teacher can apply Communicative Language Teaching which is supplemented with physical activities (using Total Physical Response), pattern practice (from ALM), and explication and translation (from the Grammar Translation Method). In brief, all methods have surely some features which can be a vehicle for successfully language learning.

## 2.2 Procedure of applying eclectic method

A main factor in the success of teaching speaking is the way teachers organize the classroom and how to give the feedback to the learners' performance. The procedure in employing eclectic method may follow the basic methodological model for teaching productive skills as proposed by Harmer (2009:275-282). The main components in such model encompass *Lead-in*, *Set the Task*, *Monitor the Task*, *Task Feedback*, and *Task-Related Follow-up*.

In the *lead-in* stage, the learners are engaged with the topic. The teacher can apply interactive processing (the combination between bottom-up and top-down processing). With bottom-up processing, the learners are permitted to be exposed with certain words (using lexical approach), and grammatical pattern (teacher may apply situational language teaching). Top-down processing leads the learners to start from their background knowledge by activating their experience about the certain topic which corresponds with the learning objective.

Furthermore, in the stage of *Set the Task*, the teacher explains exactly about students' task during the speaking performance. Brown (2001:273-274) proposes six types of speaking performance that can be applied in the classroom, which are: imitative, intensive, responsive, transactional,(dialogue), interpersonal (dialogue), and Extensive (monologue). Imitative focuses on some particular elements of language form. Then, intensive is designed to practice some phonological or grammatical aspects of language. Intensive speaking can practice through self-initiative or in pair work activity. Responsive task deals the learners' speaking activity in form of replying response correctly and fluently. Transactional dialogue is an extended of responsive language and carries out for the purpose of conveying or exchanging specific information. The next type is interpersonal dialogue which is purposed for maintaining social relationship than for the transmission of facts and information. Finally, extensive monologue are provided for intermediate to advanced learners in which the learners practice how deliver speech, oral report, and news reader.

When the learners have begun to perform the task, the teacher will *monitor the task*. This may be conducted through going round the class, listening to the students, and helping them if necessary. The teacher may writes some crucial things especially in relation to accuracy and fluency factor of the learners' performance. The next stage is *task feedback*. This is the phase to help the learners to know how well they have practiced the target language. Finally, the teacher is allowed to move on from the task with *a task-related follow-up*. During the sequences of learning, the teacher may apply the methods eclectically since it is aimed to gain the learning objective.

## Conclusion

It is obvious that any kinds of method cannot serve the right way of teaching speaking skill perfectly. In this context, eclectic method plays the significant role in mediating the various methods with their strength and weaknesses. The eclectic method is the label given to a teacher's use of technique from a range of language teaching methodologies. In teaching speaking, the teacher may combine some eclectic features which are cultivated from the various methods of language teaching. This method becomes easier and more possible for the learners to practice the language with the context of culture. Last but not least, such method can accommodate learners' learning style and even disabilities.

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