The Magic of Methodology in English Language Teaching and Effective Classroom Teaching

-   Rima Namhata

The Common Notion

With the advance of teaching and learning procedures, sticking to the traditional methods of teaching can simply prove to be devastative to a bunch of MBA graduates or some intellectually scintillating IITians, only to cite examples. So, we should first try to decipher the meaning of method; a singular weapon used to teach a class of students, homogeneous or heterogeneous. Method can simply be a catalyst to generate enthusiasm among the students making the class interesting, exciting, and real learning for them. If otherwise, a chapter or concept that can be better taught through the application of case-study could take the ball away from the court of the teacher if taught through lecture component.

This article aims at examining the difference between method and methodology and their implementation in teaching thereby making the class interesting, educative, application -oriented, and thought-provoking, triggering questions in the minds of the young learners.

Method

Let us first try to understand the theoretical meaning of the word Method. Given below are five definitions of method as and when found and used in literature, language and science as well:

-   It comes from the Greek word – *Methodos,* which means following after, pursuit.

-   It is also a "Codified series of steps taken to complete a certain task."

-   In Computer Science, it means: action, algorithm, function, and procedure.

-   In Software Engineering: a technical recipe for building a soft ware.

-   In Method Acting: acting that replicates the conditions under which the character operates.

The Beaten Path

The term methodology is very near in meaning to that of method. Some of the definitions of the word methodology are like:

-   "A set of methods and principles used to perform a particular activity."

-   "A body of methods rules and postulates employed by a discipline."

-   "A particular procedure or set of procedures."

-   "The analysis of the principles or procedures of inquiry in a particular field."

Method versus Methodology

Methodology = the power of the method

The Power of the Method:

"The more specific the method, the more powerful the methodology."

Method Methodology

What How

Steps Rationale

Coded Reasoned

If Method tells us what is to be technique/ process to be adopted to teach across a lesson, methodology tells us how it is to be done. If the former tells us the steps to be incorporated in a class lecture, the latter tell us the rationale behind adopting the steps. If method is coded in its sense of application, methodology is reasoned in imparting the technique (code).

Methodologies

The categories of methodologies are:

T – Traditional

M– Modern

AV– Audio-visual

I – Innovative

Some of the oft used methodologies include Lecture, ppts, dumb charade, mime, string narrative, One-Act plays, questioning, lark, rhetoric, and interaction. The following methodologies will deal with some effective use in language teaching and to enrich the system of imparting knowledge/education.

- **GDs** –**M**-General Discussion is considered as one of the modern approaches of delivering in a class. It is especially helpful in management-oriented classes, where the scope lies in vigorous discussion, brainstorming, ideation and mind mapping. It makes the class lively and helps the learners to develop their oral, decision-making, note taking, leadership, questioning and problem-solving skills.

- **Cue Cards** – **M**-The "best approach to teaching vocabulary is to teach children some strategies for learning the meaning of words in context, and then encourage them to read voluminously and from a wide variety of texts and genres."(Cited in Sebastian Wren) The clarifying cue card/ Flash cards provide students strategies to use when they encounter difficult words. The strategies give all students a way to learn words on their own. Flash cards also helpful in self-study groups. For example, the most effective way to memorize key terms is to work with cue cards when you need to remember a great many key terms, such as new vocabulary words in a foreign language. Simply take 3 x 5 cards and write down a term on one side and either a definition of it or a description of its significance on the other.

Although making the cue cards might seem time consuming, this method has many advantages. First, the process of making the cards helps you begin to memorize the material. As you write down a term and its definition, your mind begins to process the information into your long-term memory. Second, using the cards enables you to shuffle and reorganize them in various ways. For example, you can eliminate cards for terms you know well, and continue to test yourself on the ones you don't.

- **Role-play Simulations –M**- role-playing is a learning method. Learners take on the role profiles of specific characters or organisations in a contrived setting. Roleplay is designed primarily to build first person experience in a safe and supportive environment. Roleplay is widely acknowledged as a powerful teaching technique in face to face teaching. When we are young, we learn by mimicking, playing, and experimentation. As our language skills develop and formal schooling kicks in, these strategies are replaced by language-based learning, which can dampen our curiosity and motivation to learn. Roleplay simulation aims to revive the ease and joy of experiential learning.

- **Lecture –T**: One of the conventional approaches of teaching; lecture suits everyone for the sake of convenience .The teacher delivers through method of chalk and board or handouts .and it is more of dictating of notes and penning down teachers' words. It is the delivery end that is more active in comparison to the receiving end, in the context of interaction.

- **Interaction – T**: Interaction method of imparting knowledge is pretty synonymous to the lecture mode only that in the former, there is active participation both on the students' and at the teachers' end. It is more of a question and answer session, where new ideas are extracted and new concepts come before the class.

- **Ideation/Brainstorming – M:** A modern methodology of teaching where a concept can be best delivered through brainstorming. Brainstorming is best done through 'wh' questions, leading to triggering of thoughts and clarity in the concept. From brainstorming, ideation or extracting the ideas according to the suitability of the student. For example, in a homogeneous class, the requirement of student 'A' may vary from the requirement of student 'B', thereby leading to mind mapping where after ideation, it is completely depending on the student for how much he will absorb and how much he will let it go. Student 'A' might absorb more than student 'B' according to caliber, learning ability and intelligence.

- **Skits – T/ M**: Skits, which existed in the society for eons is both a traditional and modern approach .It is a participatory learning technique. Sitting and scratching head and wishing to teach possessives or future tense, through skits can be like icing on the sugar! It makes students more skilled and rounded individuals. It gives the practical experience in communicating, to develop tolerance to see something from various perspectives. It can make one's perception level sharp. To move further, a

class of Management, Organization Behaviour to Social Welfare can even be taught through street -plays.

- **Anecdotes – I:** Innovative in its application anecdotes can act as great appetizer for a class. It specifically helps as it gives the fact of various eminent people in their goals of life and helps the students to visualize their goals in a similar fashion. Anecdotes travel across cultures breaking the mental, barriers and acts as real examples where we can dream and realize those dreams.

- **Narratives T/M**: This is usually a story; an account of a sequence of events, whether fictional or non-fictional. Some of the tools are: storybooks, novels et al. We all love stories. And usage of vocabulary and management lessons can be best done with the help of narratives, which is quick grasping, absorbing, reflective, introspective and interesting as well.

  Cartoons – M: "cartoon is the art of doing humor with lines." While cartoon used to be a single-frame visual means of expression, now it has multi-frame variations such as vignettes, comic strips, comic stories and comic books. Short- and feature-length films were made with the animation of comic stories; and the use of computer has allowed both visual richness and saving of time and labor in animated works. The inception of cartoon dates back to the Paleolithic age. However, the cartoon – in its present sense – emerged in the 17th century. While cartoons merely focused on the portrait of persons initially, they began to deal with events and social topics and underwent changes in terms of the use of line and techniques.

  Cartoons are often used and exploited in various mediums to drive home a lesson amongst its viewers. Frequently used in the 'private eye' (newspaper), if the paper cuttings are used in the classroom to introduce a topic and brainstorm vocabulary, and lessons as well. Issues like dealing with teenager or talking about a social crime can again be best done through a cartoon. Writing a caption for a cartoon, or writing a story with the help of some cartoon images, can be excellent learning for students if used ideally.

- **Seminars –I:** This is considered as one of the innovative approach of classroom teaching. Seminars can create an energising learning environment, where learners specifically of a healthy and homogeneous group can learn a great deal by intensive and extensive use of web resources, associated magazines, newspaper, and journals. More knowledge is gathered, presentation skills get improved, thought process is sequenced, and questioning

  becomes more firm and prominent. Perspectives open and get shared and are thus a huge platform for uncompromising learners. This also engages the students in the non-class hours and helps to stop using time idly.

- **Projects (Include field/industrial visits) – I:** As discussed in the early point, seminars can be class-based or even field study based. So hands-

on experience during field-study/ industrial visits helps to understand theory in the form of practice. We come out from our inhibitions, and see the bare face of the world without covers. Research and societal studies are best done through fieldwork .It helps the learners to gain interviewing skills, communication skills, listening skills, and writing skills.

- **Interviews – M:** An out-of-box technique interview method involves the students from the start of the assignment. Collecting information, collating them, presenting them in sequence, writing it down, presenting before the class, and finally evaluation, these procedures testify and enhances the quality of the student. This makes direct involvement with the personalities

- **Cases and Case lets-M:** A Case is defined as a factual account of human experience, centered on a problem or issue faced by a person, group of persons, or an organization (Fisher, 1978, p. 262). Case captures a segment of reality by giving a detailed description of the events that occurred and thereby provides a framework within which a healthy discussion of the key business issues can occur (Desiraju & Gopinath, 2001).Decision making and problem-solving skills can be well acquired through study of subject-based case studies and case lets. An approach well adopted by the reputed foreign universities gives insight of some real life situations. It again allows shedding inhibitions in a student to come up with solutions, and is a well crafted learning platform for sector-specific studies.

- **Games – M:** Not unheard of but management classes and language classes are best done through games. An innovative, modern methodology, games can be effective, thought provoking and real fun to spear head concepts especially in ice-breaking classes and improving vocabulary classes.

- **Movies – AV:** Most opted and chosen medium of imparting knowledge, this audio-visual medium, movies is an appreciated methodology to drive home concepts. We all know that feast of eyes and senses, is well remembered and implemented. Let us say for example the documentary films or even movies like 'Taare Zameen Par' or even classics like 'Benhur' can bring in some historical insights as in the latter or an awe-inspiring, motivating, defying the norms of society under the facade of falsehood as in the former, can be absorbing for the learners.

- **Rhetoric – T/M:** "In writing, as in any field, there is only one way to take a person from a novice to a veteran, and that method is practice. The ways are: Identifying rhetoric in written pieces, practicing prewriting strategies with rhetoric in mind, writing about prewriting, and practice writing..... Teachers should focus on the key aspects of rhetoric such as audience, purpose, and limitations of writing when introducing the prewriting aspect of writing to students. The tools writers need to create interesting pieces are included in the rhetoric."(Cited in Russell)

- **Articles and Essays –I:** Did we ever imagine that articles and essays could equally be a teaching methodology? Without taking for granted reading, writing, listening skills can be tutored through writing of essays and articles. Comprehensive reading and knowing a subject in depth are the gifts of writing articles. Writing acts as a weapon in learning a language. The knowledge does not culminate into essay; instead it is the essay that gives knowledge a firm ground.

- **Hands-on Experience (Workshops)-M:** Yes activity based learning, through workshops is the mantra of today's learning. Workshops help in group activity, team building, and leadership, learning from various perspectives, presentation and more importantly communication enhancement. Workshops are made rich through small presentation, question and answer session, exchange of ideas, games and writing activities.

Conclusion:

Learning does not only mean, subject specific or specialisation specific, instead it should be holistic in nature bringing an all round development to the learner. Teacher and learner should work in unison to make knowledge complete. Theory won't help in much if not implemented through practice and application of various teaching methodologies that just gives the right nutrition for knowledge acquiring.

Works Consulted

http://www.everything.com/using-cue-cards-study-tests/#axzz0ntZ5e9lk

http://homeworktips.about.com/od/studymethods/a/flashcards.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roleplay_simulation

Bartle. P. website: http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Tompkins-RolePlaying.html. *Role Playing and Simulation Games, a Training Technique.*

Tomkins.P.K. The Internet TESL Journal, *Role Playing/ Simulation* .Vol. IV, No. 8, August 1998.Website: http://iteslj.org/

http://www.cartoonmuseums.com/anadolu-university-museum-of-cartoon-art-turkey.

http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant/teaching-tips/using-cartoons-comic-strips

Gangel. Kenneth O. http://bible.org/seriespage/interview-teaching-technique. *The Interview as a Teaching Technique* .(online article)

Russell .S. website .http://curriculalessons.suite101.com/article.cfm/transitioning-novice-writers-to-advanced-writers. *'Transitioning Novice Writers to Advanced Writer',* A Four Stage Teaching Method for Developing Writing Skills. 3 rd February, 2010.

http://books.google.co.in/books?id=15kbBjAmoZUC&pg=PA87&lpg=PA87&dq=String+Narratives+%E2%80%93++as+a+teaching+methodology&source=bl&ots=tutwSdsiqQ&sig=JbpLpuXdSWx2ubCO1op0N7EJKlU&hl=en&ei=Y67yS-

7sM4y0rAee9pmPDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CDE
Q6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Fisher.C.:http://activelearning.uta.edu/FacStaff/assets/eduCase%20Study%2
0and%20Trigger%20Incidents%20-%20QEP.pdf. *Case Studies and Trigger
Incidents.* Pp.1-4.1978.
Desiraju & Gopinath. Journal of Management Education. *Encouraging
Participation in Case Discussions: A Comparison of the Mica and the Harvard
Case Methods.* Vol. 25, No. 4, 394-408 (2001).
http://teaching-strategies-mentorship.suite101.com/article.cfm/

using_the_clarifying_cue_card_at_school

Ms.Rima Namhata
Lecturer in English
Management Institute of Durgapur
Rajbandh, Durgapur
West Bengal, India