

## Enhancing EFL learners' English Proficiency and Intelligence by implementing The Eclectic Method of Language Teaching

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### Abstract:

This paper enlightens the significance of learner-centered approaches to language teaching. In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class, a teacher should adopt a specific teaching style to accomplish teaching goals. This study is an attempt to analyze and ascertain the general principles and techniques of teaching EFL. The principal aim of the study is to highlight the needs of the learners and help the teachers to achieve their teaching goals with the planned learning outcome. The Eclectic Method of language teaching was introduced in the class to improve the communication skills and the academic performance of the learners. The Eclectic Method was pioneered in 1970 and gradually became very popular in English as a Second Language (ESL) and EFL classrooms. The Eclectic Method is a fusion of distinctive techniques of teaching and language learning approaches. This Method enables the language teachers to make it to all the learners despite the heterogeneity in their learning styles and intelligence. The author has used a Mixed Method Approach. The target group is female undergraduate students in the College of Science for Girls, King Khalid University, Abha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). After implementing an Eclectic Method in the language classroom, the author finds that it helps in blending multiple activities of language learning. It allows students to receive individual attention amid a populated class. It further makes the students feel more motivated and confident. The result of the study prompted that the learners have improved significantly in all the four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) of language learning. The study signifies that the Eclectic Method works productively for every level of learners and makes learning easy and ingenious. The best part of this method is the teacher can design his/ her own teaching techniques based on the Proficiency and the competency of the learners to make learning more effective.

**Keywords:** critical thinking skills, eclectic method, English proficiency, learner centeredness, needs analysis

**Cite as:** Sarifa, N. (2020). Enhancing EFL learners' English Proficiency and Intelligence by implementing The Eclectic Method of Language Teaching. *Arab World English Journal*, 11 (1) 103-113. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.9>

### 1. Introduction:

The Last 20 years have seen phenomenal growth in the demand for English in higher education and professional fields, respectively. With the fastest change in English Language Teaching (ELT) theory and practice, there has been a radical shift in approaches to ESL pedagogy, where we perceive language as a communication tool. This shift has brought in new ideas of teaching the English Language. There has been widespread dissatisfaction expressed by various language teachers and learners regarding the effectiveness of multiple Approaches or Methods. Hence, the demand for this Method emerges because it could motivate learners and proved to be exciting and compelling.

The prime concern of this article is to critically investigate the proficiency and intelligence of teaching English to Science Undergraduates through the Eclectic Method. Language teaching or learning comprises of four different skills LSRW. A language teacher needs to choose an appropriate method to teach each skill effectively. To date, various approaches came into practice in language teaching. Every single technique has its own merits and demerits. The failure of one existing process leads to the emergence of a new one. This study gives a brief review of various language teaching methods and throws light on the Eclectic Method in detail and how it is different from other methods. It further focuses on how the Eclectic process helps in accomplishing the main objectives of language learning. The author has applied the Mixed Method Approach and the study group comprises of first level of female undergraduate students of King Khalid University, Abha, KSA. The whole study was carried out based on classroom observations and experiences. Through classroom observation, the author has observed four prime factors that affect teaching and learning. Then to cope with the problems, the author has applied Eclectic Method in education. Finally, to find out the effectiveness of Eclectic Method students, assessment sheets were analyzed and interpreted.

### 2. Objectives of the Study:

- a. This study is an attempt to analyze and ascertain the general principles and techniques of teaching EFL.
- b. The intention of the research is to highlight the needs of the learners and help the teachers to teach them to good effect.
- c. It throws light on the benefits of using the Eclectic Method in Language classroom.
- d. This work focuses on the best possible ways to motivate students to learn English.
- e. The author has also discussed various classroom strategies to make language learning easier.

### 3. Statement of Intent:

This study particularly examines English language classroom of Science Undergraduate at King Khalid University, Abha, KSA. While teaching several problems were identified in the learning process, and these problems were hindering the student's accomplishments.

One of the major problems was the size of the class; it is a large classroom of around 50 students comprising a heterogeneous group. Large classroom affects the learning process (Halim, Wahid, Halim & Farooq, 2019). Some are already very good in general English, and they tend to excel, whereas the average lot has a little basic knowledge of English, and some are true beginners. The

second problem is the time constraint, a limited period of 12 to 15 weeks of instruction throughout the semester is not enough to teach language productively. The third problem is the lack of motivation within the students. Few students want to work hard and learn whereas an average lot is with a notion that English is not their prime subject, it is a part of the foundation course, and they are just persuading it to complete their B.S. course. This lack of motivation is possible due to a lack of career orientation. They are even unaware of the fact that they are going to need English knowledge if they want to pursue higher education. And finally, a significant communication gap was felt between teachers and students. Due to communication issues, they don't want to communicate with their teachers. They do not even feel comfortable interacting in the class, which leads to boredom, causing distraction.

Hence after experiencing such problems, the researcher decided to apply the Eclectic Method. The author has implemented various versatile language teaching strategies to create a learner-centered classroom. It further helps to teach a big class within the limited period, focusing on all the four skills of language learning.

#### **4. Significance of the Study:**

This paper enlightens the importance of the Eclectic Method in English Language Teaching. The Eclectic Method is a blend of different methods and approaches. In an EFL classroom, a teacher should have a teaching style to accomplish teaching goals. Hence, this study may be beneficial to the language teachers in a way that they can apply the Eclectic Method of teaching to enhance communication skills and the academic performance of the learners.

#### **5. Various Language teaching methods: a review.**

There are various methods that work for ELT purpose, and each Method has its strengths and limitations. There is no single method that is perfect for different types of students in an EFL classroom. The failure of one way led to the emergence of the new one. Every Method is unique on its own, but with its exclusive advantages or disadvantages in implementing it.

The oldest of all is the Grammar Translation Method, a traditional teaching technique which was established during the 16<sup>th</sup> century to teach Latin and Greek. The prime objective was to teach grammar-translation of texts and vocabulary through rote learning. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the prime focus of the Method is reading and writing, and grammar teaching method is deductive. It is a teacher-centered approach and focuses on reading and writing skills and very little emphasis was given on speaking and listening. It's an age-old method and was in practice until long.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century emerged the Direct Method. In the Direct Method, the goal was to enable students to communicate in a target language. The use of First Language (L1) was not allowed in the classroom. Grammar teaching method was inductive. In this Method, there was a focus on oral communication. Vocabulary acquisition was through the learning of word lists, and self-correction was encouraged. (Larsen-Freeman, 2004).

At the end of the 1950s originated Audio-lingual Method. This Method viewed language learning as a process of acquiring habits. The basis of Audio-lingual lessons was dialogues and

drills. The main emphasis of this Method was correction of pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation. The learners learnt the target language through habit formation. In the late 1960s, this Method was opposed by various critics on the grounds of language as habit formation. As Chomsky (1966) asserted, "language is not a habit structure. An ordinary linguistic behavior characteristically involves innovation, the formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intracity" (p. 153).

The structural approach to English views the language as being divided into several components; these components interact with each other and form the rules of the word. This approach gives more importance to grammar than vocabulary. This approach enables students to learn through context.

Gorgi Lozanov developed another method termed as Suggestopedia. As asserted by Richards and Rodgers (1986): this Method viewed that a learner could learn a language only when he/she receives productively and has no mental barriers. The prime objective of this method was to gain conversational Proficiency by using a list of vocabulary items.

Total Physical Response is another method that attempts "to teach language through physical activity" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 87). The prime aim of this Method was to teach communication, the focus was on teaching basic speaking skills by using imperative drills. Students will learn how to respond physically to basic instructions like "open your book," "turn to page 20".

Another prevalent and much-used method came into practice in the late 1960s, which is known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The foremost target of this Method is to gain communicative Proficiency. This Method focuses on learning to communicate in the target language by using language in real-life situations. Fluency was given much importance as compared to accuracy.

The Silent Way: Caleb Galtheno (1972) developed this Method. Here the teacher speaks less, and the students were allowed to talk in a target language as much as possible. In this Method, the focus was on structure, and the prime aim was to make the learners acquire a near-native fluency and pronunciation.

Community Language Learning (CLL): In this Method, the role of the teacher is that of a counselor who assists the students and suggests them however, the learners are the ones, in the end, to decide what to learn. In this Method, there is a complete bonding between teachers and students, which allows active learning. It involves peer learning and the total participation of learners in the classroom.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century evolved another unusual method termed as Immersion. The main aim of this Method was to promote bilingualism, and the learning method focuses on the development of communicative competence in learners. Second Language (L2) was used as a medium of instruction to teach other subjects like science, or social science.

Task-based learning: Task-based learning involves completion of a task; the learner uses the target language to complete the job and acquires the knowledge of the language while doing the job. The teacher acts as a delegator and guides the students in accomplishing the task.

Natural Approach: Away from other methods and approaches, there emerged a new one, termed as Natural Approach. It distinguished from the earlier methods in the sense that it focuses on the use of language and gives importance to vocabulary over the structure. This approach views that the second language learning process is like the process of native language acquisition.

Michael Lewis (1993) suggested a new Method termed as Lexical Syllabus. The main objective of this approach was to teach lexical phrases, and it focused on the instruction of fixed expressions that occur frequently in dialogues. In this approach, the language was taught basically through authentic materials.

So, many methods and approaches appeared one after another, trying to overcome the flaws of their earlier ones. Still, none proved to be complete or useful in teaching ESL or EFL learners efficiently. According to Nunan (1991):

“It has been realized that there never was and probably never will be a method for all, and the focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities which are constant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself” (p.228).

English has become globally significant. It is a language of academics, power, and profession. There is no single method that has proved successful when it comes to learning complete English. As asserted by Li (2012):

“There is no single method which could guarantee successful results. We have to take an Eclectic view in the previous methods according to learners' needs and objectives. Before we design concrete techniques, we should make it clear what language is and what factors facilitate learning” (p.168).

Hence emerged a new method termed as Eclectic Method. This Method gained popularity and it is used by most of the language teachers.

## 6. What is the Eclectic Method?

Eclectic Method is a blend of different methods and approaches used to teach language based on the needs and aims of the learners. The Eclectic Method established at the beginning of the 1970s, and gradually, it became prevalent in language teaching. According to Floresar, (2008), the Eclectic Method is a combination of different learning approaches (as cited in Jebiwot, Chebet, & Kipkemboi, 2016). There is no specific approach or language teaching theory in Eclectic Method. Various teaching methods are borrowed from different language teaching methodologies and are inherited to suit the needs of the learners. As for Larsen and Freeman (2000), “when teachers who subscribe to the pluralistic view of methods pick and choose from among methods to create their blend, their practice is said to be eclectic” (p.183).

The teacher acts as a moderator; he or she must first analyze the needs of the learners and depending on that, they must choose effective strategies to teach a target language. As mentioned by Rivers (1981), an Eclectic approach permits language teachers to draw up the best techniques and strategies of all the popular language teaching methods into their teaching process and use them for the purposes which are the most suitable ones. Language is an integrated whole, and it is impossible to teach it in isolation. Language teaching means teaching of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary as one single unit. We cannot separate it into bits and parts. As asserted by Kumar (2013), "language should not be separated into chunks like pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary" (p.1). He further mentioned Eclectic Method is the best-suited Method that makes use of various techniques, approaches, activities, and strategies to help the students learn English as a whole.

The application of multiple approaches and strategies makes the Eclectic Method more learner-centered and helps learners to gain both accuracy and fluency. By implementing the Eclectic Method, a teacher becomes aware of which approach or Method is ideal for the learners and chooses the instrumental ones to benefit the learners. Apart from being dynamic, the Eclectic Method appears to be very authentic in EFL classrooms as it makes the learning existent. The teacher's role here is that of a facilitator and a delegator. It bridges the communication gap between the teachers and the learners. The teacher's responsibility also lies in creating an environment that is friendly enough for the students to learn a foreign language. (Jabeen, 2019). This Method makes the students feel motivated and learning simple, smooth, and boisterous. Eclectic Method leaves a lasting impact on learning. It engages the learners, helps to build language competence and intelligence, boosts their knowledge of language use in real-life situations, and finally develops the learner's personality and self-confidence.

### **7. Research Methodology:**

This research is primarily a Mixed Method Approach followed by the researcher's classroom observations and quantitative data, to obtain specific information in a short period. The quantitative data analysis permitted the researcher to analyze and interpret the student's improvement in the given situation using the Eclectic Method in the EFL classroom. The actual time frame of this research work is one semester or a total of 15 instructional weeks with eight contact hours per week.

The target group of this study was chosen randomly out of the two sections, which the researcher was teaching that semester as a routine instruction system. The target group consisted of 58 students who were the first-level Science Undergraduates. Their English course, which is named the Intensive English Program, is a part of the foundation course which they need to study to complete their graduation level. It was, however, a heterogeneous group with mixed ability where some were true beginners, and others were average or advanced. The first two weeks were of complete observation to identify the individual needs of the learners and investigate their problems and issues related to English Language Learning. Based on this observation and experience various teaching activities directed towards those issues and learning styles were being designed. Later, students' assessment sheets in the form of Progress Tests were analyzed and interpreted. To receive the most compatible data, the researcher completed the whole research in the language classroom of the college campus.

The study hypothesized that the Eclectic Method of language learning elevates the teaching process and improves learners' English proficiency. The earlier language teaching methods or approaches were not suitable enough to help the learners acquire communicative competence or language Proficiency. Whereas the Eclectic Method is a complete blend of all the strategies which helped the teachers teach and the learners learn effectively.

## **8. Various activities and strategies based on the Eclectic Approach, used to teach the target group are:**

### **8.1 Explanation/ Interpretation**

This technique was mainly employed to teach grammar inductively, which is a part of the Direct Method of Language Teaching. The learners could notice and identify the structure through examples and then acquire the rules later.

Example: Teaching Simple present tense.

- I **like** chocolates
- They **like** chocolates
- We **like** chocolates.
- My parents **like** chocolates.
- He **likes** chocolates.
- She **likes** chocolates.
- Tom **likes** chocolates.

The teacher asked the students to recognize the variances in using 'like' and 'likes.' Then the rules of using simple present tense were explained, and further taught them subject-verb agreement.

### **8.2 Peer work**

It is a task-based approach which implies to teach writing to the students. The students were divided into three groups, and one promising student is assigned to each group to monitor effectively, the groups were allowed to choose a topic of their choice (e.g., "My country" or "How to plan a class party") and were asked to write an essay. While doing the task, it made active participation of the individual learners. The teacher acts as a facilitator here. While completing the task the students learned sentence structure, use of capitalization and punctuation.

### **8.3 Simulations and games**

Activities and games like "just a minute" were carried out in the class to encourage speaking. The teacher asked the students instantly to choose any topic (e.g., the weather today, my classroom, my hobby), and talk on it for a minute. The teacher presented some photos of a landscape or any personality to them and asked to describe the picture. This Method was very effective and helped to develop confidence in the learners to speak in a target language.

### **8.4 Listen-repeat-listen-repeat strategy**

The basis of this strategy was, the Communicative Language Teaching Method. The learners were first allowed to listen to the teacher, take note of how the teacher articulated a sound, then they were asked to repeat after. This strategy is an effective one to teach correct pronunciation, it is basically to teach skills like word stress, syllables, and intonation.

### **8.5 Interactive sessions:**

To promote learning there were some out-class activities. This activity is designed based on both the Natural Approach and Task-based Approach of Language teaching. At times students could visit the college library and read authentic texts such as a magazine or newspapers in English. Then they were asked to return to the class and present an oral report of what they have read. It developed the learners' skimming and scanning skills of reading text. This technique was fun and helped to improve their reading skills. It further gave room to learn new words and vocabulary and enabled them to use terms in context.

### **8.6 Using Audiovisual aids**

The teacher used Audiovisual aids to warm up the students. Some videos on the related topic were shown to the students at the beginning of the session to grab their attention. This activity was not a mere warm-up but also introduced learners with some new words and motivated them to explore more. It's better to start with a positive note.

### **8.7 Review and feedback sessions**

Before closing the lecture, a brief review was provided by asking questions about what they learned, or by asking for feedback. It is a very effective strategy to make the class more interactive.

### **8.8 Critical thinking skills**

To involve the learners and enhance their learning process the teacher used some critical thinking skills. Involving makes learning faster. Skills like brainstorming, comparing and identifying patterns provide more room for the learners to think further and discuss their queries. It makes them more aware of the languages they are learning and for example, Teaching vocabulary through context clues or semantic mapping. According to Sarifa (2018), learning vocabulary through context "helps the student bridge the gap between the students' real-life exposure to vocabulary and the learning environment of the class" (p.42).

All the above-discussed strategies and techniques were being practically applied to the target group to escalate the teaching and the learning process. The feedback sessions after each lesson allowed the teacher to know that how the Eclectic Method of teaching the English language to EFL students functioned and fruitful as compared to other traditional methods of teaching. Student assessment sheets were analyzed to support the findings of the research.

## **9. Result analysis:**

The researcher conducted two progress tests during the semester. The First Progress Test (FPT) was at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> week of instructions, and the Second Progress Test (SPT) was after the 14<sup>th</sup> week of preparations. It was a short test of 15 marks comprising questions covering all the four skills of language learning, i.e., Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW). Students Learning outcomes of both the FPT and SPT were prepared on the excel sheet to compare and verify if teaching methods applied were functioning well or not. The figure below supports the information specified in this paper.

Figure 1 shows the grades accomplished by the language learners in their FPT and SPT, respectively.

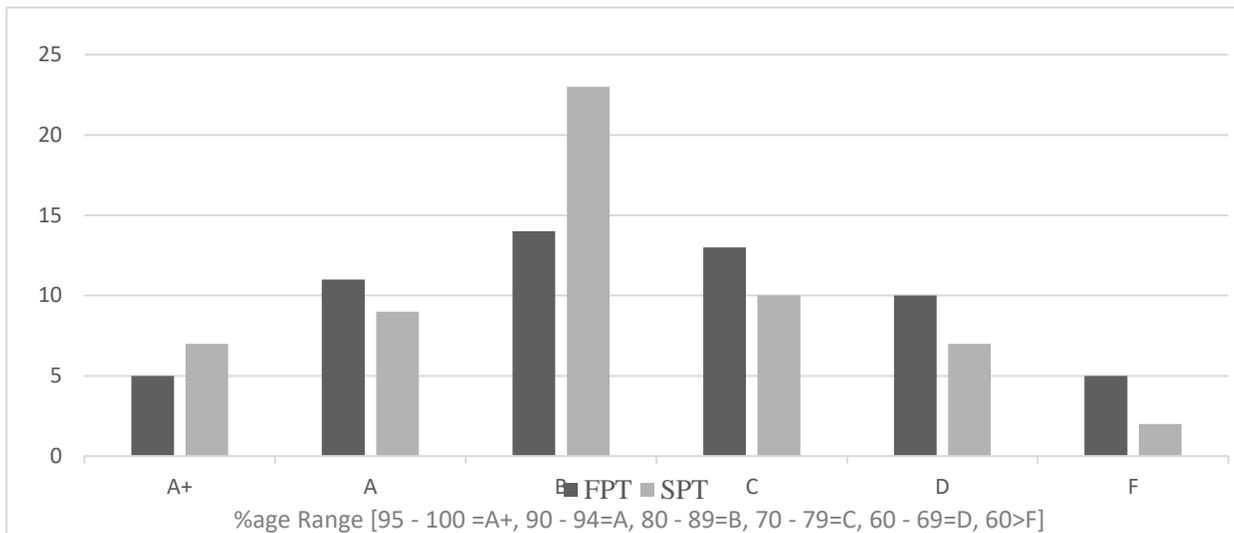


Figure 1. Grade Analysis of the learners' progress tests

After doing this grade analysis of the learner's FPT and SPT, there is significant progress in the student's learning process. Based on the percentage of marks received in FPT and SPT the learners were categorized into six different groups: A+, A, B, C, D, F. Learners who obtained a percentage ranging between 95 to 100 were under A+, learners who received a percentage rate ranging between 90 to 94 were under A, those who secured a percentage rate ranging between 80 to 89 were under B, those who obtained a percentage rate ranging between 70 to 79 were under C, the learners with a percentage rate ranging between 60 to 69 were under D, and less than 60 percent were under F (fail). From the above-given figure, we can clearly say that in FPT, 5 out of 58 learners were A+, whereas this number increased in the SPT, where 7 out of 58 are A+. In FPT, 11 out of 58 learners were A, but in SPT, this number decreased to 9. The reason behind this fall is they have shown significant progress, they excelled and are now under grade A+. One of the most remarkable change occurred in the average group. In FPT, the total number of students graded under B was 14, but in SPT, it increased, and it became 23 out of 58 students. This increase exhibits the progress in the learners' performance. In FPT, 13 out of 58 students were under grade C, whereas in SPT it decreased to 10 out of 58 students. This same fall was noted with learners under grade D also, in FPT 10 out of 58 were under D, but in SPT, 7 out of 58 were under D. Total number of failures also decreased in SPT as compared to FPT, in FPT it was 5, but in SPT it was just 2. So, it is obvious from the result analysis that the total number of students getting excellent or good grades has increased and the number of students getting lesser grades or failures has decreased in the second progress test. Hence it exhibits clear outcomes for the efficacy of the techniques and the strategies applied by teachers in the whole teaching process.

## 10. Discussion:

This analysis shows that the students remarkably benefitted with the Eclectic Method of teaching language. Since the study group was heterogeneous, one comprising advanced, average, and beginners' level their learning outcomes were affected the same way. To be more specific, the advanced level, students showed progress and were under excellent grade, in contrast, the average ones improved and obtained Grade B which, is the second-highest top category. Beginner ones

also showed their progress, and they tend to get grade C instead of D or F. The researcher was successfully able to accomplish the language learning goals of the individual learners. After using the various teaching strategies and learning skills, it can be stressed that those strategies helped to enhance the learners' English Proficiency in various ways. The learners very easily acquired grammatical rules and later used it correctly in their writing and speaking. For example, in FPT assessment sheets, mistakes like "She live in Abha", "Ali have a red car," My mother is good cooking" were present. In SPT, these types of grammatical errors were minimal, which shows the student's improvement. Learners' earlier used to mispronounce certain sounds and words incorrectly. For example, /p/ was pronounced as /b/ and /t/ was pronounced as [tə]. These were very common errors noted in maximum learners. But through the application of Listen-repeat-listen-repeat strategy, it was easily corrected. Activities like "just a minute" helped to boost learners' self-confidence to speak in English in front of others. Activities like "peer work" and "interactive sessions" added to learners' motivation and encouraged them to work in groups. It further bridged the communication gap between the teachers and the learners. Using Audiovisual aids not only helped drawing students' attention in the class but also made the language learning easy and enjoyable. Critical thinking skills made complete involvement of the learners in the whole learning process and provided rooms for the learners to use language in a real-life situation. It made them aware of their knowledge and helped in developing judgmental skills. Language acquisition is temporary; hence teaching strategies based on critical thinking skills played a vital role in enhancing learners' English Proficiency. The teaching of vocabulary through context made the learners learn new words along with their correct usage and knowledge of collocation. For example earlier the learners' used to say "true" or "false" instead of "right" or "wrong," similarly for "watching TV" OR "listening music" they used to say "see TV" or "hear music," but by teaching vocabulary through contexts these errors were corrected. So, from the above discussion, it is summarized that the researcher has proved the hypothesis of the research significantly. Application of the Eclectic Method enhanced the English Proficiency of EFL learners.

### 11. Conclusion:

After implementing the Eclectic Method in the language classroom, it is clear that it helps to blend multiple activities of language learning. It allows students to receive individual attention amid a populated class. It further makes the students feel more motivated and confident. They have improved significantly in all four skills (LSRW). The teaching experience of the researcher clarifies that the Eclectic Method is very pluralistic and comprehensive, which helps to overcome the obstacles in the language classroom and meets the diversified needs of the learners. This Method works productively for any group of learners and makes learning easy and ingenious. Being learner-centered in its approach it doesn't put any kind of pressure on the students learning process; they feel more motivated and comfortable in the class. It further provides room for the students to learn English in real-life situations. It enhances learners' ability to respond, rationalize, and interpret. And the excellence of this Method is, the teacher can design his/ her teaching techniques based on the Proficiency and the competency of the learners to make learning more productive, which in turn strengthens the teacher-student relationships and promotes classroom management successfully. In a language class, teaching and learning are perpetrated concurrently. It is indispensable to choose an efficacious method like the Eclectic Method to teach English effectively in an EFL classroom.

**About the Author**

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