

## Two Approaches to Teaching

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In this rather informal composition I will attempt to look at teaching methods employed in educational institutions, describing two methods of teaching found in most cultures. Where possible, I shall try relating these two methods to teaching English as a foreign language. Finally, looking at how these methods are applied and what factors are involved in their choosing in the real situation.

Teaching methods do differ from culture to culture, however there seem to be two major methods of teaching which facilitate the teaching-learning relationship. Commonly found in most cultures these two methods are the teacher-centric method and the student-centric method. More generally, these methods are based on deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning respectively.

What are these methods?

The Teacher-Centric Method.

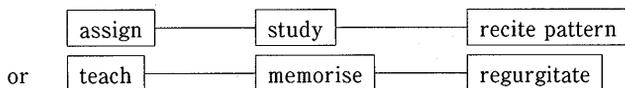
The first of these methods is a deductive approach to teaching, it focuses attention on the teacher as a central figure in the teaching-learning relationship. This type of teaching method is particularly effective in conveying information from the teacher, one who knows, to the learner, one who doesn't know. In such a relationship the teacher is usually the superior and the learner the inferior. In this situation a specific body of knowledge is conveyed. In a way, the teacher and learner share the same

sort of relationship between Parent (teacher) and Child (learner). Therefore it is quite common to hear the expression "spoon feeding" when someone is describing this relationship. The information conveyed by the teacher then taken-in by the learner is often very specific. The information can be called specific as it originates from the teacher, not from other sources. This method relies on the learner to memorise the information as it is presented then later to reproduce the same information in an applied situation. Clearly this method suits a situation that is specific so that the learner can use the memorised information effectively.

Relating this idea to learning a foreign language, English for instance, we see that the typical usage of this method occurs in large classrooms and lecture theatres where the teacher or lecturer respectively is responsible for conveying a specific body of knowledge, or specific information, to the learners. Here the system is designed to produce learners or students who ought to be able to regurgitate the memorised information to produce a set product. The set product is usually in the form of an examination answer. The need to extend this answer is non-existent. The answer is an end in itself for the examination. In Japanese highschools, students are saturated with English vocabulary, grammatical rules and patterns and expressions which they are expected to reproduce in their examinations. In most cases this information is reproduced successfully in the examination as an answer and remains only as an answer for examination purposes. As is the nature of deductive reasoning all results tend to converge to a general rule or a specific answer. This result can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. First it can help in problem solving by eliminating certain information that, within the scope of this method, is not necessary in order to achieve the result. But through that same

process of information elimination it denies us the chance to discover an alternative path that might achieve a solution.

A typical diagram of the deductive method of teaching may help to clarify the method thus far explained:



The Student-Centric Method.

The second of these methods is the student-centric, or inductive approach to teaching. This is typified by the relationship between the teacher and the learner. Central to this approach is the emphasis placed on developing the ability to solve problems by applying cognitive skills learned in the classroom. This approach is one where students themselves are encouraged through student-centric activities to produce not a specific product, but to originate unique alternatives. This method presupposes that all members of the activity have some knowledge to give and that all members (teachers inclusive) need to learn. In such a system learners are given a situation and task to perform in the situation. What is more important is that the learner devises his own means of solving the problem within his capabilities, rather than arriving at a specific answer.

Because of the nature of this approach the ability to solve problems develops. However this doesn't mean that one can acquire the specific body of knowledge that is successfully achieved by the deductive approach. Providing the learner with the tools to manipulate the environment, he is able to solve problems in a more flexible and creative way. This creative approach to problem solving will lead to divergent ways to overcome a situation and is more adaptable in a variety of situations. It appears that

this form of reasoning is responsible for the ability to form opinions. Thus a variety of problem solving methods will result in a correspondingly greater range of opinions. As both teacher and learner are involved in the learning process-perhaps through discourse-the speed, and content of what is to be learned is shared by the two parties. Whereas in the deductive approach it is mainly decided on by the teacher. The effectiveness of this method can at once be realised in the English conversation class as it will produce students capable of quickly and effectively responding to a situation in a way that they think best, rather than trying to recall some specific piece of information in reply. The effects of the deductive approach are made obvious in the conversation class when a student tries to engage in conversation with the teacher or other members of the class producing a specific response to a question as an answer and no more. It is clear that their way of thinking is restricted.

Selection and adoption of these Methods.

Both the teacher-centric and the student-centric methods have their strengths and weaknesses. While it is possible to apply either of these methods in the class, it is equally possible to apply both of these methods in the class. In fact most teachers do, perhaps without realising it, utilise both methods while teaching. In spite of the research and tests that have been carried out on student-centric methods, the teacher-centric method still remains more popular. Perhaps this is because of the scarcity of student-centric methods in teacher-training institutes. However, it does seem that most teachers tend to imitate the teaching methods of their teachers whom they were taught by during their schooling years, rather than adopting a different approach to teaching.

Furthermore, the degree of application of these methods in the class depends on several factors such as: the physical factors; (arrangement of the classroom furniture, number of students, location of classroom, composition of students) and cultural factors (such as the learners attitudes towards: gender, age, teachers etc.) These factors do affect the effectiveness of acquiring knowledge and so play a role in selecting a particular method. Therefore the teacher must assess the present situation and then decide on an appropriate method or combination of methods.

In conclusion, we have seen that there are two major teaching methods commonly found in educational institutions: the teacher-centric method and student-centric method, based on deductive and inductive reasoning respectively.

The teacher-centric method, useful for imparting a specific body of knowledge from a teacher to a learner by a process of assign-study-recite, is particularly effective in training learners to give a specific response to a specific situation. For instance, an examination answer for an examination question.

The student-centric method, useful for developing the learners attitudes and ability to solve problems, is effective in training learners to create their own ways of solving problems within their own capacities, giving rise to diversity through manipulation in a changing environment. For instance, lively dynamic responses created in the conversation class between student and teacher.

The adoption of these methods does heavily depend on the teacher whose own experiences play a big role in determining the application of either of these methods or a combination of these methods in the class. It

is necessary for the teacher to assess the situation, keeping in mind both physical and cultural factors, then choosing. A good combination of both methods should result in effective acquisition of knowledge by the learner conveyed by the teacher.

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