English Immersion Program Teaching Approach, Methodology and Techniques:

The Communicative Approach:

The guiding approach of the MESCyT’s English Immersion Program to Meet the Competition is that students learn best when they are provided with the opportunity to communicate in English in meaningful ways. This approach, called the Communicative Approach, is the most currently favored in the field of TESOL (teaching English as a Second Language) and is the guiding philosophy of the textbooks used in this course.

The six main principles behind the Communicative Approach can be outlined as below:

- Real communication must be the focus of language learning.
- Opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they know are essential.
- Teachers must be tolerant of students’ errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his or her communicative competence.
- Teachers must provide learners with opportunities to develop both accuracy and fluency.
- Lessons should be designed to link different skills such as speaking, reading and listening together, since they usually occur together in the real world.
- Students should be given opportunities to discover grammar rules with support from knowledgeable teaching staff.

Skills Based Design:

The design of the program is skills-based. In other words, the program is designed to help students achieve skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the four main abilities of language. The program has established specific student learning outcomes (SLOs) which represent significant achievement in each skill area.

Student-Centered Classrooms:

In keeping with the Communicative Approach, the program strives to create student centered classrooms. The term student-centered refers to learning environments where the students are active participants in the classroom. In student-centered classrooms, teachers act in the role of facilitators, giving students the opportunity to make mistakes and also to correct their own mistakes.

Some of the key features of a student-centered classroom are:

- Teacher provides models; students interact with instructor and one another.
- Students answer each other’s questions, using instructor as a resource.
- Students have some choice of topics.
• Students evaluate their own learning; instructor also evaluates
• Classroom is often noisy and busy

Teaching to Different Learning Styles:

Just as teachers have different teaching styles, students have different styles of learning and processing information. In terms of lesson design, the program strives to create daily lesson plans that address various learning styles and target the different ways in which students process information. A helpful way to categorize these learning styles are: auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, global, and analytic. Here is a description of each.
Auditory Learners
Students with this style will be able to recall what they hear and will prefer oral instructions. They learn by listening and speaking. These students enjoy talking and interviewing. They are phonetic readers who enjoy oral reading, choral reading, and listening to recorded books. They learn best by doing the following:

- interviewing, debating
- participating on a panel
- giving oral reports
- participating in oral discussions of written material

Visual Learners
Visual learners will be able to recall what they see and will prefer written instructions. These students are sight readers who enjoy reading silently. Better yet, present information to them with a video. They will learn by observing and enjoy working with the following:

- computer graphics
- maps, graphs, charts
- cartoons
- posters
- diagrams
- graphic organizers
- text with a lot of pictures

Tactile Learners
Students with this strength learn best by touching. They understand directions that they write and will learn best through manipulatives and realia. Tactile learners learn best by:

- drawing
- playing board games
- making dioramas
- making models
- following instructions to make something

Kinesthetic Learners
Kinesthetic learners also learn by touching or manipulating objects. They need to involve their whole body in learning. Total Physical Response (TPR) is a good ESL method for them. They remember
material best if they act it out in skits and role plays. These students learn best by:

- playing games that involve their whole body
- movement activities
- making models
- following instructions to make something
- setting up experiments

**Global Learners**

Global learners are spontaneous and intuitive. They do not like to be bored. Information needs to be presented in an interesting manner using attractive materials. Global learners focus on the whole picture and do not care so much about specific details. They do not want to get bored with slow moving lessons and enjoy interesting and attractive materials. Global learners respond well when they can play with objects or write stories simply for the fun of doing them. Global learners learn best through:

- choral reading
- recorded books
- story writing
- computer programs
- games
- group activities

**Analytic Learners**

Analytic learners plan and organize their work. They focus on details and are logical. They enjoy analyzing language through worksheets, crosswords, diagrams, etc. They are phonetic readers and prefer to work individually on activity sheets. They learn best when:

- information is presented in sequential steps
- lessons are structured and teacher-directed
- goals are clear
- requirements are spelled out

**Total Immersion Method**

The program maintains a strict policy of English only in the classroom. This policy is based on teaching method called the Total Immersion method, a highly effective teaching method for EFL classrooms. As the name suggests, students are completely immersed in English during the entire time they are in the...
classroom and conduct all communication in English. This teaching method has several advantages the most important of which is optimizing the amount of input (hearing, seeing, listening, and reading) students receive in English.

In order to be successful in the total immersion method of EFL, teachers must be versed in teaching techniques that help students access information without resorting to translation. The techniques include: activating prior knowledge, questioning, rephrasing, recast, modeling or demonstrating, and the use of visuals and realia. A brief explanation of each follows:

**Activating Prior Knowledge:**

This technique is used before giving students new information about a theme or topic in English. It involves activities, such as brainstorming or discussing an idea with a partner, before being presented with a lesson. In a language class, this lesson might be a presentation of new vocabulary, a reading in the textbook, a listening clip, a speaking exercise, etc. You can even activate prior knowledge for grammar lessons. For example: *speak to your partner for 2 minutes about what you think are the differences between past perfect and present perfect.*

Much research has shown that when students perform these types of tasks before receiving new information, they are better able to process the material.

**Questioning:**

Questioning is an important tool in an ESL/EFL classroom. The use of questions by the teacher works to increase student participation and decrease “teacher-talk”, which can be difficult for students to understand. Questions can be “open” (start with wh- words) or “closed” (Y/N). Questions can also be categorized as “display” (teacher knows the answer) or referential (teacher seeks information—does not know the answer).

Questions can further be categorized by their function. Effective questioning in the ESL/EFL classroom can be used to:

- Elicit language (what is an adjective that means very, very tired)
- Elicit information (Does anyone know when WW2 ended?)
- Check classroom instructions (So, are you going to talk to one student or many students?)
- Check vocabulary concept (So, can a burglar steal from a bank or only people’s houses?)
- Check grammar concept (In that sentence, do we know when the action began?)
- Gather social or personal information (How many of you went to the movies this weekend?)

**Recasts:**
This technique involves repeating what a student has said with an increased accuracy and/or sophistication. It is important to keep in mind that the rephrasing of the teacher should be just above what the student has produced independently. For example:

Student: *The house has much room. Is big.*
Teacher: Yes, you’re right. *The house has many rooms and a lot of space. It is very spacious.*

**Rephrasing:**

Rephrasing is an important skill for helping make input comprehensible for students. Rephrasing involves presenting students with various wording and sentence structure to help make language clear and communication successful. For example:

Teacher: *Ok, the directions tell you to identify three causes for Evan being fired from his job. In other words, if we ask Evan’s boss why he fired Evan, what three reasons will he give us?*

**Modeling:**

This technique involves modeling or demonstrating for students what they are expected to do or produce, especially for new skills or activities, by explaining and demonstrating the learning actions, sharing your thinking processes aloud, and showing what a good final product looks or sounds like. Modeling promotes learning and motivation, as well as increasing student self-confidence -- they will have a stronger belief that they can accomplish the learning task if they follow steps that were demonstrated. For example:

Next week you will give your process presentations. Today I’m going to give you a process presentation that I developed about making wine. I did some research about this topic and I even went to a vineyard, where wine is produced, to take some pictures. I made a list of all the steps in the process but when I practiced talking about each step, it was too long, over 15 minutes. So, I narrowed it down to 5 important steps and then I wrote my outline (hands out a copy for each student), which I’ll use when I speak. I have a few notes written on my outline. I’m a little nervous, but I practiced a lot this weekend. So, here I go! You can tell me your comments when I finish.

**Realia:**

Realia are ‘real things’ or concrete objects that teachers bring into the classroom to share with students. The use of realia in the classroom helps build students’ background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge. Realia provides students with sensory information that helps them process the new information they are learning. If real objects aren’t available, teachers can bring in replicas or photographs.
Values of the Program

In addition to the teaching of English, the program strives to foster values that are important for the workplace and on a personal level in effort to increase these values in society. The values targeted in this program are the following: commitment, responsibility, respect, honesty, cooperation, discipline, creativity, leadership, solidarity, and motivation.

References:


