

# Teachers' Understanding and Attitudes towards the Eclectic Method to Language Teaching in Zambia

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## ABSTRACT

Zambia is a multilingual country and it is estimated that it has 73 dialects which can be collapsed into between 30 to 45 languages. English is the only officially sanctioned language for administration, commerce, judiciary and the media. It is the only compulsory language subject in the country and the sole medium of classroom instruction from grade 5 to University. Due to its hegemonic role and status, communicative competence in English is a must if one has to excel in official domains. As such, the teaching of English is of paramount importance. The Eclectic Method is the recommended method of teaching English at senior secondary school level in Zambia. This implies that teachers should have adequate understanding of the method and hold positive attitudes towards the method for them to effectively use it. Due to its relative novelty and complexity, this study sought to establish teachers understanding and attitudes towards the eclectic method as a recommended method of classroom instruction. Face to face interviews and a quantitative questionnaire were used to collect data from 90 conveniently selected teachers of English from 9 secondary schools in Central province of Zambia. The findings show that respondents had different degrees of understanding. While some understood it as the use of several methods in one lesson, others held misconceptions about the method. Their attitudes ranged from positive, negative to neutral. The study concludes that since some teachers lacked adequate understanding of the eclectic method and some held negative to neutral attitudes, it is imperative for teacher training institutions to improve their teacher training to adequately prepare teachers in the method. Further, there is need for continuous professional development to in-service teachers to familiarize them with the method and change their attitudes towards the method.

**Key words:** Eclectic Method, Understanding, Attitudes, Teachers, English, Zambia, Secondary Schools

## INTRODUCTION

The history of language teaching has been characterised by a search for more effective ways of teaching language. Although much has been done to clarify these and other important questions in language teaching, the profession is continually exploring new options for addressing these and other

basic issues and the effectiveness of different instructional strategies and methods in the classroom. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), language teaching came into its own as a profession in the twentieth century. The whole foundation of contemporary language teaching was developed during the early part of the twentieth century. Since then, a number of teaching methods and approaches

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have been developed. Although different methods (Grammar Translation, Direct Method, Audiolingual Method, Cognitive code Approach, Situational Method, Communicative Language Teaching) have been developed and tried in the classroom, Gebhard, Gaitan and Oprandy (1990) argue that there is no convincing evidence from pedagogic research, including research into second language instruction, that there is any universal or 'best' way to teach language. They further state that while particular approaches are likely to prove more effective in certain situations than others, a 'blanket prescription' is difficult to support theoretically.

Nunan (1991:228) was probably correct when he remarked that "it has been realised that there never was and probably will never be a method for all". Since none of the methods discussed in the section above could be used effectively in isolation from other methods, the idea of Eclecticism - a conscious blending of different methods - was developed.

According to Al Hamash and Younis (1985:22) "eclecticism is defined as a type of methodology that makes use of the different language learning approaches instead of sticking to one standard approach". Pachler and Field (1997) believe that the eclectic method should be seen as an assortment of traditional and novel approaches with the aim of developing communicative competence in learners rather than as a prescriptive method of how to teach. Brown (2002) argues that eclecticism provides the solution to teaching language because the approach allows the teachers to select what works within their own dynamic contexts. Gao (2011) further states that principled eclecticism challenges the teacher to ensure that every decision about classroom instruction and activities is based on a thorough and holistic understanding of all learning theories and related pedagogies, in terms of the purpose and context of language teaching and learning, the needs of the learners, materials available, how language is learnt and what teaching is all about.

Larsen-Freeman (2000) states that a teacher can choose to be pluralistic, in which case a teacher will pick and choose from among methods to create their own blend which make allowances for differences among learners. This implies that a teacher will create his/her own method by blending aspects of others in a coherent and principled manner which result into principled eclecticism. Freeman adds that the

selection of a method to be used in the classroom will be influenced by the teacher, the students, the conditions of instruction and the broader social cultural context. He advises that there should not be any method that should be prescribed for success for everyone because each learning context requires particular methods.

Since method selection involves both thoughts and actions, it is expected that eclectic teachers should be able to give reasons for why they do what they do. Most of their decisions take into consideration the complexity of the classroom reality, including what is happening socially among the learners (Allright 1984; Nunan 1992; Prabhu 1992; Clarke 1994).

Luo et al (2001) in Gao (2011:362) sum up the five features of successful eclectic teaching as:

- 1) Determine the purposes of each individual method;
- 2) be flexible in the selection and application of each method;
- 3) make each method effective;
- 4) consider the appropriateness of each method and
- 5) maintain the continuity of the whole teaching process.

The teaching procedure should be divided into three stages namely: (a) teacher-centred at the input stage; (b) learner-centred at the practice stage; and (c) learner-centred at the production stage.

This means that the application of the eclectic approach is systematic and the teacher should have a thorough understanding of the approach and how it works in order to apply it appropriately and correctly in the classroom situation. The teacher should be aware of how s/he can recontextualise this approach to the teaching of English Grammar in his/her unique classroom situation.

The eclectic approach has several advantages. It connects classroom experiences to the daily life activities of the learners. This helps learners to understand new knowledge by drawing on what they already know. Thus, learning is not strange because the activities are life-like. Kumar (2013:2) actually states that "the purpose of advocating eclectic methods is to connect life experiences to the ideas presented in learning of the language. The types of learning activities teachers select are often directly related to their experiences in the real world". As mentioned above, this helps learners not to look at learning and the classroom as threats but as an extension of the home environment.

Ali (1981:7) lists the following principles of eclecticism:

(a) Teachers are given a chance to choose different kinds of teaching techniques in each class period to reach the aims of the lesson.

(b) There is flexibility in choosing any aspect or method that teachers think suitable for teaching inside the classroom

(c) Learners can see different kinds of teaching techniques, using different kinds of teaching aids, that help to make lessons much more stimulating and ensures better understanding of the material on the other hand.

(d) Solving difficulties that may emerge from the presentation of the textbook materials

(e) Finally, it saves both time and effort in the presentation of language activities.

From this background, it is clear that there is no one method for all. The best way to teach is to use the eclectic approach which is a blend of methods depending on the teacher, learners, materials available, the culture of the teacher and learners, background of the learners and the learning objectives. This requires that teachers are adequately trained in order to have a thorough understanding of the eclectic and how it can be recontextualised in the classroom to suit the target learners. Teachers understanding of eclecticism and recontextualisation of education knowledge become particularly crucial in teaching. Considering that Zambia is multilingual and that English is learnt as a second language, Zambian languages and cultures become part of the learners' background. Hence, the consideration of these factors in the teaching and learning of English grammar was interesting to establish.

In Zambia, the recommended approach to teaching English is eclecticism. On methods of teaching, the syllabus states "The teaching of English be eclectic"(CDC 2012:36). The syllabus also states: "It is recommended that the Senior Secondary School English Language Syllabus is interpreted through two general methodologies which should be used concurrently – the Communicative Approach and the Text-based, Integrated Approach" (Curriculum Development Centre 2012:4). The concurrent use of the communicative approach and the text based integrated approach results into eclecticism. Further, considering that the communicative approach is itself eclectic confirms that this recommendation is on

eclecticism. Pachler and Field (1997:44) stated that "the communicative approach can be seen as an eclectic assortment of traditional and novel approaches based on the tenet of the development in learners of an ability to communicate in the target language rather than as a prescriptive method of how to teach." It can therefore be reiterated that the method being recommended in the syllabus is indeed the eclectic approach.

However, for teachers to apply the eclectic method in their teaching, they have to be well trained and knowledgeable about the method. Further, they should have positive attitudes towards the method. This is the reason why this study intends to find out how teachers of English in selected schools of Zambia understood the eclectic method and the attitudes they held towards the method.

#### **Aim of the Study and Research objectives**

The aim of the study was to establish selected teachers' understanding of the Eclectic Method and what attitudes teachers held about the method.

The study sought to establish: a. teachers' understanding of the eclectic method; b. teachers' attitudes towards the Eclectic Method

#### **Literature Review**

This section reviews some studies that have been conducted on teachers' attitudes towards teaching methods and understanding or lack of understanding of teaching methods and the implications arising from the same. Some studies show that teachers do not use particular methods if they do not know or understand what the method means although it could be the recommended method by the syllabus. Note also that this section is not limited to the discussion of the Eclectic Method but the Communicative language teaching method because of its eclectic nature. Infact, Pachler and Field (1997) argue that the CLT is also eclectic. The literature review section starts with a brief discussion of teacher training in Zambia whose main focus is to train well knowledgeable teachers with positive attitudes towards not only to teaching methods but the teaching profession.

Teacher training programmes in Zambia are intended at building a teacher with the right attitude, personality, ethics and knowledge of what teaching and learning is all about. In order to do so, teacher training programmes include subjects such as

educational psychology, education sociology, general education, guidance and counselling and other supporting subjects other than the major teaching subject (MOE 1977). As mentioned above, the goal here is to come up with an all-round teacher who is versatile enough to deal with the complexities of the classroom. From what I consider as government's directive for colleges of education to produce an eclectic teacher, MOE (1977: 67) noted that: Teacher education should assist the teacher to develop his planning and instructional skills through the use of a variety of techniques and teaching methods. It should also develop his organisational and management abilities, awareness and understanding of learners needs.

From the above quote, the ability to identify learners' needs and be able to use a variety of teaching techniques and methods according to their varying characteristics surely results into eclecticism. The scope and meaning of eclecticism has been discussed earlier. Suffice to mention that, it involves the use of a variety of techniques, methods, and materials based on the fact that different learners in the classroom have different learning needs and abilities. Thus, from the quote above, one can tell that the government of Zambia through the ministry of education intends to train eclectic teachers through its teacher education programmes.

In addition, the government intends to train teachers who have multiple skills to handle the complex job of teaching. Teachers should be professional in conduct while also being knowledgeable and competent in the subjects they choose to teach. This is so because teaching demands both professional and academic skills. Further, teachers should be researchers. This means that they should continuously build on the knowledge and skills they acquire in colleges and universities. They should not be satisfied and limited to what they learn in class during teacher training; rather, they should strive to read and be aware of the new developments in the field of teaching. This calls for teachers' creativity and continuous self-development. This is partly so because the teaching profession is in continuous development and change. All these qualities and abilities are expected of Zambian secondary school teacher. For example, consider the following quote:

The teacher cannot play his various roles successfully from a position of mediocrity. Good

teaching demands that the teacher should not only possess a correct attitude and adequate knowledge of the subjects he teaches but also keep abreast of developments in those subjects and in the objectives and methods of teaching (MOE 1977:61).

It is reasonable to agree with the government that mediocrity should not have a place in the Zambian teaching service, and that training a competent, ethical and well informed teacher is the right objective of teacher training. To this end, an eclectic teacher (who is the goal of the government) should be competent in both the content and methods of teaching as well as professionally endowed in order to manage learners with their diversities.

The next part focuses on the studies which have been conducted on teachers' understanding and attitudes towards teaching methods.

Kumar (2013) conducted a study on the application of principled eclecticism to the learning of English. The aim was to discuss the relationship between spoken language teaching practice and the process of learning language effectively. The study reported that teachers mostly resorted to the use of the grammar translation method which according to the researcher was not right. The study further reports that teachers could not cope with the demands of the eclectic method. This implies that teachers did not have thorough knowledge of how the method was supposed to be applied in the classroom. From these findings, it can be argued that if one does not fully understand the method, such a one would find it difficult to even implement the method. It is therefore important that this study sought to establish teachers understanding the eclectic method which have direct implications on the classroom mis/application of the method.

Gao (2011) also conducted a study in China after a mandatory policy for teaching of English at tertiary level was introduced in 2004. The study sought to investigate the views of the lecturers, administrators and policy makers on the pedagogical shift to eclecticism. The study adopted a mixed mode of enquiry and used interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. The findings reported that lecturers had limited understanding of principled eclecticism. It was further reported that even those who showed some understanding had problems with how it could be applied in the classroom situation.

There was also resistance to eclecticism as some lecturers still used traditional methods such as the grammar translation method. This means that there is also a relationship between one's familiarity with the method and the attitudes which the individual will have towards the method. From this study, those who were not familiar with the eclectic method also resisted its use in the classroom. This is the reason why it is important that this study is addressing the two perspectives- teachers' understanding and attitudes towards the eclectic method.

However, other studies have shown that having a good understanding and positive attitudes towards a particular method does not always lead to uptake or application of the same method. Yet other studies have also reported that understanding leads to positive attitudes or that positive attitudes means having a practical knowledge of how the method can be applied. For example, Bal (2006) did a study at five different Turkish Public Primary Schools with twenty English teachers. He found that even though teachers were aware of CLT in terms of theoretical aspects and held positive attitudes towards CLT, they did not actually use important features of CLT in their classrooms. The findings of this study help us to understand the situation in Turkey and it enlightens us that it is possible to hold positive attitudes about a method of teaching, and yet fail to apply the method for which positive attitudes are held. A contradiction between teachers' attitudes and classroom practices was also found in Karavas-Doukas' (1996) study. He observed 14 Greek English language teachers' classroom practices and found that although these teachers held favourable attitudes towards CLT, their classroom practices differed significantly from the principles of the communicative approach.

A qualitative study by Coskun (2011) was conducted in Turkey whose purpose was to reveal whether teachers' classroom practices overlapped with their attitudes towards certain features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The findings indicated that there was a discrepancy between teachers' classroom practices and the attitudes they expressed. Savignon (1991: 273) believes that in order to understand the discrepancy between theory and practice, teachers' views should be investigated. In addition, Coskun (2011) pointed out that since studies of this kind may reveal different findings in different contexts, there is a need for further contextual

research, especially for the purpose of justifying possible reasons why there is a discrepancy between theory and practice. He believed that further contextual studies will pave the way for finding those factors which prevent the classroom adoption of eclecticism in actual teaching. This is why this study is particularly crucial.

Although Karava-Doukas (1996), Bal (2006) and Coskun (2011) all argued that there are sometimes mismatches between positive attitudes and implementation of a particular method, other studies have argued that positive attitudes lead to positive implementation. For example, Chang (2000) investigated the attitudes held by 110 Taiwanese teachers of English about CLT and how it could be used. The results showed that teachers held positive attitudes towards CLT and this resulted into more use of the communicative activities among the teachers of English

Indeed, the importance of attitudes in teaching cannot be overemphasised. Wafulla (2012:189) states that "attitudes held by implementers about a certain issue play a very important role in determining how that subject is going to be taught". Groux (1988) suggests that since teachers are the main agents in the implementation of the curriculum, there is need for them to have positive attitudes towards the provisions of the curriculum. Groux (1988), Hargreeves (1994), Freeman (1990) and Prabhu (1992) all argued that teachers' performance in class is largely influenced by their minds and attitudes. In fact, Freeman (1990) sees attitudes as the cause of teachers' failure or success. Thus, Richards (1996) advises that it is important to listen to teachers' voices/views about eclecticism in order to understand their knowledge of the method and their classroom practices. In this view, my study becomes very important as it establishes teachers' attitudes towards eclecticism and the impact of their attitudes (if any) on the implementation of the eclectic approach.

Studies on teachers' understanding of the methods and their classroom practice have been conducted. Adedimeji (2011) noted that despite attempts to teach English as goal-oriented and learner-centred to bring about communicative competence in the learners, there are concerns in Nigeria about students' depreciating communicative competence and continued poor performance in the use of English. The author suspected that there was a

problem with teachers because they used a single method approach to teaching which he thought was not ideal to teaching all aspects of language. Adedimeji advised teachers to know a variety of methods and how to integrate them to bring about effective learning experience for the learners. He added that the methods and classroom activities should be learner centred. A critical analysis of Adedimeji's arguments shows that depreciating communicative competence levels among learners was because teachers were not using the eclectic method because they did not know it. Thus, if a teacher does not know the meaning of the method, chances are that he/she may not use it in the classroom.

Makobila and Onchera (2013) conducted a study in Kenya whose aim was to evaluate the factors which influenced teachers' choice of theories and approaches and further evaluate the theories and approaches commonly used in teaching English. Data was collected through interviews, observations and questionnaires. The findings revealed that teachers mostly choose theories and approaches based on convenience while a few choose based on syllabus recommendation. Most teachers used approaches which portrayed them as givers of information. It was observed that teachers talked for 75% of the time spent on the lesson as learners were listening compared to only between 15% to 20% of the time which was spent on learners' reading and writing activities. This means that lessons were teacher centred. The study further revealed that teacher personality, training and the calibre of learners, curriculum objectives and text books influenced the choice of approaches and teaching materials. According to the study, the desire to pass the exam also influenced the choice of methods. Most importantly, the study also revealed that teachers training and their knowledge of the method was a very big decisive factor in the selection of the teaching method. Thus, the importance of teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards a recommended method of teaching is very crucial for research to lay a basis for continuous professional development as well as teacher education.

Ridge (2014) explored some of the challenges which teacher trainers face in South Africa in their attempt to enable trainee teachers to discover the full potential of the communicative approach to Language

Teaching and to avoid its pitfalls. One of the challenges was that teacher trainers were given very little time to enable their students gain a comprehensive understanding of applied linguistics. In addition, some of the lecturers lacked adequate knowledge of pedagogy and lacked hands-on contact with the exigencies of teaching in schools.

Mareva and Nyota (2012) conducted a study in Zimbabwe to investigate whether the traditional structural approach which emphasises grammatical or linguistic competence still had an influence on English language teaching in Zimbabwe or the communicative approach which is the recommended approach by the syllabus was being implemented. Data was collected through interviews, questionnaires and document analysis. The study reported that secondary school teachers mainly used the structural approach and its associated approaches while CLT played second fiddle. The study noted that teachers either lacked knowledge of CLT and its benefits or they simply resisted CLT due to conservatism.

Arising from the above study, Mapako and Mareva (2012) attempted to investigate secondary school teachers' conception of the Communicative Language Teaching approach in Harare, Zimbabwe. The findings were that although teachers claimed to be aware of the approach and demonstrated some knowledge of CLT, they also held 11 glaring misconceptions about CLT. Some of the misconceptions were that they interpreted learner centeredness as teachers being passive and learners doing things on their own. Secondly, they thought that CLT did not concern itself with grammar teaching and that the method meant group work and pair work in every lesson. They also argued that teaching/learning materials required to be used with CLT were scarce and expensive. From the findings, it is fair to argue that teachers did not fully understand the meaning of CLT. This means that the method was not fully utilised in the classroom and with the desired competence. In fact, the method was not utilised in some cases due to ignorance on the part of the teachers. The misconceptions which teachers had are a clear indication of their lack of understanding of the method. It is therefore clear from this study that knowledge of the method and positive attitudes towards the same is paramount for the success of the teacher and the method.

In Zambia, Munakampe (2005) conducted a study to establish the level of implementation of the communicative approach to English teaching at grade 5 and the possible constraints faced by teachers. The findings of the study showed that teachers were not implementing CLT and they didn't understand the underlying psychological processes of language learning. Further, learners did not participate actively in the lesson and the lesson lacked communicative activities. This study is important in as far as it gives us that some teachers in Zambia at primary school are not aware of the important features of CLT.

Mbozi (1989) sought to investigate the factors contributing to disparities in grade 12 English results between grant aided schools and government schools. This was based on the observation that grade 12 results in English were better in grant aided than in government schools. The study reported that the quality of teachers and learners was a huge contributing factor to success in the learning process. This means that the quality of teachers and learners contribute significantly to a successful learning and teaching experience. It is worth noting that while this study did not look at teaching methods, it still informs the current study that the quality of teachers (their knowledge and competence) and learners can be crucial to the implementation of eclecticism too. This is the reason why, this study also looked at teacher understanding of the eclectic method which is the officially recommended method of teaching English at secondary school.

Sakala (2012) conducted an interesting study relative to my own. He sought to establish the factors which contributed to the excess use of the lecture method of teaching among high school teachers in Kitwe and Kalulushi Districts. The major findings of the study were that teachers excessively used the lecture method due to large class sizes, wide syllabi, lack of teaching/learning materials, the need to prepare learners for examination, lack of participation by learners and the teacher training programme where the lecture method was used predominantly. It is important that these findings place a lot of importance on teachers' knowledge of the method in order for a particular method to be implemented. For example, stating that they used the lecture method because lecturers during training used it is tantamount to lack of pedagogical knowledge on the part of teachers. It is widely understood that lecturers predominantly use

the lecture method. Thus, teachers also copied through imitation the teaching styles of their mentors in teacher training institutions. Regardless, teachers in this study lacked adequate knowledge of the recommended method which resulted in using a different method with which they were familiar.

In summary, several studies on teachers' understanding and attitudes towards methods of teaching have been reviewed. The common message from the findings is that teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the method recommended by the syllabus for them to effectively implement it. Further, it has also been established that due to ignorance, some teachers shun the method of teaching and adopt any method they may conveniently use. Thus, studies on teachers' understanding of recommended methods of teaching give us an insight into whether or not teachers apply the method and with what success. Studies on teachers' attitudes towards recommended methods of teaching such as the Eclectic method and CLT have also been reviewed. Findings show that while in some cases, positive attitudes lead to implementation of the methods, others show that one may have positive attitudes but fail to practically fail to use the methods. All in all, knowledge of methods of teaching and positive attitudes towards the methods is an important part of the classroom success of a teacher.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

This is a mixed research study design employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Creswell (2003:20, 21) states the following about mixed research study:

*Mixed methods* approach involves collection of both quantitative and qualitative data sequentially. The researcher bases the inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research problem... data collection involves gathering numeric information (e.g., on instruments) as well as text information (e.g., on interviews) so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information..

This study used a mixed research design comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques during data collection and analysis because the researcher wanted to come up with rich

information which would improve the validity and reliability of the overall findings. This reasoning is supported by Kidder and Fine (1987) who note that combining qualitative and quantitative methods is a form of triangulation that enhances the validity and reliability of one's study.

Qualitatively, the study used face to face interviews with teachers of English while quantitatively; a questionnaire was administered to 90 secondary school teachers of English. Thus, the interview guide and the questionnaire were the two research instruments used in the study. Interviews were used to collect data on teachers' understanding of the Eclectic Method as well as their attitudes towards the method. A questionnaire was also used to further collect data to answer the question of teacher attitudes towards the eclectic method. The teachers were conveniently selected from 9 purposively selected secondary schools. Data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Data collected through interviews was analysed using thematic analysis in which it was categorised according to two themes in line with research objectives. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS to generate descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The general objective of the study was to establish teachers' understanding of the eclectic approach and the attitudes they held towards the approach. This was particularly important because as the MOE (1977) suggests, a good teacher is one who possesses both the correct attitude and adequate knowledge of the subject and methods of teaching. To answer the question of teachers' understanding and the attitudes towards the eclectic approach, face to face interviews were used to collect the data from teachers. In addition, a questionnaire was administered to teachers to generate quantitative data. This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first part presents teachers' understanding of the eclectic approach while the second one focuses on the attitudes held by teachers towards the eclectic approach. In the interview data, teachers' responses have been labelled as R (for 'response') with a corresponding number for easy reference. R represents 'response'.

### Teachers' Understanding of the Eclectic Approach

The findings from interviews with teachers of English showed that while some teachers had knowledge of the eclectic approach, others did not. Those who showed understanding of the approach explained that the eclectic approach involved the use of various methods in one lesson. They added that the use of different methods was determined by the context of teaching and learning. They stated that the eclectic approach involved active learner participation and it was easy for a teacher to know whether the learners were following or not. Here are some of the responses from selected teachers:

*R1: The eclectic method is where you use different methods but it depends on the situation in the classroom. It is a combination of techniques.*

*R2: Eclectic is using different methods instead of one method. Instead of using audio-lingual only, you use other methods as well.*

*R3: It is mixed and it is based on the learners and it allows the learner to practice and you can easily see if the learner has grasped what he or she has been learning. So, you try to use different methods until the learners understand the topic.*

*R4. The eclectic approach is using different methods. If you use this method and it doesn't work, you try another one. If it fails, you try another one, just like that. It is good because some learners don't understand easily.*

These responses reveal a very good (R 1 and 2 above) to somewhat limited understanding of eclecticism (R3 and 4). Looking at the responses above, the common point in the quotes is that eclecticism involves the use of different methods and that the use of various methods depends on the learning context. These responses correspond with Kumar's (2013:1) view that "the eclectic method is a combination of different methods of teaching and learning approaches" as well as Brown's (2002) argument that eclecticism provides the solution to teaching because the approach allows the teacher to select what works within their own dynamic contexts. However, other teachers had a limited understanding of the approach. R3 and R4 appeared to see it as the use of many isolated methods. They believed that using the eclectic approach means starting with one method, and if it fails, the teacher should resort to another one until s/he finds one which works. Thus, while they define the approach correctly (mixed



method and use of different methods respectively), they seem not to know how the method should be realised in the classroom. This is evident from their arguments that a teacher should continue using different methods until s/he finds one which works.

There were also teachers who were not sure about the meaning of the eclectic approach while others were completely ignorant of the approach. Some teachers explained what the approach meant but added that they were not sure if the way they understood it was correct. Other teachers claimed to know what it meant but that they had forgotten the meaning, thus, they could not explain it. Some teachers explicitly stated that they did not know what the eclectic approach was and how they could apply it in the classroom. In short, while some teachers were not sure about their understanding of the approach, others did not know the meaning of eclecticism and its implications to language teaching. The following responses from selected teachers provide evidence to this claim:

**R5:** *I don't know the eclectic approach very much. From the little I know, it is a mixture of approaches. This is where you choose a suitable method depending on the suitability of learners. I am not very familiar.*

**R6:** *The eclectic approach, I am not sure. But I think it's about beliefs, tricks, something like that. But I am not sure. But how to apply it as a method, to use in class, we are ignorant.*

**R7:** *The eclectic approach, ha! That one I have forgotten. Yes, I have just remembered. Ee, I don't know. Can you shed a bit more light? Anyway, I don't know.*

**R8:** *I can't really say I know what it means. As for how to use it in class, I don't know.*

In R5, the description of the eclectic approach was correct but the teacher was not sure if s/he was correct or not. In the other responses, the respondents claimed to have forgotten, not sure, not knowing and giving general statements without substantiating them. I take those who had forgotten the meaning not to have known the meaning of the approach. They were either familiar with the term but did not know what it meant. Some of those could have learnt the approach in college but no longer knew its meaning. R6 shows that the respondent was not sure but was simply guessing. Tricks and beliefs have to do with any method, not just the eclectic approach. Thus, R6's argument that the eclectic approach had to do

with 'tricks and beliefs' was simply too general to show understanding of the approach. R8 clearly shows that some respondents did not know what the eclectic approach meant. While forgetting is a possible explanation for their ignorance, it can also be argued that some teachers may not have been introduced to the eclectic approach during teacher training.

In summary, the findings on teachers' understanding of the eclectic approach have shown that while some teachers had good knowledge of the approach, others held limited knowledge while others did not know what the approach meant. Those who knew the meaning of the approach explained that the eclectic approach referred to the use of various methods in a lesson and that the combination should be context sensitive. Those who showed limited knowledge explained that the eclectic approach meant the use of various methods but had misconceptions about how it could be used in the classroom. Finally, there were teachers who lacked knowledge of the eclectic method and did not even know how it could be used in the classroom.

#### **Teachers' Attitudes towards the Eclectic Method**

To answer the question of teachers' attitudes towards the eclectic approach, the study drew on both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was generated through face to face interviews with the teachers. The quantitative data was generated through a quantitative questionnaire which was also administered to the teachers. The first part of this section presents the interview data while the second one presents the quantitative data.

#### **Teachers' attitudes towards the eclectic method: Qualitative data**

The findings revealed that some teachers held positive attitudes about the eclectic approach while others did not. In addition, there were also teachers who held neutral attitudes since they could not tell whether it was good or not. Some of the reasons for those who held positive attitudes were that the eclectic approach allowed teacher creativity and freedom and was not restrictive. They also noted that the eclectic approach helps a teacher to reach out to all the learners irrespective of their differences. Learner participation and inclusiveness were other reasons cited for having positive attitudes. The

following two extracts show some of the favourable responses:

*R9: I find eclecticism helpful in that you are not limited. It gives you a chance to be creative whereas other methods restrict you.*

*R10: The advantage of the eclectic method is that you capture all the learners because if you use the lecture method, others will not understand. So, it brings learners together.*

From the two extracts above, it can be argued that these respondents held positive attitudes towards the eclectic approach. Since the eclectic approach is the recommended approach to teach English in Zambia, positive attitudes held by teachers of English are very important because as Al-Magid (2006) notes, effective implementation of any teaching approach depends on teachers' positive attitudes towards a particular approach. Akinsola and Olowojaiye (2008) also believe that favourable attitudes result in teaching and learning achievement.

However, some teachers held negative attitudes towards the approach stating that it was time consuming as well as confusing to learners. They added that it was too demanding on the part of the teacher as it involved the use of several classroom activities in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers explained that the approach was also confusing especially to slow learners. They explained that learners easily understood concepts when a teacher only used a single method. However, if a teacher switched to another method or change from one activity to another within the same lesson, learners would think that the teacher was introducing a different concept and they would get confused and fail to follow the lesson. For this reason, they stated that a single method with the use of one activity was more straightforward and helped the learners to follow the lesson better than the eclectic method which calls for the use of various activities within one lessons ( See Li 2012). The following are two of the more negative responses:

*R11: The eclectic approach is time consuming. Sometimes, you can plan a lesson. After all those activities, it will be time up. Then, you can't give an exercise. Then, you want to postpone the lesson to the next period. So, it takes too much time. If you involve learners, the lesson will take many weeks. Maybe in Lusaka, learners can help. But here in rural areas, they can't learn.*

*R12: It is also confusing especially to slow learners. If you explain something in a different way, a slow learner will think that it is a different thing altogether. So, as a teacher, you end up misleading the learners. So, we don't use it. We put it in the lesson but it's just for supervisors. But we use what works for learners. So, we use the lecture method. Because the people who check the file expect the eclectic approach, so, we put it there in the lesson plan, so we write it just on paper. In remedial work, that's where we use another method".*

The eclectic method, as previously noted, involves a variety of classroom activities and is learner centred (Ali, 1981;, Larsen-Freeman,2000,; Wali, 2009;, A Gao, 2011;, Wali 2009). However, as seen from the above two findings, teachers find the approach time consuming, too involving and not suitable for some learners. For these reasons, they felt that a single method approach was better than the eclectic approach. While these findings signal lack of practical knowledge of the eclectic method on the part of teachers, such negative attitudes towards the method can also be attributed to the training these teachers received where they may not been adequately prepared to know both the theory and practicalities of the Eclectic Method. These findings also have implications on the teachers' application of the method where those who expressed ignorance and uncertainty about the method would obviously not be able to apply the method to teach English despite being the recommended method in the senior secondary school syllabus.

#### **Teachers' attitudes towards the eclectic method: Quantitative results**

The findings from the interview data, particularly in terms of attitudes towards the eclectic approach, were largely supported by the quantitative data elicited by the questionnaire. Consider the following statistics in response to the statements in the questionnaire.

41.1% of the respondents believed that this approach was the best method, against 4.4% who disagreed. This may indicate that a significant number are sufficiently knowledgeable about the eclectic approach and other methods to make use of them with confidence. However, quite a significant number - 22.2% - stated that they were not sure if it was the best or not. This may indicate a lack of thorough

training in the method or that they did not frequently use the method, leading to uncertainty about whether or not it was the best method. Finally, 16.7% of the respondents stated that they did not know if it was the best, indicating either ignorance of the method or such a low level of understanding of it that they had never even tried it themselves.

**Table 1.** The Eclectic Approach is the best way to teach English

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	37	41.1	41.1
	Disagree	9	10.0	51.1
	Not Sure	29	32.2	83.3
	Don't Know	15	16.7	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0

**Table 2.** The Eclectic Approach is an interesting approach to teach English

Items	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	40	44.4	44.4
	Disagree	4	4.4	48.9
	Not Sure	20	22.2	71.1
	Don't Know	26	28.9	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0

In line with the responses to statement 1, 44.4% indicated that it was an interesting approach as opposed to the 4.4% who disagreed. But again, a fairly significant percentage - 22.2% - indicated uncertainty while quite a large group - 28.9% - indicated that they simply didn't know whether or not the eclectic approach was an interesting approach to use in teaching grammar.

Taken together, the following can be concluded: On the one hand, these findings are indicative of a fairly large body of respondents (40) claiming to be sufficiently grounded in the eclectic approach in order to apply it successfully in their classrooms, leading to positive attitudes. On the other hand, there are those (nearly 60% of all respondents) who feel uncertain about the merits of the approach, are fairly ignorant about it or who simply don't recognize its value, resulting in neutral to negative attitudes. This is despite it being the recommended approach by Zambia's Ministry of Education.

In summary, both the qualitative and quantitative data have shown that some teachers held positive attitudes; others held negative attitudes while others held neutral attitudes towards the eclectic method.

**CONCLUSION**

The first objective was on whether or not teachers of English understood the meaning of the Eclectic method. The findings showed that some teachers had a thorough understanding of the approach. They explained that it involved the use of various methods in one lesson. They also explained that it was responsive to learner differences that existed in the classroom. However, some teachers were not sure if they understood the meaning of the approach and how it could be used. Other teachers did not know what the approach meant. Some teachers held misconceptions about the approach where they viewed it as the use of several methods one after the other until a teacher finds one which works. It was argued that doing so was in fact, advocating for a single method. Two implications arising from these findings re that teachers who did not adequately understand the eclectic method or were not sure were also not able to ue it in the classroom. Secondly, the same teachers suggest that they were not adequately trained into eclecticism in order for them to fully understand its meaning.

To answer the question on teachers' attitudes towards the Eclectic method, data was collected using interview data and a quantitative questionnaire which was administered to teachers. Some teachers held positive attitudes towards the eclectic approach while others held negative to neutral attitudes. Those who held positive attitudes explained that the eclectic approach was flexible, allowed teacher creativity and it enables teachers to reach out to various learning needs of the learners. Those who held negative attitudes stated that they did not like the approach because it was time consuming, schools did not have teaching materials and that the use of different methods was confusing to some learners. Due to these factors, they stated that they preferred a single method approach. There were also some teachers who held neutral attitudes to the eclectic approach either because they did not critically think about it or they simply did not know the eclectic method. These results were consistent with quantitative responses in

which 41.1% of the respondents believed that this approach was the best method, 4.4% stated that the method was not the best, 22.2% stated that they were not sure if it was the best or not while 16.7% of the respondents stated that they did not know if it was the best or not.

Taken together, 41.1% of the respondents held positive attitudes to the method while 58.9% of the respondents felt uncertain about the merits of the approach, were fairly ignorant about it or who simply didn't recognize its value, resulting in neutral to negative attitudes. This is despite it being the recommended approach by Zambia's Ministry of Education. Al-Magid (2006) stated that effective implementation of any education policy depends on teachers' positive attitudes and Akinsola and Olowojaiye (2008) observed that teachers' favourable attitudes results in good achievement. Thus, neutral and negative attitudes held by some teachers imply that they were not using the method despite it being the recommended method by the syllabus.

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