

# **Developing The Oral Competence in English of Adult Learners; An Investigative Study on ELT Approaches and Methods Used by Private Tutors in the Colombo District**

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Teaching English as a Second Language in a non-formal educational context is a deviant form of education from the normative formal and systematic educational context i.e. the school system in the country. Further, a common perception held by adult learners of the English language is that the formal education system does not adequately incorporate relevant ELT methods and approaches to enhance oral competence in English thus being monotonous. Thus, the majority of adult learners prefer non-formal educational institutes to develop their oral competence in English after formal schooling under the perception that a variety of ELT methods and approaches are used in the aforementioned context. Hence, this cross-sectional qualitative study intends to investigate different ELT approaches and methods used by private tutors i.e. teachers from non-formal education contexts, to teach English as a second language with special emphasis on oral competence. Moreover, the following research questions were formulated through the research problem; to identify different English language teaching techniques used by private tutors to develop the oral competence of adult ESL learners and to identify different English language teaching approaches and methods used by private tutors to develop the oral competence of adult ESL learners. The research adopted a qualitative approach. Moreover, the participants of the research were four private tutors from the Colombo district. In order to collect data, the private tutors were interviewed and later four teaching sessions from each participant were observed under their consent using an open observation protocol. The findings revealed that eclectic method was extensively used in the classrooms with special emphasis on cognitive method, communicative approach, audio-lingual method, community language learning method, and total physical response approach. Thus, the exploratory study revealed that eclecticism; amalgamation of selected approaches and methods, is given priority in non-formal educational contexts to develop oral competence in ESL adult learners.

**Keywords:** Adult Learner, ELT Approach, ELT Method, Oral Competence, Non-Formal Educational Context