



# Embracing Change: The Importance of Professional Development Programs in ELT

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### Abstract

This article explores the chronological development and key features of various English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies, highlighting the importance of continuous professional development for educators. Starting from early methodologies like the Grammar-Translation Method and the Direct Method, the paper traces the evolution of ELT through mid-20th-century experiments such as the Audio-Lingual Method and Cognitive Code Learning. The discussion extends to late 20th-century approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and goes on to cover recent trends like Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), Translanguaging, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). By examining these methodologies, the article argues for the necessity for educators to stay updated with the latest trends and practices in ELT. Professional Development Programs (PDPs) are identified as crucial tools for teachers to improve their skills, be aware of and adapt to new methodologies, and maintain relevance in this rapidly evolving field. The paper concludes by emphasizing that continuous professional development is no more a luxury but a basic requirement for effective teaching in the modern ELT landscape.

### Keywords

English Language Teaching (ELT), Pedagogy, Professional Development, Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Cognitive Code Learning, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), Translanguaging, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Language Teaching Methodologies, Teacher Training.

### Introduction

Pedagogy, like many other systematic fields of study, has undergone tremendous changes since the latter half of the previous century, particularly concerning the principles, methods, and techniques of teaching. Despite these advancements, pedagogy is still considered 'an immature science,' as Su Yong points out (Su, 2014). Although there has been debate on the 'scientificity' of pedagogy (Liberato, 2023), the prevalent view is that it possesses the hallmarks of a science and is both the science and art of teaching.

Given the systematic management required both inside and outside the classroom, and the risk of educators becoming redundant if they fail to keep up with trends, continuous professional training is essential for all facilitators. While pedagogy initially took

considerable time to implement major changes, the pace at which new methodologies have been tried and tested since then is almost mind-boggling.

In this paper, we will explore the chronological development and key features of various ELT methodologies, emphasizing the importance of Professional Development Programs (PDPs) in equipping educators to adapt to these changes.

## Literature Review

With the emergence of various methodologies, there has been significant development in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). These methodologies resulted from a combination of broader educational theories prevalent at the time, and the need to address the different requirements of learners.

### Early Methodologies

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method were two of the earliest approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT). The focus of GTM was translation and rote memorization, while that of the Direct Method was immersion and conversation, which aimed at the development of practical language skills without translation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

### Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Innovations

In the middle of the twentieth century, Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) and the Series Method became prominent, based on behaviorist principles and kinesthetic learning practices. ALM stressed on repetition and drill activities, while the Series Method believed learning of a language and physical actions go hand in hand (Fries, 1945; Gouin, 1894).

### Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century to Present

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasized on meaningful communication and learner-centered activities, which was a departure from the mechanical learning methodologies preceding it. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) believed in teaching that reflected real-life situations. (Hymes, 1972; Long & Crookes, 1992). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) envisioned integrating language instruction with content to be taught, in an attempt to enhance both linguistic and cognitive skills (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010).

### Recent Trends

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) that creates an environment conducive to interactive learning through digital tools, Translanguaging and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), methodologies that emphasize on inclusiveness and emotional integration (García & Wei, 2014; Zins & Elias, 2007) are recent trends in ELT.

A glance at the evolution of ELT methodologies makes one thing abundantly clear: continuous professional development is essential for staying aware of the latest trends and effectively implementing them in teaching practices.

### Early Methodologies

#### Grammar-Translation Method

A cursory look at the history of the evolution of pedagogy is beneficial in understanding the significant advancements made in the science of teaching. Greek, the language of history, science and philosophy during the Classical Period, continued its sway until 6<sup>th</sup> century AD (Mark, 2023). By the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Latin had begun to establish its prestige as the official language of the Church and the primary medium for serious study in history, theology, philosophy, and the sciences, a status it maintained for the next thousand years ("Medieval Latin Literature," n.d.). After the Middle Ages, when learning began to take place in various languages like English, it became necessary for learners to have access to works written in Latin. From this necessity, the Grammar-Translation Method of teaching was born (Carruthers, 2018).

The Grammar-Translation Method, like any other teaching methodology, had its own limitations. In an attempt to overcome them, various techniques mushroomed up. The Series Method of teaching by Francois Gouin was one of them. In contrast with the prevailing Grammar-Translation Method, *A First Lesson in French*, (1894) proposed a language teaching method that directly connected experiences to the target language without any translation. One of the most obvious differences between the Grammar-Translation Method and the Series Method was the latter's shift of focus from writing-reading to speaking-listening (Mart, 2013).

## Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Innovations

### Audio-Lingual Method or the Army Method

The Second World War created a situation where language learning became a matter of life or death. Learning foreign languages like German and French, often on short notice, became necessary for many American soldiers, especially for those who had to work behind their enemy lines. Failing to sound 'native like' could spell almost certain death (talk about motivation!). Based on the twentieth century American psychologist B. F. Skinner's theories on behavior, Charles Carpenter Fries and Robert Lado developed the famous Audio-Lingual Method also known as the Army Method. This method emphasized reinforcing learning through repetition and drilling. Departing from the explicit teaching of grammar and vocabulary in the Direct Method, it focused on structured drills and the spontaneous use of language (Maaliah et al. 2017).

After its incredible popularity during the Second World War and the succeeding decade, the Audio-Lingual Method faced criticism for purportedly overemphasizing drill and repetition, neglecting communicative competence, not giving importance to cognitive aspects, and being less useful for advanced learners (Arroway, 2016).

### Cognitive Code Learning

The behaviorist concepts of the Audio-Lingual Method were increasingly challenged towards the advent of 1960s. Taking cue from the transformational-generative grammar theory of Noam Chomsky and the works of educational psychologist David Ausubel, a new learning method called Cognitive Code Learning was introduced. This method, based on cognitive psychological processes in language learning, contrasted with the Audio-Lingual Method, which relied on memorizing and mechanical repetition. Instead, Cognitive Code Learning emphasized understanding through logical comprehension of rules, deductive grammar learning and error correction through logical reasoning (Yuksel 2020).

### Total Physical Response

Simultaneous with the advent of Cognitive Code Learning, Dr. James J. Asher developed Total Physical Response (TPR), which aimed at coordinating language use with physical actions. He believed this approach would augment recollection and comprehension. Emphasizing the role of teacher as a 'model' in language learning, TPR stressed listening and responding with physical responses (Murray, 2014). Its proponents believe it provides comparatively more stress-free learning experience, making use of the natural order of language acquisition, and that it enhances memory.

### Silent Way

Another interesting methodology of the period was the Silent Way. Based on the learner centered theories of Jean Piaget and Maria Montessori's educational philosophies, Egyptian born educationist Dr. Caleb Gattegno reasoned that a teacher, functioning as a facilitator of learning, should be almost silent while the students are on a journey of exploring, discovering, problem-solving and self-correcting, with minimal or no intervention from their teacher (Budiharto, A. 2018).

## Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century to Present

The 1970s witnessed an overdrive in pedagogical experimentation with methodologies like Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning (CLL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) becoming the vogue.

### Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia (also known as Desuggestopedia) is the brainchild of Bulgarian educator psychiatrist Dr. Georgi Lozanov who believed in the incredible ability of the human brain to process vast amounts of information when it is provided with a relaxed atmosphere (James, 1976). He believed that this process could be achieved through the techniques of positive reinforcement and suggestion, because learning takes place both consciously and unconsciously involving both peripheral suggestions as well as direct teaching (Bancroft, 1995). To facilitate this,

the teacher, with the help of visual aids and techniques of relaxation, assumes an authoritative role, similar to that of a parent, while the learner keeps the open mindedness of a child with its parent.

### **Community Language Learning**

Community Language Learning (CLL) was yet another methodology of the seventies aimed at reducing the anxiety and stress of learning a new language. American educator psychologist Charles A. Curran envisaged teachers functioning as counselors while the students acted as clients. He also believed that learning is a community effort in which the learners working in supportive groups enhance the learning experience (Spada, 2007).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), anchored on the theories of communicative competence by Dell Hymes and the views of Michael Halliday on the role of functional linguistics and language in social contexts, was a reactionary methodology to the more purportedly rigid Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). CLT revolves around various interactive, communicative activities that reflect language use in daily life. Teachers function as facilitators who provide and support learners who experiment with language use (Thamarana, 2015). The proponents of CLT believe that such opportunities produce meaningful, and hence, abiding communication.

### **Natural Approach**

The Natural Approach, similar to its sibling methodologies of the age, stressed the necessity of comprehensible input and communication in a stress-free environment, providing a natural way of learning a new language. It had its roots on the observations of the American linguist and educator Stephen Krashen, especially his Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis, along with those of Spanish educator Tracy Terrell (Giorgi et al. 2021). Delayed production, where the learners were not forced to produce until they felt they were ready, was the hallmark of this method.

### **Task-Based Language Teaching**

The final years of the twentieth century witnessed the introduction of another learner centered approach, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), in which the focus is on the authentic use of language and meaningful communication, rather than the direct teaching of grammar. To achieve this, learners are presented with real-life-like situations where they must complete tasks that demand the use of various language skills, including listening, speaking, reading and writing (Ellis, 2019). The theories of British applied linguist Michael Long and his compatriot linguist Jane Willis form the underlying principles of this approach. In their focus on the use of authentic language and communication, Task-Based Language Teaching and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) share common ground.

### **Content and Language Integrated Learning**

The requirement to learn several subjects in a foreign language led to the formation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). In this approach, equal importance is given to both learning the subject matter and acquiring language skills. This integration of language learning and content challenges the students linguistically as well as cognitively, stimulating higher order cognitive skills while developing language skills. CLIL is effected through thematic lessons presented via task-based activities, fostering a collaborative learning environment for the learners. The all-British team of David Marsh, Do Coyle, Philip Hood and Keith Kelly are the driving figures behind this methodology (Mahan, Brevik, & Ødegaard, 2018). Although these individuals may not have worked collaboratively, their collective contributions have significantly shaped CLIL.

### **Recent Trends**

#### **Translanguaging**

Some of the newest trends in ELT include the methodology known as Translanguaging where multiple languages are resorted to enhance communication and learning (Cummins, 2019). Drawing from the concepts of the Welsh linguist Cen Williams, in Translanguaging, Cuban American Ofelia García challenges the traditional language



separation approach (García 2017). She argues that it is possible to enhance English language proficiency by tapping the learners' expertise in native languages and cultural resources, which in turn promotes a sense of belonging pride in identity. Addressing the diverse language and cultural backgrounds of the students, Translanguaging tries to make pedagogical experience more inclusive and accessible (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). Unlike many conventional methodologies, Translanguaging utilizes bilingual instruction techniques where learners receive clarifications and instructions in both their native as well as target languages, which can be highly useful for low achieving students (Vaish, 2019). According to the proponents of Translanguaging, making use of bilingual posters and other learning materials creates a comfortable learning environment, apart from providing enhanced cognitive malleability and awareness of metalanguage.

### **Social-Emotional Learning**

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), another new methodology, aims at enhancing learners' academic capabilities, emotional astuteness, resilience, social abilities by providing a conducive environment. Linguists such as Daniel Goleman believe that integrating the concepts of Social-Emotional Learning into English Language Teaching (ELT) will empower students to better manage their emotions, catalyst building of relationships, teach how to arrive at responsible decisions, all while improving their language acquisition (Hoffman, 2009). SEL tries to equip students to come to terms with themselves by recognizing their emotional states, weaknesses and strengths, which in turn will enable them to control their emotions, set realistic goals, and manage stress of learning and integration. Inculcating positive feelings like empathy, putting up with different perspectives and developing ability to diffuse conflicts are the aims of SEL. Teaching techniques for Social-Emotional Learning include 'mindfulness' activities, simulations, role-plays, group activities, journals to express feelings, and meaningful discussions in classrooms.

### **Technology-Enhanced Language Learning**

Yet another new trend, Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), as its handle suggests, tries to tap technological resources such as learning apps, online learning management systems, and virtual classrooms for language learning, banking on the technical savvy of learners, especially young ones. The overall aim of the methodology is to achieve learner involvement, mutual interaction, and a more immersive and effective learning experience (Yeşilel, 2016). Technical possibilities such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), and Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR), online learning platforms like Moodle and Coursera, social media platforms like Facebook and twitter, Artificial Intelligence powered tools like 'chatbots' are some of the Technology-Enhanced Language Learning platforms. Some of its perceived advantages include immersiveness, the ability to provide immediate feedback, learner independence, readily available authentic material and so on (Boonyopakorn, 2016). This kind of classroom makes use of techniques such as blended learning methods, flipped classrooms, language labs etc.

### **Inclusive Education and Diversity Method**

Inclusive Education and Diversity Method is another fad in ELT. This methodology focuses on bringing learners of varying spectrum such as differently abled individuals, those from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, migrants and minorities who live on the peripheries of the society and so on into a single, compassionate and inclusive learning community (Darling-Hammond, 2017). One of its purported aims is breaking down of different barriers that keep societies divided. Fostering a highly flexible learning environment and a system to provide differentiated instructions to suit learners' differing requirements and abilities are its major challenges.

### **Observations:**

Evidently, in the field of pedagogy in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular, new methodologies and practices are frequently experimented with. It is imperative to stay updated with these developments and experiments for multiple reasons. To start with, teachers should be aware of the new trends in teaching to facilitate the most effective methodology that caters to the abilities, circumstances, strengths and weaknesses of learners. It is also necessary to be professionally equipped to avoid pitfalls that may arise due to

outdated practices. There is always the danger of being outdated and redundant, unless professionals are in constant search for honing their skills through training. Keeping up with the latest trend becomes a Herculean task. This is where proper and updated Professional Development Programs become the lifeline for educators. PDPs are no more luxuries, but essentially routine activities.

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