



History of English Language Teaching: Pedagogical Mutations in Instructional approach

Sulabha Dixit, Dr. Monica Singh

The Faculty of Arts, Rabindra Nath Tagore University, Bhopal, India

Abstract

The history of English language teaching is a remarkable testimony of how pedagogy evolves and adapts itself to changing environments, cultures, trends and purposes. Right from the ancient Classical Method to the more recent Audio-lingual Method, educationists have theorised and put into practice various methods of teaching English for the benefit of learners who are not native speakers of English but wish to learn it in order to move up the ladder socially, academically and professionally. The Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Method, Designer method, Suggestopedia, Silent Way, Grammar-Translation Method, among many others, are some ways in which English has been taught. History bears witness to the fact that the pedagogical approach is more student-centric today than it was in the past. Educationists are mindful of taking into consideration the temperament, need, interest, psychological state, mental ability, ethnicity, culture and social background of the learner. In other words, the approach has become more inclusive and student-centred. Similarly, ESL programs endeavour to accommodate students from different language backgrounds, accepting the inevitable mother tongue influence in the way they use English.

Keywords: pedagogy, history, language, teaching, learning, method, ESL, suggestopedia, programs, inclusive

Full Paper:

The English language has been on a growth trajectory down the ages and is surviving and prospering because of its immense power to adopt and adapt to changing times. The archives of print media bear witness to the changing faces of the English language and the methods of its propagation. Alongside the novel speaking styles, its teaching tradition has also been subject to tremendous change, especially throughout the twentieth and the twenty-first century. This is particular to Language classrooms more than other subjects. While the methodology of teaching subjects like Maths or Physics, has remained the same to a large extent, this can hardly be said for English language teaching in general. This paper takes a brief look at some milestones in the development of pedagogy and the traditions of language teaching. The attempt is to find ways and means of the optimal methods and techniques for language teaching and learning. (VYGOTSKY, LEV S. 1962).

The Classical Method:

In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, foreign language learning in the western world was associated with the learning of Latin and Greek and a knowledge of these languages was considered a sign of to their speakers' intellectuality. A great deal of importance was given to rote learning of grammatical rules, syntactic structures, vocabulary and translation of literary texts. The languages under study were not used in oral communication but both Latin and Greek were being taught in order to be seen as "scholarly" or creating an illusion of "erudition." In the late nineteenth century, the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method, in which the main focus was on the grammatical rules attending the process of translating from the second to the native language (ATWELL, NANCIE. 1987).

Although the Grammar Translation Method is still one of the most popular and favourite models of language teaching, its contribution to language learning has been lamentably limited as it has been impervious to educational reforms. The main reason for its ineffectiveness was its focus on a "dissected body" of nouns, adjectives, and prepositions rather than real language to enhance a student's communicative ability in the foreign language.

The Direct Method

It was first used in France and Germany in the early 1900s to assist soldiers to communicate in a second language quickly. Another name for the direct Method of teaching English is the Natural Method. It is used to teach a number of different languages and the main idea is that it only uses the target language that the students are trying to learn. It's chief focus is on oral skill and it is taught via repetitive practice. Grammar is taught in an inductive way wherein students pick up the rules through the teacher's oral presentation. Callan and Berlitz are the popular forms of the direct Method today.(CALKINS, LUCY M. 1986).

The principles of the Direct Method were as follows:

- The target language was the medium of classroom instruction.
- There was
- no rote learning of grammar rules, but it was taught with an inductive approach
-
- Emphasis was given on the teaching of everyday vocabulary
-
- Pictures and objects were used to teach concrete vocabulary, while abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas
-

This Method was greatly popular at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. However, it the constraints of budget, time, and classroom size made it difficult to use.. After a period of decline, however, this Method was revived, leading to the emergence of the Audiolingual Method.

The Audio-Lingual Method:

The Audio-Lingual Method also known as the New Key Method or Army Method, is based on a behaviourist theory that constant reinforcement results in learning. Just as it happens in the army that bad behaviour is punished and good behaviour is rewarded, in this Method, the use of bad English by the learner receives negative feedback, and the contrary happens when a student demonstrates a good command over English.

This is similar to the Direct Method and like its predecessor it only uses the target language. The most visible difference between the Audio-Lingual Method and the Direct Method is in its focus of teaching. The Direct Methods vocabulary focuses on the teaching of whereas the Audio-Lingual Method focuses on teaching specific grammar. (CAMBOURNE, BRIAN. 1987).

History shows that during World War II the Americans felt obligated to become conversant in the languages of their allies and enemies alike. To achieve this end, the Direct Method of language learning was appropriated. That's how it came to be known as the "Army Method," which later in the 1950s was christened as the Audiolingual Method.

The following points sum up the salient features of the Method:

- Practice of imitation or mimicry and learning of set phrases
- by heart
- Use of repetitive drills to teach structural patterns.
- No grammatical explanation.
- Emphasis on learning contextual vocabulary.
- Use of audio tapes and visual aids..
- Attention given to correct pronunciation.
- Prompt positive reinforcement to correct responses.

However, its popularity declined after 1964, as Wilga Rivers' exposed its drawbacks. It was felt that too much attention was being paid to memorisation and drilling but not enough to the role of context and world knowledge in the teaching of language. It was realised that language was not mastered through a process of habit and that mistakes were not necessarily bad or pernicious (FARRELL, EDMUND J. 1991).

The "Designer" Methods of the 1970s:

In the history of English language teaching, the Chomskyan revolution in linguistics is a noteworthy milestone. It drew the attention of teachers of language as well as linguists to the "deep structure" of language. At the same time, psychologists drew attention towards the affective and interpersonal nature of learning. As a consequence, new pedagogical approaches were proposed. These new approaches towards language teaching threw new light on the importance of psychological factors in language learning. This "one-size-fits-all" approach according to David Numan(1989-97), earned these language teaching methods the name "designer". (FARSTRUP, ALAN, and MYERS, MILES. 1996).

Suggestopedia

This Method of language teaching is based on a behaviourist theory and connected to pseudoscience. This pedagogical approach relies heavily on students' belief regarding the Method's effectiveness. Various choices are offered to the learner by the practitioners of suggestopedia, with the conviction that it would help them take more responsibility for their learning.

The atmosphere and the physical surroundings of the class play an important role. It's mandatory for the teacher to ensure that all learners feel equally comfortable and confident. When the teacher/ facilitators are getting trained to use the Suggestopedia method, there's a lot of input related to art and music. The three distinct phases of a typical Suggestopedia lesson are: i –

1. Deciphering
2. Concert Session
3. Elaboration (GOODMAN, KENNETH, and SHANNON, PATRICK. 1994).

According to Suggestopedia, the results would certainly be great if we used our brainpower and inner capacities. Lozanov (1979) believed that we have the potential of learning much more than we allowed ourselves to believe. Based on Soviet psychological research on yoga and extrasensory perception, he introduced a method for teaching that used relaxation as a means of transferring new knowledge and material. Music played a vital role in his Method. Lozanov and his followers endeavoured to present vocabulary, readings, role-plays and drama with classical music in the background while the students sat relaxed in comfortable seats. This process was believed to make students "suggestible." At this point in the history of English language teaching, it may be noticed how the focus is changing from teacher centric to student centric.

The Silent Way:

The Silent Way is a method of language teaching which emphasises learner autonomy. The new role for the teacher is to act merely as a facilitator trying to encourage students to become more participative in their learning. The chief technique of this way of teaching is for the teacher to say very little, so that students can become autonomous and take responsibility as well as control of their learning. A large chunk of the lesson focuses on pronunciation. This Method of teaching English follows a structured syllabus, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation . drilled and recycled constantly for reinforcement. The facilitator evaluates students through careful observation, encouraging them to correct their own language errors. and in all probability, there might never be a formal test that the learners have to take. The Silent Way was characterised by a problem-solving approach to learning and rested on cognitive rather than affective arguments. Gattegno (1972) held that development of independence and autonomy was in the learners' best interests and that they ought to be encouraged to cooperate with each other in solving language problems. As the teacher is supposed to be a silent (albeit attentive) observer- hence the name of the Method. According to this pedagogical approach, the teacher must disabuse himself of the tendency to explain everything to them (GRAVES, DONALD. 1983).

Nonetheless, The Silent Way faced an onslaught of criticism as it was argued that such a classroom environment where the teacher was silent and aloof would not be conducive to learning.

Strategies-based instruction:

This pedagogical approach for teaching English as a foreign language was popularised by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), as well as others before and after them. Strategies based instruction emphasises the importance of style awareness and strategy development to ensure mastery of a foreign language. A number of textbooks and curriculum offering guidelines on constructing strategy-building activities were introduced. Given below is an example of a list of "Ten Commandments" for good language learning (Brown, H. D. [2000: 137]):

	Teacher's Version	Learner's Version
1	Lower inhibitions	Fear not!
2	Encourage risk-taking	Dive in
3	Build self-confidence	Believe in yourself
4	Develop intrinsic motivation	Seize the day
5	Engage in cooperative learning	Love thy neighbour
6	Use right-brain processes	Get the BIG picture
7	Promote ambiguity tolerance	Cope with the chaos
8	Practice intuition	Go with your hunches
9	Process error feedback	Make mistakes work FOR you
10	Set personal goals	Set your own goals

These injunctions cum suggestions intended to sensitise learners to the importance of attaining autonomy, i.e. taking charge of their own progress, and not expecting the teacher to spoon feed them.

Communicative Language Teaching:

Communicative Language Teaching is not merely a method but a noteworthy pedagogical approach. It proffers a theoretical position about the nature of language as well as language learning and teaching.

Basic premises of the communicative approach are:

- Focus on all aspects of communicative competence including: grammatical (linguistic) competence,
- pragmatic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes
- fluency and accuracy as complementary principles underpinning communicative techniques
- Using the language in unrehearsed contexts (MANDEL, BARRETT J. 1980).

The Grammar Translation Method:

This traditional or 'classical Method of teaching English is grammar heavy and relies a great deal on translation. It's still commonly used while learning certain languages. It is a preferred style of teaching English in some countries. In this Method the students are encouraged to learn all grammar rules, so they'd be able to translate a number of sentences from their native tongue to English. This is particularly recommended for those students who wish to study literature at a deeper level (SHIEL, GERRY. 2002).

At this stage of our engagement with the topic, it would be worthwhile to take an overall view of some of the various language teaching program models that have contributed significantly to the narrative of the History of English language teaching.

Education	EFL	Immersion	CBLT	CALL
Who teaches?	Language Teacher	Subject Teacher	Language Teacher	Subject Teacher or expert language teacher
Focus on	Language	Subject	Language	Subject & Language
Feedback on	Language	Subject	Language	Subject & Language
Assumption	Language is learned by studying it	Content is learned without specific attention to language	Language is learned by studying content	Language depends on content & vice versa.

Fig: Program Models for Teaching English Language Learners (Ehrman, M.1990)

The efficacy of various program models for language teaching for minority students yet remains a topic of controversy. Although there may be several advantages in a one program over another, there are learning needs which require (Collier 1992; Ramirez, Yuen, and Ramey 1991), a variety of programs to be effectively addressed. In such cases, the choice ought to be made locally after careful consideration of the needs of the concerned students and the available resources.

ESL program models

ESL programs are suitable for districts where there is a wide diversity among the language minority population representing various different languages. ESL programs are designed to accommodate students from different language backgrounds in the same class even when the teachers are not necessarily proficient in the home language(s) of the students.

- **ESL pull-out**

This is generally useful in elementary school settings. Students are required to spend a part of the school day in a mainstream classroom, but are periodically pulled out for a while each day for learning English as a second language.

- **ESL class period**

Generally used in middle school settings, the students are given ESL instruction during a regular class period and may be grouped for instruction according to their level of English proficiency.

- **The ESL resource centre**

In this variation of the pull-out design, students from several classrooms or schools are brought together in the resource centre which houses the ESL materials and staff in one location. Most resource centres are usually supervised by at least one full-time ESL teacher.

Bilingual program models

In all bilingual program models, the students' home language is used for instruction in addition to English. The teachers are required to be proficient in both English and the student's home language and the students are grouped according to their first language.

Early-exit bilingual programs

In these programs the students receive some initial instruction in their first language

- **, primarily for the introduction to reading and also for clarification. These early exit program**

models are designed to help children acquire the English skills required to succeed in an English-only mainstream classroom.

Late-exit programs

- **The main difference between early-exit program**

models and late exit model is in the amount and duration of time used for instruction in English as well as the length of time students spend in order to participate in each program" (Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991). It enables students throughout elementary school to continue receiving 40% or more instruction in their first language.

- **Two-way bilingual programs**

This pedagogical model is also known as developmental bilingual program wherein a group of language minority students from a single language background are put in the same classroom along with a language majority (English-speaking) students. Medium of instruction both English and the minority language. The language majority students serve as native-speaker role models for their peers. These two-way bilingual classes may be taught by by two teachers, one of whom is bilingual or a single teacher who is proficient in both languages. (Ehrman, M., & Oxford, R. 1995).

Other program models

Some other English language teaching programs do not offer instruction either in the native language or direct instruction in ESL. Nonetheless, the mode of instruction is tailored to meet the requirements of students who are not proficient in English language.

- **Sheltered English or content-based pedagogical programs**

These English teaching models group together the language minority students from different language backgrounds in classrooms where teachers use English as the medium of instruction. They adapt their language to the proficiency level of the students for providing content-area instruction. Gestures and visual aids are also used to help students understand the lesson being taught. Although the ultimate aim of sheltered English and content-based programs is the acquisition of English, the instruction focuses on content rather than language (Gan, Z., 2011).

- **Structured immersion programs**

These programs use only English as a medium of instruction, but no explicit ESL instruction is offered. Just like sheltered English and content-based programs, English is taught similarly through the content areas. The teachers of Structured immersion are supposed to have strong receptive skills in their students' first language apart from having a bilingual qualification or ESL teaching credential. However the teachers limit the use the children's first language only for offering clarification of English instruction. In this pedagogical practice, most students are mainstreamed after 2 or 3 years (Li, J. & Qin, X., 2006).

The Success of these program models depends on their ability to promote academic achievement of language minority students and enable them to develop academic skills while learning English. The best program organisation would be one that meets the linguistic, academic, and affective needs of students; while providing the language minority students with the instruction necessary to empower them to make progress in school at a rate commensurate with their native-English-speaking peers, while making the best use of the available district and community resources.

Some more Program Models for Language Instruction

- *The Transitional bilingual education* program is designed to provide instruction in both English and the home language for one to three years, though the ultimate aim is to achieve English language proficiency as soon as possible.
- *The Maintenance bilingual education* program offers instruction in both English and the mother tongue throughout elementary school and into the upper classes. In this case the aim is the development of full bilingualism and biliteracy for learners
- *of English*

language.

Factors determining the choice of program model

There are

four Essential Factors that govern the choice of program models:

- *1. Curriculum Coordination:* How can the learners of English language receive the best possible support from the ESL specialist for learning the academic content of their particular grade level?
- *2. Social Integration/Stigmatisation:* How can the learners from minority groups stop feeling alienated and start to feel a sense of "belonging" in the ESL classroom?
- *3. Scheduling Issues:* How can the timetable be negotiated to fit in students from multiple grade levels?
- *4. Teaching Facilities:* Is there a provision for a separate space for the ESL classroom? (Nyikos, M., & Oxford, R.L., 1993)

In India however, most English medium convent and missionary schools established during the British raj and thereafter, continued to teach English via the *direct Method* and the *audio-lingual Method*. All those who attended English medium convent schools during the mid-twentieth century and the late 1900s will remember how their schools promoted the use of English in the classroom as well as the school premises. The teacher as well as the pupils were expected to communicate only in English. Deviation from this rule was not allowed, any lapse was a punishable offence and adherence to it was encouraged, applauded and rewarded. The wannabe scholars would be shamed for lapsing into their mother tongue for want of adequate vocabulary. Chastity of the spoken language was much valued and adherence to the correct pronunciation (Queen's English) was considered mandatory. Some so-called elite English medium schools would go as far as levying a fine for every word of the vernacular language used by any student during routine conversations inside the school premises. Reading, writing and speaking in English was compulsory in such schools although there was no formal training in English grammar. Regardless of their background, caste, creed, ethnicity or their mother tongue, all students alike were expected to use English language as the medium of communication and instruction. Later this approach was criticised for being colonisation of the mind and efforts began to re-instate the lost glory of the vernacular tongues.

As language is a product of culture, the change in lifestyle goes hand in hand with the adoption of a foreign language. India has been witness to how in the heyday of post-colonial English language supremacy, even leisure activities would be an imitation of the English folk. Games like chess, scrabble, cricket, football, hockey, baseball, badminton, basket ball, volleyball, throwball and the like were popular among the convent-educated youth and indigenous games like Chaupar, Pittul, khokho, fugri, mall khamb, kallari payattu, and *kabaddi* were allowed to recede into oblivion. Bread, cereal, egg and toast would be preferred for breakfast rather than poha or upma. Use of spoon, knife and fork was also adopted by these people who wished to flaunt the superiority of their English education and westernised upbringing; turning their nose up at all that was local and Indian (which they termed condescendingly as 'desi').

It was only in the 1990s that this trend slowly began to be replaced and the recognition of importance of the vernacular tongue, desi food, clothing, medicine and lifestyle began to be recognised. Jazz, pop, rock and disco music played at all parties and celebratory events began to be replaced by Punjabi and other folk numbers as well as Hindi pop, Bollywood and regional music bands and many hybrid versions thereof.. The supremacy of the English tongue lost its elitist lustre and put on a common man's garb. The teaching of

English language has also been undergoing a parallel transition from colonialism to commonality and elitism to practicality. Indianisms and mother tongue influence on spoken English is no longer seen as offensive and the use of English for practical purposes (and employability) is encouraged.

Thus it is evident that the English language teaching methodology has been evolving with the changing times and the needs and interests of the learners. It has become more student-centric or learner-centric and seems to be gravitating towards learner autonomy.

'What seems to be happening is that those people who were once colonised by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it – assisted by the English language's enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers.'

-Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (Granta Books 1992).

References:

- VYGOTSKY, Lev S. *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 1962
- CALKINS, LUCY M. *The Art of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 1986
- CAMBOURNE, BRIAN. "Language, Learning, and Literacy." In *Towards a Reading/Writing Classroom*, ed. Andrea Butler and Jan Turbill. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 1987

History of English Language Teaching | TEFL Articles <https://www.englishclub.com/tefl-articles/history-english-language-teaching.htm>

- FARRELL, EDMUND J. "Instructional Models for English Language Arts." In
- *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*, ed. James Flood, Julie M. Jensen, Diane Lapp, and James R. Squire. New York: Macmillan. 1991
- Nunan, D. *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989
- GOODMAN, KENNETH, and SHANNON, PATRICK. *Basal Readers: A Second Look*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen. 1994
- Gattegno, Caleb. *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools the Silent Way*. New York: Educational Solutions, 1972.
- GRAVES, DONALD. *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 1983
- O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- MANDEL, BARRETT J. *Three Language Arts Curriculum Models*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. 1980
- SHIEL, GERRY. "Reforming Reading Instruction in Ireland and England." *The Reading Teacher* 55 (4):372–374. 2002
- Ramirez, J. D., Yuen, S. D., & Ramey, D. R. Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early-exit, and late-exit transitional bilingual education programs for language-minority children. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International. 1991
- Nyikos, M., & Oxford, R.L., (). A factor-analytic study of language learning strategy use: interpretations from information processing theory and social psychology. *Modern Language Journal*, 77 (1), 11-23. 1993
- Li, J. & Qin, X., (). Language learning styles and learning strategies of tertiary-level English learners in China. *RELC Journal*, 37(1), 67-90. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0033688206063475>,
- Rushdie, Salman. 'Imaginary homelands : essays and criticism : 1981-1991 London : Granta Books ; London : Penguin Books, 1992.

