

# English Language Teaching (ELT)



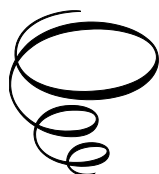
# English Language Teaching (ELT):

*From Historical Foundations  
to Future Directions*

By

Pankaj Vaishnav

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to Future Directions

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*I am deeply grateful to the many people who supported the development of this book. I owe my deepest gratitude to my **father**, and to the cherished memory of my **mother**, whose values and encouragement continue to guide me; whose life have been a quiet testament to resilience, integrity, and dedication. Their unwavering belief in the power of education, even in the face of challenges, has shaped my path in profound ways. This work stands as a reflection of the values they instilled in me.*

*My heartfelt thanks go to my wife, **Harshada** whose love, patience, and steadfast support have been my anchor throughout this journey. She stood beside me through long hours, moments of doubt, and the many demands this work required, always encouraging me to move forward with confidence and purpose. Without her, this book would not have been possible.*

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**Dr. Pankaj Vaishnav**

“To teach a language is to stand at the crossroads of past wisdom and future change, guiding learners to find their voice in an ever-evolving world.”

—*Pankaj Vaishnav*

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## PREFACE

This book grew out of many years of teaching, research, and reflection on the evolving realities of English Language Teaching. Working with diverse groups of learners in multilingual and multicultural contexts, I became increasingly aware of the need for a comprehensive volume that brought together historical foundations, theoretical perspectives, classroom practices, and emerging innovations in a single, coherent framework. The field of ELT has undergone rapid and often dramatic transformation, shaped by technological change, global mobility, and new understandings of how languages are learned. This book aims to provide an integrated overview of these developments for teachers, researchers, and students who wish to engage critically with both established and emerging trends.

The chapters draw from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, including linguistics, psychology, pedagogy, and technology studies. While each chapter addresses a specific theme, the book as a whole is guided by a central concern: understanding how English can be taught and learned effectively, ethically, and inclusively in a rapidly changing world. I have attempted to highlight practical insights alongside theoretical foundations, and to present discussions that are grounded in contemporary research yet accessible to practitioners.

This book would not have been possible without the support of colleagues, mentors, and students whose questions and experiences continually shaped my thinking. I hope that this work contributes to ongoing conversations in ELT, offering a resource that informs professional practice while encouraging further inquiry. My sincere wish is that readers find in these pages both clarity and inspiration as they navigate their own journeys in language education.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to the many people who supported the development of this book. I owe my deepest gratitude to my **father**, and to the cherished memory of my **mother**, whose values and encouragement continue to guide me; whose life have been a quiet testament to resilience, integrity, and dedication. Their unwavering belief in the power of education, even in the face of challenges, has shaped my path in profound ways. This work stands as a reflection of the values they instilled in me.

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This book is not only a product of academic effort but also of the love, strength, and encouragement that my family has given me so generously.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CALL –  | Computer-Assisted Language Learning      |
| CLIL –  | Content and Language Integrated Learning |
| CLT –   | Communicative Language Teaching          |
| EMI –   | English-Medium Instruction               |
| ELT –   | English Language Teaching                |
| EFL –   | English as a Foreign Language            |
| ESL –   | English as a Second Language             |
| ICT –   | Information and Communication Technology |
| L1 –    | First Language / Mother Tongue           |
| L2 –    | Second Language / Target Language        |
| MOOCs – | Massive Open Online Courses              |
| MALL –  | Mobile-Assisted Language Learning        |
| TBLT –  | Task-Based Language Teaching             |
| VR –    | Virtual Reality                          |
| AR –    | Augmented Reality                        |
| AI –    | Artificial Intelligence                  |
| ML –    | Machine Learning                         |

# INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a global language has undergone a remarkable evolution. It is shaped by historical developments, theoretical advances, and the changing demands of an interconnected world. As English continues to serve as the lingua franca of international communication, English Language Teaching (ELT) has grown into a complex and multifaceted field. This book, *English Language Teaching (ELT): From Historical Foundations to Future Directions* offers a comprehensive exploration of ELT's past, present, and future, providing insights into how the discipline has developed and where it is headed.

The book is organized into three parts, each focusing on a key dimension of ELT.

## **Part 1: Historical and Theoretical Foundations**

This section sets the stage by examining the evolution of English language teaching and the major theories that have informed its practices.

- **Chapter 1** provides a historical overview, tracing the development of ELT from its early roots through colonial expansion, the rise of English as a global medium, and the policy shifts that contributed to its prominence in education systems worldwide.
- **Chapter 2** explores foundational theories of language learning, including behaviorist, cognitive, and sociocultural models. These frameworks are examined in terms of their influence on pedagogical methods and their relevance to contemporary classroom practices.

## **Part 2: Current Practices in English Language Teaching**

The second part focuses on modern approaches and innovations currently shaping the ELT landscape.

- **Chapter 3** investigates the growing role of digital tools, online platforms, and mobile technologies in transforming how English is taught and learned, particularly in the context of accessibility and learner autonomy.
- **Chapter 4** examines Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), emphasizing authentic communication, learner interaction, and its adaptation across diverse educational contexts.
- **Chapter 5** introduces the Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach, highlighting how task completion promotes language use in meaningful, real-world contexts and encourages critical thinking and fluency.
- **Chapter 6** presents Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), an interdisciplinary approach that merges subject content with language learning. It considers CLIL's role in bilingual education and its potential for holistic, content-driven pedagogy.

### **Part 3: Future Directions in English Language Teaching**

The final section looks forward to the innovations, challenges, and opportunities that will define the next chapter of ELT.

- **Chapter 7** explores emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, adaptive learning systems, and immersive environments like virtual and augmented reality, considering their transformative potential in language education.
- **Chapter 8** addresses global trends and region-specific challenges. It includes the pressures of globalization, linguistic equity, and sociocultural dynamics across Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe. It also discusses how ELT professionals can respond to these evolving demands with context-sensitive strategies.
- **Chapter 9** concludes the volume by synthesizing insights across the chapters and reflecting on the future of ELT. It emphasizes the need for flexible, inclusive, and culturally aware approaches as English continues to evolve in a rapidly changing world.

**Table 1: Structure and Thematic Overview of the Book**

| <b>Section</b>                            | <b>Chapter</b>               | <b>Key Focus</b>  |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| Part 1:<br>Historical<br>&<br>Theoretical | 1: Historical<br>Overview    | Evolution of ELT; global spread                             |
|   | 2: Theoretical<br>Approaches | Behaviorist, cognitive, sociocultural<br>theories in ELT    |
| Part 2:<br>Current<br>Practices           | 3: Technology in<br>ELT      | Digital tools, online platforms, mobile<br>learning         |
|   | 4: CLT                       | Communicative competence; real-world<br>communication       |
|   | 5: TBL                       | Task-based instruction; learner<br>engagement               |
|   | 6: CLIL                      | Bilingual education; integration of<br>content and language |
| Part 3:<br>Future<br>Directions           | 7: Emerging<br>Technologies  | AI, adaptive learning, VR/AR in ELT                         |
|   | 8: Global Challenges         | Regional issues; globalization; policy<br>responses         |
|   | 9: Conclusion                | Synthesis; future pathways; pedagogical<br>adaptability     |

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE BOOK

The purpose of *English Language Teaching (ELT): From Historical Foundations to Future Directions* is to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the evolving field of English Language Teaching. Aimed at educators, researchers, and policymakers, this book offers a detailed examination of foundational principles, contemporary practices, and future developments shaping ELT worldwide. The scope of the book spans a broad spectrum of topics essential to understanding the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of language education. It begins with a historical overview, tracing the evolution of teaching methodologies and the theoretical frameworks that underpin current practices. This foundation helps readers appreciate the roots of modern pedagogical approaches.

Subsequent chapters explore current practices and trends in ELT, including the integration of technology, the rise of communicative and task-based teaching methods, and content-based instruction. The discussion also includes innovative assessment practices and how these align with evolving learner needs. Attention is given to the diverse contexts in which English is taught, ranging from multilingual classrooms and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to young learners and globalized educational environments. This diversity highlights the importance of adapting ELT strategies to meet varying learner profiles and institutional demands.

Looking forward, the book addresses emerging technologies, global shifts in language policy, and the socio-cultural and political challenges that influence language learning. It highlights the critical need for ongoing teacher professional development and responsive, equitable language education policies. By combining historical perspective with forward-looking analysis, this book equips its readers with the understanding and tools needed to engage critically with the changing landscape of English Language Teaching.



**PART 1:**  
**HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL**  
**FOUNDATIONS**

# CHAPTER 1

## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

### **1.1 Introduction: Evolution of ELT Methodologies**

The history of English Language Teaching (ELT) reflects a diverse progression of methodologies and instructional paradigms, each shaped by its historical, philosophical, and pedagogical context. These approaches have evolved significantly over time, offering critical insights into the principles that support modern ELT practices. This chapter traces the major milestones in ELT methodology, focusing on the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method, each of which laid foundational groundwork for contemporary practices.

### **1.2 The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)**

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is defined as “a language teaching method based on the explicit teaching of grammar rules and the direct translation of sentences between the first and target language” (Richards and Rodgers 2001). It emerged in the early 19th century, originally developed for teaching classical languages such as Latin and Greek and later adapted to modern languages, including English. It emphasizes grammatical accuracy and translation, reflecting a belief in the transferability of structured knowledge across languages. According to Grenfall and Harris (2017), the GTM represents a direct application of grammatical rules to second-language learning, seeking at minimum a “best fit” when transitioning from the learner’s first language to the second.

This method prioritizes reading and writing skills, with students learning grammatical rules deductively and memorizing vocabulary lists. Translation of sentences and texts between the native and target languages

is central. For example, students might be asked to translate “*The boy throws the ball*” into the target language, reinforcing structural accuracy over spontaneous communication. Gamage (2020) notes that such techniques of translation and memorization had a considerable positive impact on the teaching-learning process, particularly when compared to some newer methods that often lacked structure. GTM places a heavy emphasis on teacher authority; the teacher explains rules, corrects errors, and typically dominates classroom discourse. As Kravchenko (2023) argues, this creates extreme teacher dependence and eliminates the need for spoken interaction among learners.

Despite its effectiveness in developing reading comprehension and grammatical knowledge, GTM has been widely criticized for its mechanical nature and neglect of oral communication. Its limited emphasis on listening and speaking made it poorly suited for learners seeking communicative competence in real-world contexts. Nevertheless, scholars such as Cook (2010) have pointed out that GTM continues to be relevant in examination-driven contexts, where accuracy, translation skills, and written proficiency remain central to educational success.

### **1.3 The Direct Method**

Emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a response to GTM’s shortcomings, the Direct Method sought to emulate natural language acquisition. It is defined as “a method that refrains from using the learner’s native language, emphasizing the inductive teaching of grammar through direct exposure to the target language” (Howatt and Smith 2014). Instruction is conducted entirely in the target language, and grammar is taught inductively through exposure and contextual usage rather than explicit explanation. This approach places a strong emphasis on speaking and listening, aiming to immerse learners in authentic communication. The Direct Method makes extensive use of real-life situations and visual aids, integrating vocabulary and concepts with immediate, contextual meaning. For instance, instead of translating the word “apple,” a teacher might point to an apple and say, “*This is an apple,*” encouraging students to repeat and use it in sentences such as “*I eat an apple.*” According to Skidmore (1917), its effectiveness lies in its physiological and psychological

orthodoxy, particularly its emphasis on auditory input as a natural route to language acquisition. Moreover, it arouses student interest by offering practical achievement, contributing to motivation and engagement.

In Direct Method classrooms, students are encouraged to speak freely, gesture, act, and interact. Errors are tolerated as part of the learning process, and teachers actively promote language production regardless of fluency or accuracy. Sanako (2023) observes that with consistent exposure and reinforcement, students demonstrate significant improvements in both fluency and accuracy. Language, in this approach, is not merely a subject to be studied but a tool for communication. However, this method is not without its limitations. Bunrosy and Vireak (2024) note that while enhancing oral proficiency it neglects reading and writing skills, It impedes the development of well-rounded language ability. Additionally, adapting the method to diverse learner needs can be challenging, especially in contexts where access to authentic materials or trained instructors is limited. Its inconsistent implementation across educational settings has also been a point of critique. As Stern (1992) observes, the assumption that second-language acquisition mirrors first-language learning can be idealistic, particularly in adult education contexts. Nevertheless, the Direct Method's focus on immersion and communicative use of language influenced later approaches such as the Audio-Lingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching, and resonates strongly with Krashen (1982) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in language acquisition.

## **1.4 The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)**

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) is defined as “a method of foreign language teaching that emphasizes the teaching of speaking and listening before reading and writing, relying heavily on pattern drills and habit formation” (Richards and Rodgers 2001a). The mid-20th century witnessed its rise, strongly influenced by behaviorist theories of learning Skinner (1957) and structural linguistics. This method focused on developing correct language habits through repetition, drilling, and reinforcement. Rilling (2018) explains that in ALM, listening is prioritized

as the first skill to be developed, with grammar taught implicitly through repeated patterns and reinforced prior to minimal explicit explanations.

In practice, ALM classrooms typically employ scripted dialogues, choral repetition, substitution drills, and role-playing to internalize grammatical structures and pronunciation. For example, a teacher might present a dialogue—“*How are you? – I am fine. Thank you.*”—which learners repeat in unison before practicing substitutions (“*How is she? – She is fine. Thank you.*”). Grammar is not overtly explained; instead, mastery is developed through consistent and accurate practice. Mart (2013a) emphasizes that the goal of ALM is to help students respond quickly and accurately in spoken English by teaching vocabulary and grammar through repeated dialogue. The method’s strength lies in its systematic approach to pronunciation and structural control, and it played a significant role in intensive language training programs during the post-war era, especially in the U.S. Army Specialized Training Program. However, it was critiqued for its unmeaningful, contextualized communication. The mechanical nature of drills and lack of learner autonomy often led to boredom and superficial learning. As Chomsky and Skinner (1959) argued in his critique of behaviorism, language acquisition involves creativity and cannot be reduced to stimulus-response patterns. Consequently, as communicative goals gained prominence, ALM fell out of favor, paving the way for more interactive and learner-centered approaches.

## 1.5 The Communicative Approach

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a paradigm shift in English Language Teaching with the emergence of the Communicative Approach, or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Richards and Rodgers (2001a) define CLT as “an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language.” Grounded in sociolinguistic theories, particularly those of Hymes (1972a) on communicative competence and M. A. K. Halliday (1978) on language as social semiotic, CLT revolutionized ELT by shifting the focus from grammatical accuracy to meaningful communication.

A hallmark of CLT is the use of authentic materials and real-life communication tasks that reflect genuine language use. Unlike earlier methods centered on grammar and vocabulary in isolation, CLT emphasized language functions such as requesting, apologizing, and offering, which mirror actual communicative needs. For example, in a CLT classroom, learners might role-play ordering food in a restaurant or planning a trip, integrating vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics. As Bureković et al. (2023) highlight, CLT promotes student interaction through role-plays, pair and group work, and task-based exercises, with teachers acting as facilitators who encourage meaningful exchange among learners. The approach's core goals are to develop communicative competence, pragmatic skills, and cultural awareness. However, its implementation has not been without challenges. Critics have noted difficulties in balancing fluency with accuracy, adapting to diverse learner backgrounds, and managing large classes where individualized attention is limited (Littlewood 2011). Furthermore, while CLT stresses learner interaction, some contexts lack resources or teacher training to sustain its learner-centered ethos. Despite these challenges, CLT has been instrumental in inspiring subsequent methodologies, notably Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), both of which continue to shape contemporary ELT.

## **1.6 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)**

Emerging in the late 20th century as a practical extension of CLT, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is defined as “an approach where learners carry out communicative tasks using the target language, with the focus on meaning rather than form” (Ellis 2003). In contrast to traditional methods that foreground grammar, TBLT emphasizes learning through problem-solving activities, meaning-focused communication, and authentic language use.

One of TBLT's defining features is its learner-centeredness: students are given autonomy to determine how to complete tasks, which fosters creativity and independence. For example, a task might involve planning a holiday using brochures and online resources, requiring students to negotiate, decide, and present their plan. In such a way, students are

engaged in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in combination. Alisoy (2023) observes that unlike conventional assessment methods reliant on written tests, TBLT evaluates learners based on their ability to navigate tasks and reflect critically on outcomes. This shift not only encourages active engagement but also supports integrated skill development.

TBLT has been widely praised for promoting meaningful language use and enhancing communicative competence. Nevertheless, practitioners face several challenges: designing contextually relevant tasks, ensuring task authenticity, and developing assessment tools that effectively capture performance. Skehan (1998) cautions that without careful balance, tasks may prioritize fluency at the expense of accuracy. Despite these concerns, TBLT remains a powerful methodology that embodies the communicative spirit while responding to real-world language needs.

## **1.7 Key Milestones in ELT History**

Building on the methodological shifts outlined earlier, the evolution of ELT has also been shaped by broader milestones that reflect the field's responsiveness to changing educational, technological, and theoretical landscapes. Among the most influential are the rise of applied linguistics, the integration of technology, and the professionalization of language teaching (Vaishnav, 2026). Together, these developments expanded ELT beyond classroom practice, embedding it within wider academic, institutional, and global contexts.

### ***1.7.1 The Rise of Applied Linguistics***

Applied linguistics is broadly defined as “the systematic application of linguistic theories to solve real-world language-related problems” (Schmitt and Celce-Murcia 2002). It emerged in the mid-20th century as a critical foundation for ELT. It has shaped nearly every dimension of the field—from methodology to curriculum design, testing, and sociolinguistic analysis. As Adnan Salih (2022) explains, applied linguistics encompasses both the theoretical study of language acquisition and its practical implementation in teaching contexts.

Key contributions include Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, which identified developmental stages of learning; Interlanguage Theory, which reframed learner errors as signs of progress; and frameworks such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBLT), which drew legitimacy from applied linguistics research. Needs analysis and syllabus design became more rigorous and learner-centered, while innovations in assessment emphasized reliability and fairness through systematic error analysis and standardized testing. Applied linguistics also paved the way for technology-enhanced learning, particularly through Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and corpus linguistics, which allow teachers to design authentic, data-driven learning experiences. Beyond pedagogy, it has influenced policy and teacher development, advocating for culturally responsive instruction, multilingual education, and reflective practice through classroom research. In this sense, applied linguistics not only refined classroom methodologies but also contributed to the professionalization and inclusivity of ELT.

### *1.7.2 Technological Milestones in ELT*

Technology has consistently been harnessed to reinforce and expand prevailing methodologies, each era producing tools that reflected contemporary pedagogical priorities:

- **1950s–1960s:** Language Laboratories – Supported Audio-Lingual Method drills by enabling repetitive listening, recording, and immediate feedback.
- **1980s–1990s:** Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) – Interactive programs facilitated grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice, offering individualized, multimedia-rich learning.
- **1990s–2000s:** Internet and Online Resources – Websites, forums, and email exchanges extended ELT beyond classrooms and enabled authentic communication.
- **2000s–2010s:** Interactive Whiteboards and Smart Classrooms – Integrated multimedia lessons and collaborative activities, aligning with communicative and task-based pedagogy.

- **2010s–present:** Mobile Learning and MOOCs – Apps like Duolingo and Babbel, along with MOOCs and video conferencing platforms, democratized access to English instruction and promoted personalized, flexible learning.

These milestones highlight how technological innovation has consistently shaped both methodology and accessibility, moving ELT toward more interactive, inclusive, and globally connected models.

**Table 1.1- Chronological ELT Methodologies and Their Key Features**

| Period           | Method                                | Key Features                                       | Influences / Limitations  |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Early 1800s      | Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)      | Focus on grammar rules, translation, teacher-led   | Rooted in classical education; effective for reading/writing but neglects oral skills       |
| Late 1800s–1920s | Direct Method                         | Emphasis on speaking/listening, real-life context  | Inspired by natural language acquisition; criticized for limited focus on literacy skills   |
| 1940s–1960s      | Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)            | Habit formation, drills, structural practice       | Influenced by behaviorism and structural linguistics; criticized for mechanical learning    |
| 1970s–1980s      | Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) | Functional use, interaction, learner-centered      | Grounded in sociolinguistics; balancing fluency vs. accuracy can be challenging             |
| 1980s–present    | Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)   | Task completion, meaning-focused communication     | Builds on CLT; challenges in task design and assessment                                     |
| 1990s–present    | CLIL and Technology Integration       | Language + content, digital platforms, CALL, MOOCs | Promotes multilingual competence and global access; requires trained teachers and resources |

## 1.8 Conclusion

The historical development of ELT methodologies, from the Grammar-Translation Method to Communicative and Task-Based approaches demonstrates the field's search for effective, learner-centered, and context-sensitive pedagogy. At the same time, the rise of applied linguistics, the integration of technology, and the professionalization of teaching have broadened the field's intellectual and institutional foundations. Taken together, these methodological and structural milestones illustrate ELT's adaptability to shifting educational needs and global realities.

This trajectory not only provides context for contemporary practice but also sets the stage for examining emerging trends, challenges, and innovations in ELT, which are explored in the following chapters. Understanding the past allows educators and researchers to build upon this legacy, ensuring ELT continues to thrive in an interconnected and multilingual world.

## References

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