

Innovative Approaches in English Language Teaching: A Comparative Analysis of Traditional and Modern Methods

Amir Abdulhussein Hashim^{1*}

¹Department of English, College of Education, University of Sumer, Iraq

*Corresponding Author: Amir Abdulhussein Hashim

Department of English, College of Education, University of Sumer, Iraq

Email: drameralbuhmedee@gmail.com

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Abstract: With English turning out to be a needed international tool for communication, debate after debate has risen on what methodology best teaches the language. This review article covers a range of ELT methodologies and their evolution, from traditional approaches contrasted with modern methods to strengths, limitations, and the place of technology within them. Traditional approaches to teaching, like grammar-translation, audio-lingual, and direct instruction, focus on the precept of structured learning; they focus on grammar rules and vocabulary. These methods, however, very often result in the negligence of communicative competence and also fail to engage learners actively, which in turn limits their real-life applicability. In contrast, contemporary methods such as CLT, TBL and TELL focus on interaction, fluency and learner autonomy. These methods, while promoting practical use of the language and integrating technology to enhance learning, also have tools for personalized and adaptive learning. However, the challenges posed by these methods, such as the digital divide and resistance to change among educators, are a significant barrier. Also very important is the need for interaction between traditional and modern, leading to a balanced framework by context sensitivity, which tries to maximize both linguistic and communicative proficiency. These recommendations then conclude the paper with a review of ideas on how best to synthesize innovative methods with old practices, emphasizing continuous professional development, investment in technology, and research into the longitudinal effects of hybrid teaching. With these factors in mind, educators will be able to accommodate the ever-changing nature of ELT and make sure learning is effective for students of diverse backgrounds.

Keywords: English Language Teaching Method, Modern Method, Traditional Method.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has come to be the lingua franca of our modern era, serving as a cardinal tool in international communication, economic development and cultural exchange. Indeed, in this global scenario, proficiency in English is not considered a desirable skill but instead a basic necessity for participation in the global discussion by each individual. It opens the avenues to scientific research, technology, and international markets, therefore being considered one of the foremost prerequisites for academic and professional success. According to Graddol (2006), the demand for English language skills will continue to rise due to the growth of global trade, migration, and digital communication. Therefore, educators and policymakers all over the world are increasingly concerned with refining ELT strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners in diverse contexts.

In short, the field of ELT has undergone significant transformations within a structure progressing from traditionally teacher-centered methodologies to increasingly more dynamic and learner-focused methods. Traditional methods, which are grammar-translation and direct instruction, place significant stress on rote learning and formal correctness, normally at the cost of communicative competence. In contrast, their more modern counterparts, among them CLT, TBL and technology-enhanced instruction, focus primarily on the three principles of interaction, real-world applicability, and learner autonomy. The integration of digital tools with innovative pedagogical frameworks further

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enriched the ELT methods, rendering them more adaptable to individual learning styles and the demands for the 21st century (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The debates still go on about which of the traditional methods or the modern approaches have proved to be more effective. Other scholars like Brown (2001) supported a blended model that combined the strengths of both paradigms. The present comparative analysis is very important to define the optimal strategy of balancing linguistic rigor with communicative proficiency to maximize learning outcomes.

The present review article seeks to discuss the historical and theoretical bases of both traditional and modern ELT methodologies, identify the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches in developing language proficiency, discuss the role of technology and innovation in modernizing ELT practices, and put forward evidence-based recommendations on how best to combine traditional and modern methods to enhance teaching effectiveness. Addressing these objectives, it aims to provide a proper framework for educators, researchers, and policymakers in making critical decisions regarding strategies in ELT.

The article is organized into four significant sections. The first part deals with the theoretical basis of both traditional and modern methods of ELT and enables the reader to trace the historical paths leading to their establishment. The second part presents a comparison of those methodologies, referring to research and empirical studies, with practical examples. The third one underlines the impact of contemporary technologies, such as online platforms, gamification, and artificial intelligence, to innovate language teaching. The final section synthesizes the findings and presents actionable recommendations on how to adopt a hybrid model that leverages the best of both worlds.

Moreover, the article draws on various sources, from seminal works to the latest research efforts, to achieve a proper balance of views. In this respect, such a course of events underlines the complexity and dynamism of ELT, yet at the same time provides real-life answers to the modern challenges faced within this sphere. This work seeks to make a worthy contribution to the current debate on creative developments in ELT by connecting theory and practice.

2. TRADITIONAL METHODS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1 Overview of Traditional Methods

The teaching of English has, over decades, depended on traditional methodologies. Traditional methods of linguistic instruction are structured and systematic and normally used to be followed in mastery of grammatical rules, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Three of the best-known classics are reviewed in the present review article, to wit, the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method, and the direct method. Grammar-translation is an approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language that focuses on the translation of texts coupled with the explicit teaching of grammatical rules. The learning of vocabulary takes place through a word-for-word translation from mother tongue to target language, or vice versa, when students would most usually memorize the translations by rote. Therefore, the more reading and writing approach instead of speaking and listening was emphasized. Though this may retain grammatical structures pretty well, it has also often bypassed communicative competence regarding real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The audio-lingual method emerged in the mid-20th century and is based on behavioral theories of learning, especially those advanced by B.F. Skinner. It relies heavily on repetitive drills and pattern practice to help learners gain proper language habits. This method focuses on listening and speaking, and grammar is introduced implicitly rather than being explicitly taught. This method gained favor because of its systematic approach to pronunciation and structural accuracy but soon fell out of favor due to its mechanical nature (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In the direct method, all instruction is to be immersive in the target language. Grammar is taught inductively; there is a great emphasis on oral communication and spontaneous use of the language. Vocabulary is learned in context often through demonstration and conversation. Although the approach allows for fluency and comprehension, being resource-intensive and relying on experienced tutors limits its application areas (Brown, 2007).

2.2 Strengths of Traditional Methods

Traditional methods create a very strong foundation in grammatical structures, which becomes so crucial in reading and writing. In this direction, the traditional method explicitly concerns itself with grammar rules and systematic drills that ensure the learner gets a clear view of sentence construction and linguistic conventions. This structured approach is particularly beneficial for students preparing for exams or academic writing tasks (Richards, 2006). The predictability and organization of traditional methods foster a stable learning environment. Clear objectives, defined lesson plans, and sequential learning stages help students track their progress and build a sense of achievement. This structure is especially advantageous for beginners, who may benefit from a systematic introduction to language components (Harmer, 2015).

2.3 Limitations of Traditional Methods

Traditional methods often cannot engage the learners actively because they rely mostly on rote memorization and mechanical exercises. Lack of interactivity may also result in a decrease in motivation and interest in language learning. It

is supported by research that passive approaches to learning are not as effective in maintaining the long-term retention and application of language skills (Nation & Macalister, 2010). The other major drawback of traditional methods is the lack of appropriate focus on communicative competence. The priority usually goes to grammatical accuracy and reading ability, leaving speaking and listening skills in a very underdeveloped state. Consequently, modern pedagogical frameworks, such as CLT, have emphasized the embedding of communicative activities within language instruction. Canale and Swain (1980). In other words, while traditional approaches offer a solid and systematic structure for language learning, limitations in these approaches indicate more interactive, communicative, and learner-centered approaches are required. The evolution in the teaching of the English language has been directed toward rectifying these deficiencies and ushering in newer methodologies oriented toward the needs of all kinds of learners.

3. MODERN METHODS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

3.1 Overview of Modern Methods

Modern methods of ELT emphasize interaction, adaptability and the integration of technology. These methods are set on communicative competence of learners as well as getting learners ready for real-life language uses. Important modern methods include: Communicative Language Teaching; Task-Based Language Teaching, and Technology-Enhanced Language Learning. Communicative language teaching is based on the functional approach to language in real-life contexts. It gives more importance to fluency and meaning than to grammatical accuracy; therefore, it encourages the learner to communicate through different activities such as role-play, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks. Since CLT puts the learner in the center of learning, its focus is mainly on the encouragement of participation and useful language (Richards 2006). The task-based approach to language teaching applies the principles of CLT to organize instruction around real-life tasks rather than grammatical systems. These tasks, such as planning a trip, making a presentation, or solving a puzzle, require learners to engage with peers in collaborative and purposeful language use. The method fosters critical thinking, cooperation and integration of multiple language skills (Willis & Willis 2007). Technology-enhanced language learning, or TELL, embraces the use of digital tools and online platforms for improving language learning. Examples are language learning apps, virtual reality, and interactive multimedia. Technology-enhanced language learning makes it possible to tailor learning experiences and offers access to authentic language materials, thus closing the gap between classroom instruction and natural communication (Chapelle, 2010).

3.2 Strengths of Modern Methods

Modern methods in ELT focus on real-world communication. They focus on functional usage, which helps the learners acquire the skills required to communicate in different situations. Their emphasis on fluency, cultural competence, and contextual learning makes these approaches quite compatible with the needs of globalization processes (Littlewood, 2014). Another strength of modern methods in ELT is the integration of digital tools and resources. The incorporation of technology in modern methods enhances interactivity and engagement. New ideas on teaching and learning emerge through an array of instructional tools like learning management systems, video-conferencing, and gamified language apps. Additionally, it supports self-paced learning and offers access to great volumes of language resources (Reinders & White, 2010). More so, modern methods embrace personalized and adaptive learning. They often leverage adaptive learning technologies to tailor instruction to individual needs. These systems analyze learners' progress and adjust content, pacing, and difficulty accordingly. This personalization fosters learner autonomy and ensures more effective language acquisition (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

3.3 Challenges of Modern Methods

While effective, modern methods are nevertheless at the mercy of access and technology barriers, not every learner has computers, good internet, or even digital literacy. This digital divide has widened inequities in education (Van Dijk, 2020). What is more, effective integration of modern methods places additional demands on teachers to possess higher-order skills in integrating technology and learner-centered pedagogies. However, improper training and reluctance to changing behavior from educators can work against it. Continuous professional training could alleviate these concerns, thus helping to overcome some obstacles (Kessler, 2018).

Put simply, contemporary methods in ELT come with novel ways to overcome limitations associated with the traditional approach. So, by integrating technology, fostering real-world communication, and adapting to learners' needs, these methods provide a dynamic framework for language education. However, addressing accessibility and teacher training challenges is essential to fully realize their potential (Ellis, 1994).

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN METHODS

4.1 Pedagogical Principles

Traditional and modern ELT methods are grounded in fundamentally different pedagogical principles. Traditional approaches, such as the grammar-translation method, emphasize linguistic accuracy, formal grammar instruction, and the systematic acquisition of vocabulary. Rooted in classical education, these methods prioritize teacher authority and structured learning environments, reflecting behaviorist principles (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The primary goal is to

build a strong foundation in language rules, often at the expense of practical communication skills. In contrast, modern methods like CLT and TBL adopt a constructivist approach, focusing on language as a tool for meaningful communication. These methods focus on learner independence, interaction, and the use of language in authentic situations. As Larsen-Freeman (2000) mentioned, new methodologies actively involve learners in the learning process and integrate all four skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-in the development of a balanced language ability. This trend is part of a wider educational movement that has emphasized the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

4.2 Student Engagement and Outcomes

Traditional methods often present challenges in sustaining learner motivation and engagement. The focus on rote memorization and repetitive exercises can lead to a monotonous learning experience, particularly for younger or less academically inclined students (Harmer, 2007). While these methods excel in providing a structured framework, they may lack the dynamism required to address diverse learning preferences. Modern approaches, by contrast, leverage interactive and experiential learning techniques to enhance engagement. Techniques such as role-playing, collaborative projects, and gamified activities make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. Research by Ushioda (2011) highlights the positive correlation between learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation, underscoring the effectiveness of modern methods in fostering active participation and sustained interest. Furthermore, real-world applications of language skills, such as simulations and case studies, contribute to improved long-term retention and practical proficiency (Ur, 1996).

4.3 Role of Technology

The integration of technology has been a game-changer in modern ELT practices. Digital tools, including online platforms, language learning apps, and virtual classrooms, provide unprecedented opportunities for personalized and flexible learning. Tools such as Duolingo, Quizlet, and Zoom enable learners to practice at their own pace, access diverse resources, and interact with peers and instructors globally (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Moreover, innovations like artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) have enabled adaptive learning systems that tailor content to individual needs. Chatbots, for instance, offer real-time conversational practice, while automated assessment tools provide immediate feedback, enhancing the learning experience (Heift & Schulze, 2015). In contrast, traditional methods rely heavily on in-person instruction and physical resources, limiting accessibility and scalability. However, the effective use of technology requires careful integration. As argued by Selwyn (2016), technology should complement, rather than replace, pedagogical expertise, ensuring that digital tools are used to enhance rather than dilute the learning experience.

4.4 Cultural and Contextual Factors

The adaptability of ELT methods to different cultural and educational contexts is a critical consideration. Traditional methods often align with cultures that value hierarchical teacher-student relationships and formal learning environments, such as those prevalent in East Asia (Hu, 2002). These methods provide a sense of discipline and structure that resonates with societal expectations. Modern approaches, on the other hand, thrive in settings that emphasize collaboration, creativity, and learner-centered education. However, their success depends on the availability of resources and teacher training. For instance, the reliance on technology in modern methods may pose challenges in under-resourced regions, where access to digital infrastructure is limited (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Additionally, cultural attitudes towards autonomy and peer interaction can influence the acceptance and effectiveness of these methodologies. A balanced approach that considers cultural and contextual nuances is essential. As Stern (1983) suggests, the integration of traditional and modern methods should be context-sensitive, ensuring that pedagogical strategies align with the values, resources, and needs of the target learners. By systematically comparing traditional and modern ELT methods across these dimensions, this section underscores the complexity of selecting and implementing effective teaching strategies. The insights gained from this analysis provide a foundation for the development of hybrid models that leverage the strengths of both paradigms.

5. CASE STUDIES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

5.1 Examples of Successful Integration of Traditional and Modern Approaches

Several case studies illustrate the potential of blending traditional and modern ELT methods to optimize learning outcomes. For instance, a pilot program conducted in a secondary school in India combined grammar-translation techniques with digital storytelling activities. This approach allowed students to strengthen their grammatical foundation while simultaneously enhancing their creative writing and communication skills (Kumar & Tammelin, 2018). The program reported improved student engagement and higher test scores in both linguistic accuracy and expressive abilities. Similarly, a university in Japan implemented a hybrid curriculum that integrated task-based learning with periodic grammar-focused workshops. According to Nishino (2019), this model successfully addressed gaps in students' communicative competence without compromising their understanding of grammatical structures. The balanced approach led to greater student satisfaction and better performance in standardized English proficiency tests. Another example comes from a language institute in Brazil, where gamified learning platforms like Kahoot! were incorporated into traditional classroom sessions. Teachers reported that the use of gamification not only increased motivation but also facilitated peer interaction and collaborative learning (Silva & Menezes, 2020).

5.2 Insights from Specific Classroom Experiences or Pilot Programs

Classroom experiences further underscore the benefits of integrating traditional and modern methods. A study conducted in a rural school in Kenya highlighted how incorporating WhatsApp-based group discussions into traditional lecture formats improved students' conversational English skills. The use of a familiar and accessible digital tool made learning more relatable and interactive, particularly in a resource-constrained environment (Muthwii, 2021). In a Canadian context, a flipped classroom model was adopted for adult learners preparing for IELTS exams. Traditional in-class grammar drills were complemented with video lectures and online quizzes, allowing learners to pace their studies while focusing classroom time on interactive speaking and listening exercises. This approach not only increased learner autonomy but also enhanced their performance in communicative tasks (Gordon & McCann, 2017).

6. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING MODERN METHODS

6.1 Technological Infrastructure and Access

One of the primary challenges in adopting modern ELT methods is the uneven availability of technological infrastructure. In many low-income regions, schools lack access to basic digital tools such as computers and internet connectivity, making it difficult to implement technology-driven approaches (UNESCO, 2022). Even in well-resourced settings, issues like outdated software and limited technical support can hinder the effective use of digital tools in classrooms.

6.2 Resistance to Change among Educators

Resistance to adopting modern methods is another significant barrier. Many educators are accustomed to traditional teaching methods and may be skeptical about the effectiveness of innovative approaches. Concerns about increased workload, lack of training, and unfamiliarity with technology contribute to this resistance (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Overcoming this challenge requires targeted professional development programs that equip teachers with the necessary skills and confidence to integrate modern methods into their practice.

6.3 Balancing Traditional and Modern Approaches

Striking a balance between traditional and modern ELT methods can be challenging. While traditional approaches provide a solid foundation in linguistic rules, modern methods emphasize communicative competence and adaptability. Finding the right mix requires a nuanced understanding of the learners' needs, cultural context, and available resources. Additionally, educators must continuously evaluate and adjust their strategies to ensure that both linguistic accuracy and practical proficiency are addressed effectively (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

7.1 Emerging Trends in English Language Teaching

The future of ELT is shaped by evolving educational paradigms and technological advancements. Key trends include the increased use of blended learning models, gamification, and adaptive learning technologies. Moreover, there is a growing emphasis on integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into ELT practices, recognizing the importance of fostering empathy, collaboration, and resilience in learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). Globalization and the proliferation of English as a lingua franca are also influencing ELT practices. Teachers are increasingly focusing on intercultural competence and global communication skills, preparing learners to navigate diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Additionally, the rise of multilingual education approaches acknowledges the value of learners' native languages as resources rather than barriers to English acquisition (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

7.2 Role of Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality

Artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) are poised to revolutionize ELT by providing immersive, interactive, and personalized learning experiences. AI-powered tools, such as chatbots and adaptive learning platforms, enable learners to receive instant feedback and customized instruction. For example, AI-driven language tutors can simulate real-life conversations, helping learners build confidence and fluency (Heift & Schulze, 2015). Virtual reality offers unparalleled opportunities for experiential learning. By creating realistic simulations of everyday scenarios, VR enables learners to practice language skills in authentic contexts. Applications such as Mondly VR and ImmerseMe have demonstrated the potential of VR to enhance learner engagement and motivation (Godwin-Jones, 2020). Despite these advancements, the integration of AI and VR into ELT must address challenges related to cost, accessibility, and ethical considerations. Ensuring that these technologies complement rather than replace traditional teaching methods is critical for maintaining a balanced and inclusive approach.

7.3 Recommendations for Integrating Innovation with Established Practices

To effectively integrate innovative and traditional approaches in ELT, educators and institutions must take several key actions. First, they should foster a culture of continuous professional development, ensuring that teachers have the skills and knowledge necessary to adopt new methods and stay updated with evolving trends. This ongoing learning process is crucial for adapting to the rapid changes in language teaching methodologies (González *et al.*, 2020). Next, investing in

scalable and affordable technological solutions is essential for enhancing accessibility and equity in ELT. Technology can play a transformative role, providing students with diverse learning opportunities, especially in underserved areas where resources may be limited (Chapelle, 2021). By making digital tools more widely available, institutions can create a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment. Encouraging collaboration among stakeholders is another important step. Teachers, policymakers, and technology developers should work together to design context-sensitive solutions that address the unique needs of different learner populations. This collaboration ensures that the methods and tools used are not only innovative but also relevant to the local context (Bax, 2019).

Promoting research into the long-term impact of innovative ELT practices is also crucial. By gathering evidence-based insights, institutions can refine their approaches and make informed decisions about which methods to implement on a larger scale. Research helps to assess the effectiveness of new practices and guides future developments (Richards, 2020). Finally, it is essential to emphasize learner-centric approaches that balance linguistic rigor with communicative competence. Students should develop both foundational language skills and the practical ability to use language in real-world situations. This balanced approach ensures that learners are not only proficient in grammar and vocabulary but also able to communicate effectively in various contexts (Harmer, 2021). These strategies, when applied together, can lead to a more holistic and adaptable approach to ELT, benefiting both teachers and students in a rapidly changing global environment.

8. CONCLUSION

This article has explored the comparative strengths and limitations of traditional and modern ELT methods, highlighting their distinct pedagogical principles, impact on student engagement, and adaptability to cultural and contextual factors. While traditional approaches excel in providing a structured framework for linguistic accuracy, modern methods prioritize communication, creativity, and learner autonomy. By leveraging the strengths of both paradigms, educators can create more effective and inclusive language teaching strategies. For educators, the findings underscore the importance of adopting a flexible and adaptive approach to ELT, tailored to the diverse needs of learners. Policymakers should prioritize investments in teacher training and technological infrastructure, addressing barriers to the implementation of modern methods. Researchers can contribute by examining the long-term outcomes of hybrid ELT models and exploring innovative solutions to emerging challenges. Ultimately, the future of ELT lies in striking a balance between tradition and innovation. By embracing a context-sensitive approach that integrates established practices with cutting-edge methodologies, educators can empower learners to thrive in an interconnected and dynamic world. As the field continues to evolve, collaboration and innovation will remain key to advancing the effectiveness and accessibility of English language teaching.

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