

**Navigating the Modern Linguistic Landscape
Emerging Practices and Challenges in English Language Teaching**

Dr Depavath Balu Naik

Assistant Professor, Department of Languages - English
JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
bn.depavath@jainuniversity.ac.in

Paper Received on 18-08-2025, Accepted on 29-09-2025
Published on 30-09-25; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2025.10.3.902

Abstract

English Language Teaching or ELT underwent a transformation in the twenty-first century due to globalization, electronic communication, and technology. In India, English has become an international language that is essential for higher education, jobs, and worldwide communication. As such, traditional teacher-centred methods have gradually been substituted with learner-centred approaches that emphasize communicative competence, critical thinking, collaboration and digital skills. This review examines some of the major developments in the contemporary ELT practice. Our main focus will be on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), MALL, gamified assessment and AI. This also looks at the challenges of the digital divide and the preparedness of teachers along with multilingual classrooms and the ethics of educational technology. This paper draws on recent thinking and policy documents on NEP 2020 to argue that while technological and pedagogical innovations have created new opportunities for learning languages, effective implementation depends upon adequate infrastructure, teacher training and context-sensitive educational practice.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, ELT in India, Digital Pedagogies, Artificial Intelligence, Task-Based Learning, Multilingual Classrooms, Learner Autonomy.

1. Introduction

The ascendance of English as a global language has profoundly and irrevocably impacted educational policies, curriculum development and language teaching practices all over the world, which has been the main instrument of globalization and world communication.

In many post-colonial contexts, such as India, English was taught using very structured and traditional methods such as the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, which emphasized grammatical correctness, formal memorization, and the rigid study of canonical texts rather than informal communication. Although these early pedagogical models helped in developing the basic linguistic knowledge and reading comprehension, they were often unsuccessful in equipping learners for spontaneous, natural, authentic, and contextual communication in contemporary academic and professional domains (Richards and Rodgers 45). Through the second half of the twentieth century, the thinking underwent a sea-change with the advent of communicative theories. One such useful theory was the 'communicative competence' explained by Dell Hymes. It proposes that proper knowledge of a language does not only entail syntactically correct sentences but also the ability to converse appropriately in different social and professional settings (Hymes 271).

English is an important link language in today's India, which has several states with different Languages. Moreover, English becomes the most taught language at a higher level. Further, in the corporate business, information technology and scientific innovation use English only. Modern educational philosophies strongly echoed by the progressive structure of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aim at critical thinking, the ability to use language in real-life situations, and experiential learning. Students are now considered active, independent participants in the construction of knowledge and not mere recipients of grammatical rules (Ministry of Education). Even with these policies, there is still a gap between the theory and what actually happens in classrooms. Therefore, there is a need to review the existing practices. As such, the following core research questions will be addressed in this study:

- What are the major pedagogical shifts characterizing contemporary English Language Teaching?
- How are digital technologies and artificial intelligence transforming language learning?

□ What systemic barriers hinder the effective implementation of these pedagogical innovations in India?

2. Methodology

To effectively meet the research objectives, this study adopts a qualitative, thematic review of the scattered up-to-date literature on English Language Teaching (ELT) and educational technology and government policy in India. In the top academic databases Scopus, JSTOR, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) database, Google Scholar was used for comprehensive literature retrieval. To grasp the transformation of digital pedagogies in conjunction with significant policy changes, the search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, influential academic monographs and official government policy documents issued between 2000 and 2026. A detailed retrieval strategy was adopted by the researchers, which included the use of Boolean operators and complicated Keyword matrices.

Through the use of strict exclusion criteria, we ensured a rigorous thematic and academic selection of the literature. The studies focused on primary education level, and those which did not offer good empirical data or a sound theoretical basis were excluded to maintain the focus only on adult language learning and higher education readiness. The process of inductive thematic analysis was used on the corpus of eligible literature. Through this qualitative analysis process, identification and categorization of the dominant repeated trends, key pedagogical shifts and institutional barriers were done. In conclusion, the extracted themes provide the conceptual framework for the study as it underpins the structure and logic of the paper's analytical section.

3. Thematic Review of Emerging Practices

3.1 Communicative Language Teaching and Learner-Centred Pedagogies

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is still the theoretical basis of current English language teaching (ELT) classrooms, which have shifted their focus from merely using forms to using English for a purpose, to do something with the language. The goal of CLT is to develop a strong communicative competence that enables students to negotiate meaning, articulate complex opinions, and solve collaborative problems through genuine interpersonal interaction (Harmer 88). The characteristic that defines CLT is that it is unapologetically learner-centred. CLT acknowledges a great deal of research which sees the traditional classroom with the teacher as the ultimate authority and fountain of knowledge replaced by one in which the teacher is facilitator, guide, and manager of the linguistic resources. Research shows that student-centred teaching methods increase student intrinsic motivation

and engagement and enhance retention over a longer duration, as students take charge of their learning trajectories (Little 34). This approach is very effective and also a must in the Indian classroom, where the students are endowed with different languages and culture framework. Activities like role-plays, debates and group discussions expose learners to real communicative situations and help them develop their English as well as intercultural awareness and empathy. More and more, English is being accepted as a neutral lingua franca across various regional and cultural divides. The requirement for graduates going into the world of work to communicate in a way that is contextually sensitive, pragmatically appropriate and interculturally respectful has become a key aim of higher education institutions.

3.2 Approaches of Task-Based Learning and Experiential Learning.

Task-Based Language Teaching is a very powerful pedagogic framework that has been built organically from Communicative Pedagogy and more so within the specialized disciplines in higher education. The TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) method opts for authentic, goal-oriented tasks as the core unit for classroom instruction and curriculum design in a move away from grammar exercises to activities that replicate the exact linguistic requirements that students will face outside school. Nunan (56) As an example, assignments in special courses may include conducting a stock market study, writing a business letter, taking part in a business negotiation, or making a multimedia presentation on a hot economic topic for a Financial English course. Learners acquire oral fluency, grammatical well-formedness and essential strategic competence in dealing with subject matter content through this complex multi-layered activity. Task-based instruction fits into wider educational trends that emphasize experiential learning, especially Project-Based Learning (PBL), where students must explore complex questions, structure data from a variety of sources, and produce meaningful work collaboratively over a sustained period. When language learning is connected to a genuine purpose, TBLT encourages learners to become active participants rather than passive observers. This develops highly transferable 21st-century skills, for example, making quality decisions, researching successfully online and working towards powerful solutions.

3.3 Digital Pedagogy and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

English language teaching has rapidly changed due to the extensive use of digital technology. It has made many resources available for teachers and students alike. It has also changed the ways in which English is taught and learned. Moreover, teachers and students can now collaborate both synchronously and asynchronously. Widespread use of Learning Management system makes it easy for teachers to go

beyond the classroom. With the help of training resources, educators can select appropriate multimedia instructional materials, track learner analytics, and facilitate continuous blended learning (Chapelle 92). Digital media, including academic podcasts, global news websites, on-demand videos, and interactive e-Reader documents, immerses students in a range of global accents and worldly expressions not available in printed textbooks. In addition, interactive, gamified digital software has transformed formative assessment by enabling teachers to create fun and non-threatening assessments which yield immediate, actionable feedback for the student and the teacher. These tools alleviate the tension connected with any type of language testing while increasing classroom involvement and competition among students. Furthermore, the explosion of MALL due to the cheap availability of smartphones and high-speed data across India has seen a movement towards highly autonomous, self-directed learning (Kukulka-Hulme 45). Through application software using spaced-repetition and gamification algorithms, students are able to practice vocabulary and grammar concepts while travelling in their daily commutes, which subsequently blurs the boundaries between schooling and ambient learning.

3.4 Artificial Intelligence and the Future Paradigms of ELT

The most powerful and disruptive frontier in language education today is artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms. These offer a capacity that was unthinkable only a decade ago, resulting in a complete rethinking of how we assess language proficiency (Godwin-Jones 12). The use of generative AI models and advanced writing assistants in educational contexts has become widespread. These systems can provide students with instant and highly personalized feedback on syntactic structures, vocabulary variety, and overall rhetorical coherence. In effect, they act as tireless and highly personalized language tutors that can function efficiently at scale. AI-powered conversational agents and voice-recognition tools provide learners with a safe, non-judgmental space to improve oral fluency and pronunciation, benefiting hesitant speakers suffering from debilitating foreign language anxiety. Additionally, adaptive AI learning systems have the unique ability to continually assess a student's performance data and recognize their language shortcomings, automatically creating customized exercises to target those very weaknesses. Nevertheless, the implementation of artificial intelligence into English Language Teaching comes with a lot of complex, pedagogy-related, ethical, and institutional challenges. Academic administrators and teaching faculty must navigate these challenges carefully. A real issue is now emerging that if we rely too much on machines, we may not grapple and engage with the systems of thinking that our brains

are actually designed to use to learn a language internally and store it in our long term memory. Concerns about academic misconduct, non-consensual collection of student data, algorithmic bias based on training data, and the dilution of authentic human engagement call for institutions to act quickly to establish strong, broad policies. At the end of the day, the challenge in integrating AI in education is to position it as a useful scaffolding tool that enhances and complements but does not substitute an educator's unique ability to empathise, culturally contextualise, motivate, and engage in complex moral reasoning.

4. Discussion of systemic challenges and implications.

As already indicated in earlier sections, notwithstanding the remarkable educational and technological advancements, English Language Teaching in India is still struggling with a range of serious systemic and infrastructural problems that threaten to jeopardize the educational equity and increase the socio-economic divide. One of the biggest barriers is the digital divide. In diverse countries like India, there is a wide and growing gap in technological infrastructure, hardware, and reliable high-speed internet connectivity between rich urban centres and resource-poor rural districts. In fact, these inequities and vulnerabilities were laid bare and exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO 18). As urban universities smoothly moved to advanced Learning Management Systems and AI-proctored examinations, large sections of the rural student population were virtually excluded because of a lack of basic digital access.

The increasing pressure of technological advancement is an additional burden on the training and professional development of teachers. Oftentimes, it is necessary for teachers to undergo different training sessions, such as workshops and conferences. This ensures that they don't use technology as a gimmick. Many seasoned educators trained in traditional ways suffer from severe technostress and need considerable institutional support to shift to digital facilitators. In the Indian context, moreover, teaching per se implies working with very complex multilingual classrooms possessing an extremely diverse base level of proficiency and mother tongues. Educators must carefully create an appropriate balance between encouraging students' high-level global English proficiency while respecting their mother tongues, ideally through innovative pedagogies like translanguaging. The purpose of such dual-oriented pedagogy is to create an inclusive, culturally equitable classroom not which does not position the mother tongue as a deficiency but as a cognitive strength.

5. Conclusion and Future Scope

English language teaching in the 21st century has a permanent shift from a fixed, rigid system of grammar instruction to a flexible, highly adaptable discipline that aims to develop integrated communicative competence, advanced digital literacy and independent critical thought.

As we have seen in the review, the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching with Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and Artificial Intelligence can go a long way toward democratizing language learning and making it personalized and engaging. Nevertheless, unlocking this potential in India is heavily dependent on addressing the existing infrastructure divides and providing teachers with the training and freedom to use such innovation effectively.

In the future, academic papers must become studied, longitudinal empirical reports centre to look at the long-term changes caused by AI-assisted learning on students' writing and critical thinking. Moreover, an underexplored possibility for future research is the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) for creating immersive, low-anxiety situational language practice environments. The full potential of twenty-first-century ELT can only be realized when policymakers, university administrators and educators make meaningful efforts to bridge digital divides, continuously and locally empower the teaching workforce and support pedagogies that respect Indian multilingualism even as they prepare Indian students for unprecedented global success.

Works Cited

- Brown, H. Douglas. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. 6th ed., Pearson Education, 2014.
- Chapelle, Carol A. *English Language Learning and Technology*. John Benjamins, 2017.
- Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Godwin-Jones, Robert. "Emerging Technologies and Language Learning." *Language Learning & Technology*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2018, pp. 8–17.
- Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. 5th ed., Pearson Education, 2015.
- Hockly, Nicky, and Gavin Dudeney. *Current and Future Digital Trends in ELT*. British Council, 2018.
- Hymes, Dell. "On Communicative Competence." *Sociolinguistics*, edited by J. B. Pride and Janet Holmes, Penguin, 1972, pp. 269–293.

- Kukulska-Hulme, Agnes. *Mobile-Assisted Language Learning*. Routledge, 2020.
- Little, David. *Learner Autonomy and Language Learning*. Authentik, 1991.
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. *National Education Policy 2020*. 2020, www.education.gov.in.
- Nation, I. S. P., and John Macalister. *Language Curriculum Design*. Routledge, 2010.
- Nunan, David. *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Richards, Jack C. *Key Issues in Language Teaching*. Cambridge UP, 2015.
- Richards, Jack C., and Theodore S. Rodgers. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. 3rd ed., Cambridge UP, 2014.
- Tomlinson, Brian. *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. 2nd ed., Bloomsbury, 2013.
- UNESCO. *Global Education Monitoring Report: Technology in Education*. UNESCO Publishing, 2023.
- Warschauer, Mark, and Deborah Healey. "Computers and Language Learning." *Language Teaching*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1998, pp. 57–71.
- Zhao, Yong. "Recent Developments in Technology and Language Learning." *Language Learning & Technology*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2003, pp. 7–27.