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# PARADIGM SHIFT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY OF SECONDARY LEVEL: FROM CONVENTIONAL TO MODERN

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#### **Abstract:**

This paper explores the English language paradigm shift from conventional to modern in terms of curricular focus, methodology, evaluation practice, and teachers' and learners' behavior. Based upon the existing literature, critical analysis has been done to explore how changes in pedagogical context happened from a traditional structured approach to a post-modern perspective. These changes are reflected in the present days teaching of learning ecology in secondary school. It was found that there is a paradigm shift in English pedagogy from teacher centrism, structuralism, behaviorism to a learner-centered, post-modern and constructive approach. This transition in English language pedagogy results from a revolutionary process of change in society and the academic world. Academicians and practitioners will benefit from this thematic paper.

Keywords: paradigm shift, English language, pedagogy

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#### 1. Introduction

English as a school subject in secondary education in India occupies an essential place in the school curriculum. It has the value of connecting with people worldwide, a language of trade and commerce, a language of library and a medium of instruction in higher education (Graddol, 2006, Murata & Jenkis, 2009).

Competency in the English language is also associated with scientific temperament, more comprehensive opportunity, increased power and prestige, and a symbol of progress (Amin, 2016). However, there is a fear among the students of the English language in India, which is reflected in their poor English language skills and lower achievement. The problem of English language learning among students is directly linked with English language teaching and learning. English as a school subject in India is taught to students in similar ways to other school subjects (Baloch, 2014). Sometimes, it is taught by teachers who are not English teachers. This pedagogical shortcoming or use of inappropriate pedagogy is one of the reasons for lower English language skill acquisition and achievement, which is directly related to English teacher's knowledge about pedagogy, their context of use and perspectives. It has been found that English teachers in India have less knowledge about various teaching methods to teach English and their context of application. This thematic work has been organized into three primary sections: traditional or classical methods, modern methods, and transformation from traditional to modern methods.

## 2. Historical Perspective of English Language Teaching in India

English as a school subject in India has its historical root in Macaulay's minute where the intention of English teaching for Indian students was to produce a class of Indians who would be Indian by blood but taste in English and help the British administration. As a result, English was taught primarily by grammar translation, and the content of the syllabus was based primarily on European literature. Development of oral linguistic skills such as listening and speaking were least focused. Reading ability among students was given priority, with the objective that it may help to read English texts, but not helpful for developing oral communication skills (Pinke, 2018). Along with this Grammar translation method, audio-lingual and direct methods were also used to teach English (Pica, 2000). This pedagogical method and Western world culture syllabi- content of English teaching is until now practiced in India.

## 2.1 Traditional English Pedagogy, Practice and Context

Traditionally, English as a school subject in India was taught primarily by grammar-translation and direct and audio-lingual methods. Grammar translation as a method of English pedagogy has a historical context of use in Western countries. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Europe demanded the translation of the European classical language to English. In 1536, the Bible, initially in the Greek language (Sawant, 2013; Dave & Joshi, 2018), was

translated into English. Chaucer, who was known as the father of English literature, had translated one famous French epic to English in the 14th century. The works of Dante and Homer were translated into English during that period, which signifies that the grammar translation method was popular in Western countries during the 16th century, mainly to teach English to non-native English language students. Grammar translation as a method of English teaching is based on structural theories of language. It is assumed that language consists of structures and grammatical elements, and knowing the language means knowing these structures and grammatical rules. The teaching technique in this method is the translation of English to the native language or vice-versa. The learning techniques for this method are drilling, exercise and practice (Machida, 2011).

Although this method is widely used globally but is more prevalent in countries where students' native language is not English, this method has the advantages of fewer requirements of teaching-learning materials, economical and scope to the advancement of vocabulary among students (Kirkpatrick, 2010). At the same time, this method has limitations from a linguistic skill development point of view. Excessive focus on grammar rules, vocabulary, and language structure during teaching and less focus on developing linguistic skills, i.e., listening and speaking, hamper students' communication skills. Secondly, using this method is inappropriate for every situation and context, especially when the meaning of a particular word has a different contextual meaning; its exact translation is not possible. In this pedagogical method, there is minimum scope for oral expression. As this method excessively emphasises English's grammatical and structural rules and less on its use, the semantic and pragmatic aspects were ignored (Gillanders, 2007; Xu & Drame, 2008). Although ideally, it is expected to give equal emphasis on both languages during the translation method (target and medium), it was found that teachers give more emphasis on the native language and less on the target language, which results in poor language skill achievement among students in the target language.

Along with using this pedagogy for teaching English, the Direct method was also traditionally used in India and globally.

The direct method establishes a direct association between thought and expressions through the learner's experiences. It supports the assumption that there will be an experience of the new language (English) in the same way in which the learner experienced the native language. The learner begins to think in English and gets an active command of the language. Here, fluency in reading and facility in writing follow speech fluency. The first step of learning a language is learning to speak the language first, which is the basic principle of this method. The 'input before output' approach was placed as listening before speaking (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). This method assumes that a second language can be learnt precisely like a first language. So, the learning experiences are given directly in the target language during the time of instruction to the learners. More exposure to English is given to the learners to develop oral fluency and spontaneity.

The direct method is also called the natural method because the learner directly uses the target language to communicate and derive meanings of words, phrases and idioms with the help of teachers' actions and demonstrations during classroom practices

(Batool *et al.*, 2017). In this method, grammar or language structure is less focused on learning grammar rules during the teaching-learning process through illustrations, demonstration and audio-visual aids. This method is found to be more effective for secondary school students (Hussain *et al.*, 2009). The meanings of any text/ word/ sentence are made clear by presenting physical objects and abstract ones through the association of thoughts and ideas, not through direct translation. The sound of the phonetic parts of language is emphasised and presented in the classroom (Setiyadi, 2020). The pedagogical mechanics of this method are demonstration, visual illustrations, miming, contextualization, and activities. Sufficient emphasis is given to associating the meanings of sentences and their practical use by students (Adebileje & Akinola, 2020).

This language-based pedagogy has limitations in terms of excess use of resources and teaching expensive learning materials (Batool *et al.*, 2017). It requires highly competent teachers who are good in the target language, a major problem in India. This method puts much more emphasis on the teacher than on the textbook. The assumption of direct instruction and deriving meaning by simply listening to or reading texts is not always fulfilled in India's case of English as a second language. Some words or texts have contextual meanings that vary from situation to situation. As a result, pedagogical experts suggest another method that can overcome the direct method's limitations.

During World War II, there was a demand for the recruitment of such Army officials who would efficiently communicate with soldiers from different language-speaking countries, which is a contextual background for popularizing the aural-oral methods by American Universities. The learning approach was primarily listening and practising. The learner can learn a foreign language by listening to a native speaker and practising speaking similarly. So, in this context, observation, imitation, and drill/practice are significant. This method was popular in Spain for learning English. In other European countries, it was primarily required to gain competency to speak like a native speaker as an opportunity to work in that country. From a psychological basis, it can be mentioned that this method of language acquisition is based on Behaviorism. Academicians claim that foreign languages can be taught using this method in the same way as habit formation through the process of conditioning or training (Shameem, 2013). Language learning is a matter of habit formation; i.e. stronger habit leads to more significant language learning (Paudel, 2020).

This method assumes that language mastery can be achieved through habit formation or stimulus-response connection chains and proper habit formation in the target language. The sub-cognitive skills for this foreign language learning are sound recognition, discrimination, imitation, repetition and memorization. Dialogue or speech is the core of audio-lingual pedagogy, and sufficient time is allotted for repetition and memorization of the dialogue. This method uses drills and pattern practice, which includes a free response, directed discourse, substitution, transformation, repetition and expansion of dialogues or content through listening and speaking (Karunakaran, 2013). In this method, students interact intensively with native speakers and a linguist in guided

conversations primarily designed to decode basic grammar and learn essential vocabulary (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Though this method has contextual application for learning a foreign language as spoken by the native speaker, it requires a native speaker as a tutor, which is not always possible. Secondly, the use of this method in the classroom is directly dependent upon the learner's need for that language. For example, in India, English is taught as a second language, which the student will use as a co-official language within India.

From a synthetic perspective on the conventional or traditional pedagogical approach used, it can be stated that these pedagogical methods are based on Behavioristic psychology, which primarily follows the PPP technique, i.e. 'present', 'practice', and 'produce'. As these methods emphasize the repeated tasks of reading, reading aloud, memorization, and other kinds of form-focused practices, it causes classroom learning to become monotonous, less exciting and less effective for learning (Wang & Hill, 2011). However, these methods have contextual application in teaching English where the main focus of learning language is to learn 'language points', i.e. the words, phrases, and structures of language which are crucial in language teaching for meaning processing and reading comprehension (Dahlin & Watkins, 2000; Ellis, 2008). Chen and Ying (2009) claim that traditional language practices significantly affect the development of fluency and comprehension among learners. However, the mechanical repetition of learning materials does not help with meaningful communication. This suboptimal and rudimentary functioning of methods in varied language contexts leads to the search for a balanced pedagogy that can address every aspect of language learning, i.e., communicative, competent, and pragmatic. As a result, innovations in language pedagogy emerged by integrating all aspects of language learning in its various forms and terrain.

# 3. Innovations and Modern Pedagogy in ELT with Theoretical Context

In this globalized scenario, there is a constant need for innovation. The research on innovation in language teaching began to generate interest from the 1980s onwards due to the dynamics and challenges of implementing educational reform, which were often overlooked and inadequately addressed before that period. In recent decades, innovation has been of greater significance, especially in language education, as evidenced by recent books such as Murray (2008), Alderson (2009), and Wedell (2009). Carless (2018) in his study defined innovation as an attempt to bring about educational improvement by doing something which is perceived by implementers (teachers and practitioners) as new or different. Fatiloro (2015) argues that the lack of various teaching methods and techniques hindered learning English as a second language. Innovations in methods, strategies, and approaches are the accelerating agents to bring varieties in learning and for better language learning outcomes. In the Indian context, the lack of language educational policy suggests applying innovative methods in English teaching at the school level (Das, 2022).

Nowadays, the most substantive changes are also made in English language teaching through a collection of classroom practices, teaching-learning materials and beliefs about the teaching and learning process, which integrates variations in the content and context of language teaching (Pica, 2000). The classroom pedagogy shifted to more communicative language teaching. This approach represents a teaching philosophy based on using language for communicative purposes in its appropriate context. It emphasizes the functional use of language components and communicative competence rather than using grammatical structures and patterns as central to the teaching-learning process.

# 3.1 Communicative Approaches to Language Teaching

With the introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT), the perspective of language teaching experienced considerable changes as per the nature and context of language. The communicative approach has various features, integrating multiple language skills to be practised at once and help learners communicate effectively (Hinkel, 2006; Zacharias, 2013). This approach focuses on the teaching philosophy based on communicative language use. The central to teaching is the notional (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, and frequency) and functional concepts (requests, offers, complaints, invitations, etc.) and also communicative competence (linguistic, socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic) rather than grammatical structures. This method primarily follows three principles: communication principle, tasks principle, and meaningfulness principle (Richards & Rodgers, 2000). In classroom activities, learners' involvement goes accordingly. Activities involving communication to promote learning, completion of language tasks, classroom discourse and learner engagement in meaningful and authentic language contexts are the essential classroom techniques to promote communicative learning. Communicative language teaching continues in the range of varieties of course books and teaching resources based on the principles of CLT. The classroom techniques are role play, interview, problem-solving, language game, conversation, pair and group activities, debate and discussion, opinion and comments, narration, dialogues and reporting, etc. This method is more learner-centric, capitalizing on the needs and interests of learners and providing vitality of motivation in the classroom.

Despite its massive popularity, communicative language teaching experiences some drawbacks in terms of learners' resistance and difficulties in implementation, particularly in India and other Asian countries (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) and ineffective in non-Western contexts due to a lack of conducive ecology (Nunan, 1999). Due to its focus on producing native-like proficiency among language learners, it has also been criticized for being insensitive to learners' own cultural identity to some extent (Byram, 1997). Finally, the CLT method fails to incorporate the social and pragmatic components of language learning to the utmost (Bax, 2003). Because of these apprehensions, more transitions occur in the field of English language teaching.

# 3.2 Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been introduced since the 1980s. It was explored as an alternative pedagogical tool as an extension form of CLT (Skehan, 1996; Barrot, 2013). Task-based language teaching refers to the activities in the target language, i.e. English, by which learners can learn and produce the language fluently. This method of teaching is conceptualized differently based on variations in tasks. Scholars believe this TBLT incorporates various methods and principles, such as information processing theories, collaborative learning, and interactionist hypotheses specially introduced to develop learners' second language knowledge and skills (Long & Crookes, 1992).

In this pedagogy, several language tasks are assigned to learners who have an interest and complete the task (Richard & Rogers, 2020). These language tasks are based on principles of meaningfulness, communicativeness in nature, and contextualized application. Learners are engaged in these language tasks in its use, such as information gap activities, reasoning, comprehending, interacting, manipulating and producing the second language, which allows students to exchange information and learn things through conversation with each other. For communication, learners are allowed to interact and gain personal experience in the classroom and outside. The primary goal of TBLT is to promote language acquisition along the three dimensions of fluency, accuracy and complexity. Here, the achievement of the goal varies from learner to learner as their cognitive skills differ from one to another. In order to cope with this problem, some authors (e.g., Skehan, 1996) suggested three types of language tasks in a sequence: pretask, during-task, and post-task. The pre-task begins with sequencing and introducing the language needed for task performance. During-task takes place after the task is selected, and it allows the learners to be engaged in fulfilling the goals of the language task; post-task activities deal with refining what has been learnt.

TBLT, like all communicative approaches, tries to recreate natural learning conditions in the classroom because natural conditions are assumed to be ideal for learning a language. The issue is whether 'natural conditions' can be recreated in the classroom. If the assigned kind of tasks can work within the classroom, they are very different from the real-world tasks. Many academicians criticized TBLT, saying it does not seem to be based on new learning principles; instead, it offers simply a novel way of being exposed to and practising the language just by involving and motivating the student. This novel way is considered as the task by which the learner's learning is supposed to be effective (Sanchez, 2004).

# 3.3 Technology-Mediated Task-based Language Teaching

With globalization and the advancement of technology, language classroom pedagogy has also been enriched in terms of methods, techniques, learning resources and learner engagement (Brown, 2002). Based on the basic principles of TBLT, technology-mediated tasks are meaningful, goal-oriented, authentic, communicative, and activity-based. The first technology-mediated task was program-based language learning on computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which helped learners engage in drilling, training,

and testing language skills (Andone & Frydenberg, 2019). The tasks included jigsaw, information gap activities, discussion (both open-ended and close-ended), etc. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is believed to be effective because it decreases educational costs and increases learning outcomes for an extended period (Atabek, 2020; Oz et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of CALL is affected by some moderators such as learners, task type, educational settings and conditions and the assessment instruments (Sadeghi & Dousti, 2013).

Lloret and Ortega (2014) opined that technology-mediated TBLT integrates technology and tasks in the teaching-learning process. To achieve communicative competence and technology utilization among learners, TMTBLT is seen as an alternative to the traditional English teaching method. This method allows students to engage in a more meaningful individualized learning process through tasks and assignments that teachers can flexibly adapt, integrating communicative and communal qualities. Aligning with this view, Lloret and Ortega (2014) propose five principles of TMTBLT: (1) meaning-oriented (2) a clearly defined language learning outcome (3) the task should adapt resources as per students' needs (4) the task should be authentic in nature and (5) tasks should involve maximum engagement in tasks to learners in intellectual knowledge and their personal growth. To supplement language learning, digital technologies and instruments such as television, language labs, and a variety of designed media use audiovisual devices, monitors, and computer keyboards to make learning effective (Ahdian, 2007, Xu et al., 2019).

Some researchers, such as Sung, Cheng and Liu (2016) and Lee (2010), are in favour of technology-based language learning, while other researchers, such as Lipsey and Wilson (2001), Norris and Ortega (2000), and Oswald and Plonsky (2010) have expressed doubts about its success. The greatest hindrances to applying technology in English classes are the limited resources, teacher's skills, feelings and attitude towards ICT and the type of application and software available (Mumtaz, 2000; Adams & Newton, 2009; Littlewood, 2007).

Though there is already an agreement on its effectiveness, there are certain constraints like turn-taking, which leads to minimalization and indexicality to perform particular language tasks, too many clarification and comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and self-repetition during language task performance, which have a less facilitative role in second language acquisition (Seedhouse, 1999). TBLT considers the context to be narrowly attributed to the linguistic and pragmatic features of the language, and it also fails to include broader social, political, historical, and cultural aspects (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

## 3.4 Intercultural Approach

Due to less attention on the cultural aspect by most English language teaching approaches, many researchers (Byram, 1997; Byram *et al.*, 2002; Corbett, 2022; Kramsch 1998; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Liddicoat *et al.*, 1999; St Clair & Phipps, 2008) advocated for an intercultural approach to language learning. The primary objective of this

approach is to create learners as intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with various complexity and multiple identities which will help them to avoid the stereotyping notion of perceiving someone through a single identity (Byram *et al.*, 2002). It also aims to prepare learners to interact with people of other cultures and be able to accept them with their unique characteristics, behaviors, and values. One framework supporting this innovation is the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference, which aims to help learners interact with speakers of other languages on equal and balanced terms and be aware of their identities (Byram *et al.*, 2002).

Indeed, this approach is not free from problems. The approach and its objectives are challenging to realize in classroom, immersion, and independent learning contexts as it lacks specificity (Wang & Coleman, 2009). As a result, this method is underscored as it is more likely to experience technical and practical limitations in real-life classrooms.

# 3.5 Post-method Pedagogy

Too much emphasis on methods and approaches has led to another significant transition in ELT, which is from methods to beyond methods (Richards, 1990), which is to the postmethod condition (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The post-method condition refers to what compels us to refigure the relationship between the theorizers and the practitioners in English language classrooms. This pedagogy is shaped by the three-dimensional principles of particularity, practicality and possibility. It is rooted in eclecticism (Akbari, 2008) and failures in the use of past methods (Pennycook, 1989; Prabhu, 1990). Prabhu (1990) confirmed that there is no best method to teach language; what matters is the teachers' personal conceptualization of what will make their learners learn. It allows the power of the practitioners (teachers) to develop classroom-oriented theories of practice based on their informed teaching, experience, and critical appraisal. Maximum choice of alternatives and research-based pedagogy emerged from multilingual pedagogy, critical pedagogy, translanguaging and plurilingualism in practice. It took teacher cognition, reasoning, and beliefs into account to choose and imply appropriate alternative teaching strategies for language.

However, this post-method pedagogy is not without weaknesses. Some scholars (Larsen-Freeman, 2005 and Liu, 1995) affirmed that the post-method is not an alternative to the method but an additional method only based on practitioners' assumptions without any authentic logical bases of classroom pedagogy. Bell (2003) argued that it is just a synthesis of different methods under CLT, ignoring the realities of teaching and language teachers (Akbari, 2008), which only suggests that methods have limitations that must be overcome.

#### 4. Discussion

All the pedagogies for teaching English have been presented as Traditional or classical and New or modern from the evolution or time perspective. Though some differences exist between these broad categories of pedagogies, new pedagogies also use some essential components of traditional pedagogies. For example, decoding the meaning of words is essential in both types of pedagogies, but it is also the most important aspect of classical pedagogy. Secondly, traditional or classical pedagogy is based on behaviouristic and cognitive schools of thought; on the other hand, recent or modern English pedagogies are based on constructivist and post-positivist thoughts. These foundational perspectives indicate that remembering and cramming are mediums of language learning, so the teachers and textbooks are highly focused on classical pedagogies (Gillanders, 2007; Fatiloro, 2015). On the other hand, in the modern or recent pedagogies of activity-centric learning processes, the learners occupy the central position in the learning process. Thirdly, in the traditional English pedagogies learning English, learning about one's own socio-cultural context was given less value; instead, the value was on the native speaker's way of communication, life and culture (Chen & Ying, 2009), but academicians claim that in modern English pedagogies, inter and multi-cultural perspective was given priority (St Clair & Phipps, 2008). As a result, the contents of English lessons were primarily based on English literature of the Western world, which was taught in the classical methods school of thought.

These pedagogies are not against each other but have their own context for application. For example, traditional pedagogies focus more on grammatical rules or the structure of language, which are very much required for the written context, but recent pedagogies emphasize functional or communicative aspects, which are required for the development of communication and pragmatics.

#### 5. Conclusion

Many similarities are seen in classroom practices and conventional and modern pedagogy strategies. It can be stated that the amalgam of traditional and new techniques is being employed in schools located in urban areas. In contrast, traditional language teaching methods are still practiced in rural areas. Now, whether these changes and variations in pedagogies can be called a transition or transformation arises. From a developmental perspective, it may be said to be a transition because of the multiplicity of methods and the introduction of new classroom strategies and student engagement practices. The goals of English learning became dynamic and contextual concerning its use, global exposure, and technology integration. It can be considered that the current trend of language teaching methodology is the blend of what was practiced in the past and what we are currently doing. The traditional methods serve as the subsequent guides for the current practices.

## **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare that no such potential conflict of interest is associated with the present paper entitled "Paradigm shift in English language pedagogy of secondary level: from conventional to modern".

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## Suruchi Sahoo, Partha Sarathi Mallik, Dipanjali Sahu PARADIGM SHIFT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY OF SECONDARY LEVEL: FROM CONVENTIONAL TO MODERN

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