



## EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) METHODOLOGIES AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CAMBODIA CONTEXT

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### Abstract:

This research explores the global evolution of English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies and compares them with current practices in Cambodia. While international ELT has increasingly adopted communicative approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a transitional phase in Cambodia where traditional methods, such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), still remains and are particularly used in rural areas. The inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and unequal access to digital technologies are the key challenges in this shifting. Despite these obstacles, Cambodia has initiated a hybrid approach that blends traditional methods with communicative strategies, aiming at balancing language accuracy and fluency. While progressively aligning with global trends, the country considers the reflection from such a hybrid model to address local educational contexts. The study highlights the need for continuous professional development and greater investment in infrastructure to support this transition. The findings conclude that while the hybrid approach is a feasible solution for Cambodia's educational context, ongoing efforts are necessary to narrow further the gap between international ELT standards and local practices. Additionally, the study yells specific interventions to address the gaps in teacher training and resources that continue to hinder the progress of ELT in the country.

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**Keywords:** ELT methodology, contemporary trend, teaching approach evolution, hybrid approach, Cambodia

## 1. Introduction

In the field of language teaching, particularly English language teaching, the concept of "methodology" in English Language Teaching (ELT) draws heavily from linguistics and applied linguistics (Şahin, 2023). Methodology is reflected through various approaches, techniques, and attitudes that define language teaching methods (Pandya, n.d.; Sun *et al.*, 2022). It is understood as a structured set of interactional approaches within a real-world learning context or activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Methodology forms part of a documented approach to ensure that the teaching process is carried out consistently, systematically, and in an explainable way (Vinogradova & Kang Shin, 2020). Anthony (1963) defined a methodological model as a combination of approaches, methods, and techniques, while Richards & Rodgers (2014) later refined this model to include approach, design, and procedure.

The evolution of foreign language teaching has varied from one century to another, influenced by societal and technological advancements (Vinogradova & Kang Shin, 2020). Humphreys (2023) suggests that in the pre-20th century, particularly during the Classical Greek and Medieval Latin periods, language instructors used informal and direct approaches by allowing students to engage with two primary methods. One method focused on using the language through pronunciation and comprehension, while the other emphasized analyzing grammatical structures, all without the use of language textbooks. During this time, Greek (primarily) and Latin (secondarily) served as lingua francas in religion, politics, and business throughout Europe, enabling users to achieve fluency in speaking, reading, and writing these classical languages (Marchiori, 2023). Additionally, in the 17th century it was seen an increase in influential language teachers and methodologists who contributed significantly to European approaches to foreign language learning. Their teaching techniques were compiled and published in books between 1631 and 1658 (Oppezzi, 2023; Celce-Murcia, 2001).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the spread of foreign language learning increased significantly, with a greater emphasis on practical language use and less focus on language analysis (Avazmatova, 2021.p.14). By the early 20th century, several teaching methods, including the grammar-translation approach and the direct method, were introduced to Europe from the United States (Niasse, 2023). The approaches used in the 20th century—such as grammar-translation, direct methods, the reading approach, audiolingualism, the cognitive code, the affective/humanistic approach, and the functional/ESP approach—had a positive impact on learners and led to significant learning outcomes (Zahroh *et al.*, 2023; Şentürk, 2021; Celce-Murcia, 2001).

In several Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Laos, pre-high school English education employs various teaching methods and models (Lukita, 2023). In Indonesia, different methods are used

for teaching English, which require adaptive modification to incorporate Information and Communication Technology (ICT), computer-based learning, worksheets, and other tools (Rashid *et al.*, 2022). In Singapore, English teaching continues to rely heavily on textbooks produced by communicative-oriented commercial publishers, aligned with the 2001 curriculum, which emphasizes improving communicative fluency (Shahi *et al.*, 2022; Yeşil & Balçıkanlı, 2022). In Malaysia, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is adopted alongside ICT to enhance students' language skills, though within the limits of the national curriculum framework (Sahib & Stapa, 2021). In Laos, which has a relatively younger English learning tradition, the focus is on writing rather than speaking, with the Grammar Translation Method being the primary approach (Cherchata *et al.*, 2023; Lukita, 2023). Meanwhile, in Thailand and the Philippines, similar methods are used, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Karami & Zamanian, 2016).

In Cambodia, English Language Teaching (ELT) has traditionally been dominated by the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which emphasizes memorizing grammatical rules and translating sentences, reflecting a historical focus on structural competence rather than communicative proficiency (Akramy *et al.*, 2022; Chan, 2015; Ellis *et al.*, 2010). However, several challenges, including limited teacher capacity, rigorous textbooks, and the absence of scaffolding strategies, hinder effective teaching and learning (Chea & Kuon, 2024; Nhem, 2020). Teachers often face difficulties in delivering vocabulary and grammar instruction due to inadequate methodological support (Em *et al.*, 2024).

In contrast, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced to Cambodian education in the late 1990s. CLT promotes active learner participation through collaborative activities (Nhem, 2019; Bon *et al.*, 2022). Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) began to gain traction in Cambodia in the early 2000s as teachers sought to create more engaging and interactive classrooms (Donaher & Wu, 2020; Nget *et al.*, 2020). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) endorsed TBLT as part of the national curriculum to enhance students' communicative competence (MoEYS, 2020). TBLT also supports real-world language use, helping students build confidence and improve their proficiency. Modern ELT approaches increasingly prioritize learner-centered methodologies, catering to students' interests and needs while encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Garcia & Martinez, 2022; Johnson & Brown, 2021). Content-Based Instruction (CBI) started being implemented in Cambodian schools and universities in the 2000s as part of efforts to provide context-driven language learning experiences (Donaher & Wu, 2020). It aligns well with the increasing focus on English for specific purposes, particularly in fields such as business, science, and technology. CBI integrates language learning with subject matter content, providing context-driven learning that enhances language skills (Meyer & Coyle, 2021; Liu & Tsai, 2020).

Other innovative methods, such as Total Physical Response (TPR) have been incorporated into Cambodian ELT practices, particularly for younger learners, since the

early 2000s (Wright *et al.*, 2022). It is recognized for its ability to create a dynamic and engaging classroom environment that caters to various learning styles. TPR blends physical movement with language instruction. While less widely adopted than other methods, elements of Suggestopedia have been explored in Cambodian language classrooms in recent years, particularly in private language schools, aiming to reduce language anxiety and enhance retention. Suggestopedia, which uses multisensory experiences and music, create dynamic learning environments (Lee & Chan, 2020; Petrovic & Jones, 2020). The Silent Way has had limited exposure in Cambodia, but its principles of fostering learner independence have influenced some innovative teaching practices in private language institutions and progressive education initiatives. The Silent Way, which promotes learner autonomy by minimizing teacher-led instruction, encourages students to take control of their learning (Richards & Rogers, 2020). While GTM has traditionally shaped ELT in Cambodia, newer methodologies like CLT, TBL, CBI, TPR, Suggestopedia, and the Silent Way are being introduced to foster more engaging and effective educational environments.

Looking ahead, it is clear that English Language Teaching (ELT) has continuously evolved over time, adapting to the needs of both teachers and learners by considering various factors such as historical periods, regions, cultures, religions, languages, and other sociolinguistic variables (Wedell, 2022; Sperti, 2022). ELT has undergone significant transformation through the introduction of alternative methods and approaches, and it has become increasingly linked to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and interpreted ChatGPT in English teaching in the digital learning era (Yu *et al.*, 2024; Baz, 2024; Khasatiya, 2024). Up to the current time, the application of ELT methods and approaches to real-world contexts continues to shape the field as explored by researchers (Al-Awaid, 2020).

## 2. Historical Evolution of ELT Methodologies

The early documentation of language teaching methods primarily focuses on Latin from the 5th century AD. Compiled by European scholars, Latin, the language of the Romans, was widely used across Europe for communication in scholarship, commerce, and governance (Mastura, 2023; Mullen & Woudhuysen, 2023; Hilgendorf, 2012). This period marks the emergence of foreign language teaching. The focus was not on general language teaching methods but specifically on Latin, the formal language of the Roman Republic (509 BC to 27 BC) and the Roman Empire (27 BC to AD 476). Latin played a crucial role as the primary foreign language across Europe and the Mediterranean, serving as the international language in these regions (Mullen & Woudhuysen, 2023). Additionally, Greek was taught as a second foreign language due to its significant influence on politics, philosophy, art, science, and literature (Geroula, 2023). Although classical Latin and Greek eventually became rarely spoken as native languages (L1), they remained the central references for foreign language teaching for over a century (Axatovna & Abdujabbarovich, 2023).

The development of foreign language teaching methodologies has significantly diverged from the traditional focus on Latin and Greek (Burton, 2020). With evolving societal demands and advancements in linguistic research, educators have pursued more innovative and adaptable approaches to language instruction (Stéphan *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, various methodologies have emerged, each integrating a distinct theoretical framework for language learning and pedagogy (Gao & Zhang, 2020). Among those, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), the Direct Method (DM), the Audio-lingual Method (ALM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) remain widely employed in contemporary English language teaching (ELT). These approaches signify a shift away from conventional, rigid methods toward more interactive, communicative, and context-oriented practices (Berdiyeva, 2024). The following sections will examine these methodologies in detail, discussing their underlying principles, strengths, and potential challenges in facilitating language acquisition.

## 2.1 Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

During the late Middle Ages, the establishment of universities led to the development of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), also known as the classical method, which was designed for studying Latin and Greek texts (Rajput *et al.*, 2023). This method gained widespread popularity as a historical preference for teaching grammar, vocabulary, and text translation (Humphreys, 2023). By the 15th century, Europeans had broadened the scope to include modern vernacular languages of the region (Hilgendorf, 2012; Celce-Murcia, 2014), and GTM was introduced in English language teaching by the 16th century (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021).

Between the 15th and 19th centuries, a synthesis of the Grammar Translation Method's key components, as discussed by Fotos (2005) and Celce-Murcia (2015), highlights several principles: (1) instructors and learners frequently use the mother tongue, resulting in minimal use of the target language in classroom interactions; (2) it emphasizes learning grammar forms and vocabulary; (3) instruction begins with complex reading texts; (4) exercises primarily involve translating sentences between L1 and L2; (5) students show minimal improvement in communicative competence; (6) fluency in the target language is not a high requirement for instructors; and (7) cultural and grammatical elements are taught deductively.

In the 19th century, the GTM evolved further, incorporating grammar presentations, memorization, and citation tasks. These innovations allowed students to effectively learn vocabulary, grammar rules, and sentence structures (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021; Celce-Murcia, 2001). Despite advancements in language teaching, GTM remains significant in teaching English as a second language. It provides a foundational method for non-native English speakers by integrating both L1 and L2 in the learning process (Javid & Sayyara, 2024). In critical situations, researchers have examined GTM and learners' attitudes towards it. Prastyo (2015) emphasized the importance of combining GTM with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to achieve success in accuracy and

fluency in ELT. Additionally, Khan *et al.* (2016) found that college students felt comfortable communicating with teachers, understood learning concepts with ease, and achieved high scores through GTM.

## 2.2 Direct Method (DM)

The Direct Method is an approach to teaching a foreign language, particularly modern languages, that emphasizes instruction through dialogues, discussions, and reading in the target language without translation or reliance on the student's native language (da Silva *et al.*, 2024; Laela, 2018). In the late 19th century, as Europe transitioned from classical languages to modern languages like French, Italian, German, and English, these languages developed their own speech communities focused on spoken communication skills (Krogull, 2021; Tröhler, 2016). This emphasis on oral communication developed the Direct Method (DM), which François Gouin pioneered in the 1880s, drawing inspiration from patterns observed in first language acquisition (Celce-Murcia, 2015). The method's core idea requires students to first comprehend spoken language through listening before producing speech themselves (da Silva *et al.*, 2024). DM gained widespread popularity in France and Germany and soon influenced language educators across various countries (Celce-Murcia, 2015).

By the early 20th century, DM had been officially adopted by the governments of Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany and was similarly debated in the United States by Hennes, Sauveur, and Berlitz. In Great Britain, DM was integrated into language teaching policy between the two World Wars (Çelik, 2014). The fundamental principles of DM include: (1) strict exclusion of the first language in the classroom; (2) lessons centered on new conversations through dialogues and anecdotes; (3) comprehension facilitated by visual aids and clear prompts; (4) inductive teaching of grammar and cultural aspects of the target language; (5) a focus on reading for enjoyment rather than grammar analysis; and (6) instructors are required to be either native speakers or highly proficient in the target language (Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024; Rakhmatovna, 2024).

## 2.3 Audio-lingual Method (ALM)

In the early 20th century, B.F. Skinner and others expanded the behaviorist framework, which proposed that education operates through conditioning and that language learning involves the formation of habits (Goddard, 2018). During the 1940s and 1950s, the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) emerged from this foundation. ALM became highly popular in the United States during the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, focusing on phonological (sound) and morphological (word construction) systems (Nagy, 2019). It was initially developed to train U.S. military personnel in speaking foreign languages, with the goal of understanding native speakers for military and political purposes (Ghofur *et al.*, 2017; Celce-Murcia, 2014). ALM also evolved to meet global demands, especially in scientific and technological advancements (Çelik, 2014, p. 29). The method stemmed from the structural linguistics of the Aural-Oral approach.

The roles of the teacher and student in ALM are clearly defined. The teacher plays a dominant, active role, while students function primarily as imitators, heavily dependent on the teacher's guidance (Sidabutar, 2021; Çelik, 2014, p. 35). Compared to the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM), ALM offers notable advantages to both teachers and learners (Bidenko & Bepalova, 2017). Ongoing research continues to explore variations of ALM due to its efficacy. Abduh (2016) found that ALM significantly improves learners' listening comprehension, while Aprianto *et al.* (2020) reported positive outcomes in developing Arabic-speaking skills. Similarly, Ghofur *et al.* (2017) highlighted the method's effectiveness in enhancing basic speaking abilities, and Maaliah *et al.* (2017) emphasized its structured approach in supporting both instructors and learners. Furthermore, Bidenko & Bepalova (2017) confirmed that ALM strengthens communicative competence by integrating speaking and conversational exercises.

#### **2.4 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

In the 1970s, with the increasing popularity of Krashen's cognitive theory model, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged (Nato Sierra, 2023). This approach recognized language as a social phenomenon closely tied to expressing, interpreting, and negotiating meaning (Zulu, 2019). CLT encourages learners to focus on exchanging new information (Cheruiyot & Ongeti, 2023), and it strongly supports anthropological linguistic research in the United States (Meesing, 2017). According to Adem & Berkessa (2022), a key characteristic of CLT is the teacher's role. In such role, teachers guide students by transforming their understanding of grammar into tools for communicative interaction in language learning.

Some defining characteristics of CLT include: (1) promoting students' ability to communicate in the target language, (2) engaging learners in active learning through pair work and group activities, (3) involving students in enjoyable learning experiences connected to the cultural, social, and real-world contexts of the target language, (4) using classroom materials and tasks that are authentic and meaningful, and (5) requiring teachers to be highly fluent and culturally competent in the target language (Sarikha & Chumworathayee, 2022).

However, Nowlan & Samuell (2020) found that teachers of Japanese as a second language often lack sufficient academic knowledge of CLT, as they tend to prioritize language instruction over teaching methodology. Despite this, CLT remains central to language teaching due to its emphasis on student-centered activities (Ly, 2024), and both teachers and students generally hold positive views toward the approach. Studies by Sarfraz *et al.* (2015) and Christianto (2019) suggest that CLT facilitates highly interactive and enjoyable learning experiences.

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

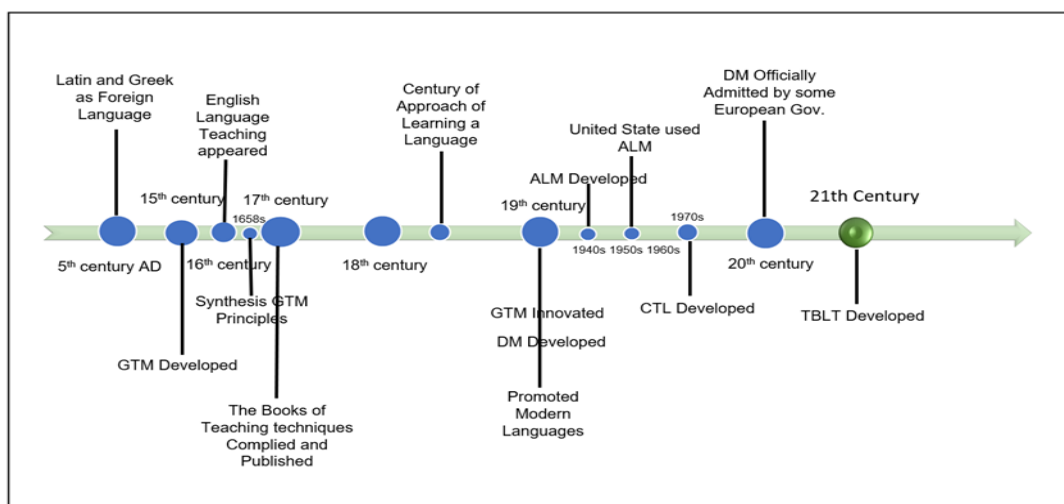
Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) represents a modern and dynamic approach to language instruction, markedly different from traditional methods like the Grammar-

Translation Method (GTM) (Chaika, 2023). Unlike GTM, which centers on the explicit teaching of grammar rules and translation exercises, TBLT emphasizes real-world tasks and meaningful communication scenarios that encourage active language use (Molnar & Dániel, 2024). Through TBLT, learners engage in interactive and collaborative tasks, allowing them to develop their linguistic abilities alongside problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. This method ultimately enhances students' confidence and proficiency, equipping them to navigate authentic communication situations in real-life contexts. TBLT emerged as a progressive evolution of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in response to the limitations of previous methodologies (Khamroeva, 2024). While CLT prioritized communication in general, TBLT focuses on using tasks—such as problem-solving or project-based activities—to simulate real-world language use, which better supports practical language acquisition (Ngọc, 2023). Although some traditional methods helped students develop certain linguistic competencies, they did not adequately prepare learners for communication beyond the classroom (Molnar & Dániel, 2024).

Moreover, TBLT aligns with functional language teaching and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approaches, which emphasize language use in specific contexts (Georgy, 2023). For example, Vietnam has successfully integrated TBLT into its EFL curriculum, showcasing its effectiveness in Southeast Asia (Cao, 2018). Similarly, TBLT's flexibility and practical focus have made it an appealing method for various educational systems, as it promotes both communicative competence and broader language-use skills beyond the target language taught (Pico Pachacama, 2023).

Almefleh *et al.* (2023) explained that TBLT supports language learning by emphasizing developmental operations through communicative tasks aimed at meaning-making. The process of developing both meaning and language systems leads to more effective outcomes and language use (Djigunovic & Krajnovic, 2009). The core principles of TBLT can be summarized as follows: (1) designing course outlines that reflect the outcomes of task-based language use, (2) linking form and meaning through tasks that depend on the target language to enhance proficiency, and (3) enabling learners to communicate by engaging in meaningful tasks as part of the course structure (Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024; Donaher & Wu, 2020).





**Figure 1:** A hundred years of ELT methodologies development phases

Current research highlights the increasing adoption and benefits of TBLT in language teaching. Case studies show that TBLT motivates students to become more independent and address real-world academic needs, provides significant advantages for Chinese students (Bao & Du, 2015), and effectively supports the teaching of narrative writing (Milarisa, 2019). Additionally, Liu Siyi (2021) found that TBLT aligns with new national curriculum standards, and Riazi *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that TBLT had a statistically positive effect on Iranian intermediate learners' reading comprehension.

### 3. Influences and Adaptations of ELT Methodologies in Cambodia

English in Cambodia has been influenced by the country's social, political, and economic developments (Sam *et al.*, 2012b). Globalization and significant events, such as Cambodia's entry into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999, have increased the demand for English (Hum & Heng, 2024). However, in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Cambodia, Nhem (2020) found that teachers' capacities and textbook modifications make the processes of English teaching and learning difficult. It says that this is an inconsistency between instructors and textbook uses accompanied by lacking mix-abilities to flexible scaffolding strategies (Chea and Kuon, 2024). Teachers employ harder in teaching vocabulary and grammar (Priska, 2024). This is because of teachers have a shortage of teaching methodology knowledge, encouragement, and are not aware of how to use it to adapt to the real-world context (Em *et al.*, 2024).

#### 3.1 Grammar Translation Methods (GTM) in the Cambodian Context

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which emerged in the 19th century, was widely used in European language education and later became the dominant approach in Cambodia during the French colonial era (1863-1953) (Akramy *et al.*, 2022; MoEYS, 2020). This method persisted after independence, heavily influencing English Language Teaching (ELT) in the country. GTM primarily focuses on the memorization of

grammatical rules and vocabulary, along with sentence translation exercises, which shaped Cambodian language education for decades (Abduqaxarov, 2024).

In the context of Cambodian ELT, GTM has historically been the primary instructional approach, emphasizing structural competence over communicative proficiency (Ellis *et al.*, 2010; Chan, 2015). The method's persistence in Cambodian classrooms can be attributed to colonial educational legacies, which have deeply influenced contemporary ELT practices, including teacher training programs (Sok, 2018; Kim & Lee, 2020). As a result, memorization and translation continue to dominate classroom practices, reflecting traditional educational priorities (Khan *et al.*, 2016).

### **3.2 Direct Methods (DM) in the Cambodian Context**

The progression of the Direct Method in Cambodia's English Language Teaching (ELT) has been both gradual and complex. Traditionally, ELT in Cambodia heavily utilized the Grammar-Translation Method, which emphasized the memorization learning of grammar and the translation of sentences (Lor, 2021; MoEYS, 2020). However, as the country became more influenced by global trends and a greater need for communicative skills emerged, the Direct Method began to gain prominence (Usman *et al.*, 2020).

The Direct Method, which emphasizes learning through listening and speaking without the use of translation, became increasingly relevant during Cambodia's educational reforms in the 1990s, particularly as the country reintegrated into the global community (Nhem, 2019). By the early 2000s, its influence became more evident as Cambodia adopted international educational standards. Schools began to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) alongside the Direct Method, following regional trends in Southeast Asia that prioritized communicative fluency (Dos Santos, 2020). Despite obstacles like insufficient teacher training and limited resources, Cambodia incorporated Direct Method principles, such as language immersion, into its classrooms.

More recently, the Direct Method's focus on active language usage has aligned well with the rise of digital platforms that support speaking and listening exercises (Sitorus & Silitonga, 2018). As a result, Cambodia's ELT now employs a blended approach, integrating traditional methods like Grammar-Translation with communicative strategies such as the Direct Method and Task-Based Learning, addressing local educational needs while striving to meet global standards (Lor, 2021).

### **3.3 Audio-lingual Method (ALM) in the Cambodian Context**

The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), developed in the United States during World War II, focuses on language learning through repetition, drills, and the development of speaking and listening skills without direct grammar instruction (Celce-Murcia, 2015). ALM gained global recognition in the mid-20th century and began influencing language teaching in Southeast Asia, including Cambodia (Celce-Murcia, 2001). After gaining independence in 1953, Cambodia looked to modernize its education system,

incorporating global educational frameworks, which introduced methods like ALM (Nhem, 2020).

In the post-colonial era (1950s-1970s), Cambodia's education system was still largely shaped by the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) from the French colonial period (UNESCO, 2010). However, global trends, particularly American pedagogy, started to influence reforms, and ALM began to surface, supported by international aid and collaborations with Western educational institutions (Richter & Lara Herrera, 2017). The rise of the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s, however, disrupted educational progress, including English language teaching (ELT). The destruction of the nation's educational infrastructure left little room for structured methods like ALM (UNESCO, 2010). Following the regime's fall and the nation's rebuilding efforts in the 1980s and 1990s, Cambodia sought international support, which led to the reintroduction of ALM alongside other modern methodologies, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Grammar-Translation (Hum & Heng, 2024).

By the 2000s, Cambodia actively modernized its ELT practices, and while ALM continued to be used, particularly in state-run schools where resources were limited, the method was increasingly blended with newer approaches, such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) (Vong & Kaewurai, 2017). Today, despite of digital learning tools and more communicative methods, ALM still plays a role in foundational language instruction, especially in rural areas where modern resources are scarce (Sovachana, 1991). Its emphasis on repetition and drills remains practical for improving basic language skills in such contexts (Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024).

### **3.4 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the Cambodian Context**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a dominant approach in Cambodia's English Language Teaching (ELT) landscape, particularly in the years following the Khmer Rouge regime (Nhem, 2020). Educational reforms during this period aimed at rebuilding the education system, and CLT, with its focus on active student engagement, collaborative activities, and real-world communication skills, began to gradually replace the traditional Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). By encouraging teachers and students to take active roles in the learning process through group discussions, task-based activities, and interaction, CLT has shifted the pedagogical emphasis from linguistic memorization to communicative proficiency (Bon *et al.*, 2022).

The method has been particularly effective at the university level, where fostering communication is a priority. However, its success is often based on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers. According to Doeur (2022), the effectiveness of CLT depends significantly on whether teachers are receptive to integrating its strategies into their classrooms. Those who are well-trained in CLT principles and adopt its techniques tend to cultivate more dynamic and communicative learning environments, which enhance student outcomes.

Globally, CLT emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of GTM. In Cambodia, it was not until the late 1990s—after the country had begun to rebuild its educational infrastructure—that CLT was incorporated into the national education curriculum. According to Chhinh & Dy (2009), the educational reforms in the post-war period placed greater emphasis on communicative competence, leading teacher training programs to introduce CLT strategies that aimed to improve student interaction and language use in real-world contexts.

Regardless of its growing acceptance, challenges remain in the widespread implementation of CLT in Cambodia (Williams *et al.*, 2016). Limited teacher training, inadequate resources, and the persistence of traditional methods in certain areas continue to hinder the full realization of CLT's potential. Nevertheless, the integration of CLT marks a significant shift toward a more interactive and learner-centered approach, aligning Cambodian ELT with international educational standards (Bon *et al.*, 2022).

### **3.5 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the Cambodian Context**

In Cambodia, TBLT began gaining strength in the early 2000s as part of broader reforms in English language teaching (ELT) (Vutha, 2021). The country's educational authorities, particularly the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS), recognized the need for more communicative, student-centered methodologies in response to the increasing demand for global English proficiency (MoEYS, 2020). TBLT was introduced as part of Cambodia's efforts to modernize its educational system and align with international standards. This shift aimed to equip students with the linguistic and communicative competencies necessary for success in a globalized world, where English proficiency is crucial for economic and professional opportunities (Nget *et al.*, 2020).

As Cambodia continues to recover from its unsettled past, education reform has become a cornerstone of national development efforts. TBLT has been embraced for its ability to foster active learning, offering more engaging and interactive classroom environments (Vutha, 2021). Teachers in Cambodia have found TBLT effective in helping students develop communicative competence through the completion of meaningful tasks (Khakimova, 2024). This has been particularly beneficial in contrast to traditional methods like the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which has been criticized for its reliance on memorization with little focus on practical language use (Kong, 2023).

<b>Evolution of ELT Methodologies in Cambodia</b>		
<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Historical Context Methods</b>	<b>Challenges/ Adaptations</b>
1863-1953	Grammar Translation Methods (GTM) - French colonial influence	Teacher training gaps Resources disparity
1953-1970s	Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) introduced alongside GTM	
1970s	Educational disruption - Khmer Rough	
1980s-1990s	Rebuilding phase: Introduction of ALM, GTM	
1990s	Direct Methods and early sign of CLT - Educational reforms	
2000s	Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) adopted	
2000s-Present	Blended approaches (GTM, CLT, TBLT)	
Influence & trends	Globalization, Asian entry, rise of digital learning	Technological tools

**Figure 2:** Influence and adaptation of ELT methodologies in Cambodia

#### 4. Contemporary Trends in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Cambodia

The integration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) into Cambodia's national curriculum represents a shift toward modern, communicative methods in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Takeda, 2015; Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2017; Wongdaeng, 2020) including English for specific purposes (ESP) courses (Petraki & Khat, 2022). However, several challenges continue to hinder the consistent and effective implementation of these approaches (Boy & Water, 2023.p.p-44.75). One of the most significant obstacles is the lack of adequate teacher training. Many teachers are still trained in traditional methods, making it difficult for them to fully adopt CLT and TBLT in their classrooms. Additionally, limited resources and overcrowded classrooms exacerbate these issues, leaving educators struggling to apply these student-centered approaches in a meaningful way (Lim & Keuk, 2018.p.1). Consequently, the implementation of CLT and TBLT varies across different regions and institutions, leading to inconsistent outcomes (Donaher & Wu, 2020).

Despite these challenges, Cambodia has made significant progress in transitioning toward more communicative approaches in ELT (Lim & Keuk, 2018.p.87). Many schools and universities have adopted a blended approach, combining TBLT with traditional methods like the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and modern strategies such as CLT (Nhem, 2019). This blend allows teachers to balance the limitations of each method while enhancing interactive, task-oriented learning. For instance, TBLT helps students engage in real-world tasks, fostering collaboration and problem-solving, while CLT emphasizes practical language use and communicative competence. By combining these

methods, educators can offer flexibility in teaching, catering to the diverse needs of learners and promoting both linguistic accuracy and fluency (Sholeh *et al.*, 2021).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia has embraced blended learning, which combines traditional in-person instruction with online education. Blended learning was initially introduced in some higher education institutions (HEIs), like the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, but only gained widespread adoption during the pandemic. This method helped maintain educational continuity and accelerated Cambodia's adoption of digital learning technologies (Em, 2021b; Som, 2020; Heng & Doeur, 2022). Blended learning has offered flexibility and improved student engagement, but challenges such as limited digital infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and the lack of online teaching skills among faculty and students, persist (Heng *et al.*, 2023; Khan *et al.*, 2021). Blended learning and the use of digital tools have also gained motive in Cambodian classrooms, especially with the improving of technology and e-learning platforms (Ly & Doeur, 2024). These platforms provide opportunities for students to practice speaking and listening skills, complementing the Direct Method's focus on active language use.

However, the biggest hurdle remains the professional development of teachers (Khalil & Kholofelo Semono-Eke, 2020). While recent reforms have aimed to introduce modern teaching techniques, many educators still face a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Professional development initiatives are crucial to equip teachers with the skills needed to implement CLT and TBLT effectively. Without sufficient training and resources, the successful application of these methods remains a challenge (Sholeh *et al.*, 2021).

In summary, Cambodia's ELT sector has embraced hybrid approaches that combine traditional methods with modern communicative strategies. This hybrid model helps meet both local educational needs and international proficiency standards, making it a practical solution in a context where resources and training opportunities are still developing (Sam *et al.*, 2013b; Жаңтәева *et al.*, 2023). However, ongoing efforts to improve teacher training and resource allocation are essential for the full realization of these approaches (Ngoc & Barrot, 2023).

#### **4.1 Comparative Analysis of Global and Cambodian Trends in ELT methodologies**

Globally, English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies have evolved significantly in response to changing social, political, and technological conditions. This evolution reflects a shift toward communicative competence and real-world language use, as seen in the widespread adoption of methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). In Cambodia, the ELT landscape is similarly evolving, though a slower pace due to structural challenges. While global trends emphasize interactive and student-centered approaches, Cambodia remains heavily influenced by traditional methods, particularly in rural regions.

Several key factors differentiate Cambodia's ELT terrain from global trends: (1) Teacher training: On a global scale, communicative methods like CLT and TBLT have

become the norm, with teachers being trained to focus on communication over rote memorization. However, in Cambodia, many educators are still transitioning from traditional methods such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), highlighting the need for further professional development to effectively adopt newer methodologies (Lim & Keuk, 2018). This gap is particularly noticeable in rural areas, where access to modern training resources is limited. (2) Resource constraints: Generally, ELT practices are increasingly supported by digital tools and blended learning environments that integrate both in-person and online instruction. In Cambodia, however, the adoption of these technologies is hindered by infrastructural limitations, particularly in countryside or rural areas where access to digital tools and the internet remains uneven. This disparity makes it difficult to fully integrate the global shift toward technology-enhanced learning (Heng & Doeur, 2022). (3) Hybrid approaches: In contrast to many global settings where CLT and TBLT are implemented independently, Cambodia has developed a hybrid approach that blends traditional methods with modern communicative strategies. This merging allows educators to balance the strengths of traditional methods, such as the focus on linguistic accuracy, with the benefits of communicative methods that promote fluency and real-world language application (Nhem, 2019). This hybrid model has proven practical in addressing Cambodia's unique educational challenges, where resource constraints and varying levels of teacher training must be considered.

In summary, while Cambodia's ELT sector is making progress toward aligning with global trends, challenges related to teacher training, resource limitations, and the adaptation of modern methodologies persist (Sam *et al.*, 2013b). The country's hybrid approach, combining traditional and communicative methods, offers a flexible solution for addressing these challenges, but ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure and professional development are crucial for further advancement.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Cambodia's ELT outlook is gradually advancing toward global trends in English language teaching (ELT) methodologies, but the pace of change is tempered by persistent challenges related to teacher training, resource limitations, and infrastructural constraints, explicitly in remote areas. The country's hybrid approach, blending traditional methods with modern communicative strategies, provides a practical solution to these challenges, allowing educators to maintain linguistic accuracy while promoting fluency and real-world application of language skills. However, further efforts in professional development and infrastructural improvement are essential to fully embrace contemporary ELT practices.

For future research, studies could focus on evaluating the effectiveness of Cambodia's hybrid teaching methods in diverse classroom settings, with a particular emphasis on rural regions where the challenges are most pronounced. Additionally, research exploring innovative solutions for bridging the digital divide and increasing

access to technology in rural schools would provide valuable insights into overcoming resource constraints.

In terms of practice, there is a pressing need for continued investment in teacher training programs that emphasize communicative methodologies. Expanding access to digital tools and creating scalable blended learning models can also encourage the shift toward modern ELT practices. Furthermore, future initiatives should consider context-specific adaptations to ensure that new methodologies are not only theoretically sound but also practically feasible within Cambodia's educational aspect.

### **Acknowledgements**

We sincerely appreciate Dr. Sam Rany for his invaluable guidance, support, and expertise throughout this research project. His thoughtful feedback, encouragement, and dedication were instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this study. Dr. Rany's deep knowledge of the field, combined with his willingness to share insights and offer constructive critiques, greatly enriched the final work. His mentorship and commitment have been a constant source of inspiration, and we feel truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from him. This study was conducted collaboratively, with no conflicts of interest, and without external funding support.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest.

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