Datokarama English Education Journal
Vol. 6 No. 1 (2025) 60-67 **e-ISSN: 2723-4967**
Available online at http://deejournal.org/index.php/dee

From Traditional to Trendy: How ELT Curricula Have Evolved

Maulida Zahratun Niesrina.[1], Nabila Nur Azizah[2*], Zaitun Qamariah[3]
azizah.azizahnur.nur2003@gmail.com
English Education Department
State Institute for Islamic Studies Palangka Raya, Indonesia

Article History:
Received:
(24-06-2025)
Revised:
(27-06-2025)
Accepted:
(28-06-2025)

Keywords:
ELT curriculum; curriculum evolution; language teaching approaches

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the evolution of the curriculum in english language teaching (elt) from traditional approaches to more modern and contextual ones. Based on the reality that 21st-century learning demanded changes in teaching approaches, methods, and curriculum content, this research adopted a library research method with a qualitative approach. Data were collected from various relevant academic literature sources and were analyzed using content analysis in a descriptive-qualitative manner. The findings indicated that elt curricula had undergone significant shifts, moving from grammar-based and rote memorization models to communicative and task-based approaches that emphasized language use in real-life contexts. These changes were driven by various factors, including technological advancements, globalization, and the demands of 21st-century competencies. This study contributed by providing a historical mapping and critical analysis of elt curriculum dynamics, offering conceptual insights that could serve as a foundation for developing adaptive, relevant, and future-oriented curricula.

How to Cite:
Niesrina, M. Z., Azizah, N. N., & Qomariah, Z. (2025). From Traditional to Trendy: How ELT Curricula Have Evolved. *Datokarama English Education Journal*, *6*(1), 60-68. https://doi.org/10.24239/dee.v6i1.118

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (English Language Teaching/ELT) has undergone significant transformation over the past few decades. These changes reflect the education sector's response to global dynamics, technological developments, and the demands of 21st-century competencies that emphasize communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills. ELT curricula, which once focused on traditional approaches such as explicit grammar instruction, translation, and vocabulary memorization, have now shifted toward more communicative, task-based, and learner-centered approaches. This transformation highlights the urgent need to design curricula that are more adaptive, contextual, and relevant to learners' real-

Copyright © 2025 Author(s).
This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

world needs in various social and professional contexts. Therefore, it is important to further examine how ELT curricula have evolved over time and what implications this evolution has on the practices of teaching and learning English.

The main issue addressed in this research is the paradigm shift in ELT curricula from traditional to more modern and dynamic approaches. This study highlights how the curriculum has shifted in terms of design, approach, and learning objectives, and how factors such as globalization, the development of digital technology, and changes in international communication needs have influenced the direction of these changes.

The objective of this study is to describe the evolution of ELT curricula over time, identify the characteristics of each stage in curriculum development, and analyze the factors driving these changes. In addition, this research aims to evaluate the impact of curriculum changes on the implementation of English language teaching in various educational contexts.

The contribution of this research lies in its comprehensive and integrated presentation of the dynamics of ELT curriculum change. It offers a novel synthesis of historical development combined with critical analysis of curriculum trends, a perspective that has not been extensively explored in previous literature. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical foundations for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers in designing relevant and effective ELT curricula.

Several previous studies have discussed aspects of change in English language teaching. (Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020) outlined the development of various approaches and methods in ELT, while (Suteja, 2017) highlighted the shift from content-based to task-based curricula. Furthermore, research by (Azimova, 2019) emphasized the importance of communicative approaches in the context of language learning in Asia. However, comprehensive studies that map ELT curriculum changes from a historical to a contemporary perspective are still limited. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by offering a complete and contextualized mapping of curriculum evolution, linking it to current educational challenges and needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the evolution of the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum is rooted in various educational and linguistic theories that provide the conceptual foundation for understanding the dynamics of change in language learning. One of the main theories underpinning this study is Vygotsky's social constructivism (Tohari & Rahman, 2024), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in the learning process. This theory forms the basis of communicative and task-based learning approaches, where language is seen as a tool for communication and interaction, rather than merely a grammatical structure. Additionally, Knowles' andragogy theory (Bowling &

Henschke, 2023) is also relevant, especially in the context of adult learning, highlighting the importance of material relevance, prior experience, and practical needs in curriculum design. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Berliana & Atikah, 2023) also influences differentiated approaches in ELT curricula, aiming to accommodate various student learning styles.

Various previous studies have traced changes in English teaching approaches and their impact on curriculum design. (Bekteshi & Xhaferi, 2020) described the development of ELT methods from the Grammar Translation Method to the Audiolingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching. (Suteja, 2017)discussed the paradigm shift from content-based to task-based learning, which is considered more suited to real communication needs. (Azimova, 2019)highlighted the challenges of implementing communicative approaches in Asian countries, which often face cultural and structural barriers. Research by (Khosiyono, 2019) also explored the relationship between language education policy and curriculum design, emphasizing the importance of local context in designing effective curricula. Although various studies have addressed aspects of change in ELT, there is still a gap in comprehensive studies that map the evolution of ELT curricula from a historical to a contemporary perspective—especially those that integrate global social dynamics, technology, and education policy into a unified analytical framework.

This study seeks to fill that gap by presenting a thorough synthesis of ELT curriculum transformation over time. By drawing on theoretical foundations from social constructivism and communicative approaches, and analyzing past findings within a chronological and contextual framework, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how and why ELT curricula evolve. It also reinforces the relevance of previous research by showing the links between pedagogical approaches and the ever-changing socio-cultural context. Thus, this article not only complements existing literature reviews but also provides new directions for formulating adaptive, inclusive, and future-oriented ELT curricula.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach through library research. As a library study, all data analyzed are obtained from various relevant written sources such as books, scientific journal articles, conference proceedings, educational policy documents, and previous research reports discussing the topic of curriculum evolution in English Language Teaching (ELT). This research does not involve populations and samples in a quantitative sense, as its focus is on content analysis of available academic literature.

The identification of variables in this study is not quantitative, but rather thematic issues related to changes in approaches, methods, and structures of ELT curricula over time. Some key themes examined include traditional approaches in

ELT, the shift toward communicative and task-based learning, and the influence of globalization and technology on the ELT curriculum.

Data collection was conducted through a search of credible and relevant academic literature sources. Searches were performed using databases such as Google Scholar, as well as key reference books commonly used in the fields of ELT and curriculum development. The collected data were then analyzed using content analysis methods, by examining and categorizing information related to paradigm and practice changes in ELT curricula.

The validity of the data in this study was reinforced through source triangulation, by comparing and examining findings from various types of sources to ensure consistency of information and the accuracy of interpretations. Data analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively through a critical synthesis approach, aiming to identify patterns of change, literature gaps, and the theoretical and practical contributions of ELT curriculum evolution in various educational contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of an analysis of various English Language Teaching (ELT) articles and curriculum documents that highlight significant changes in curriculum approaches, content and objectives over time. The analysis emphasizes the shift from traditional teacher-centered and grammar-based methods to student-centered communicative approaches. The data used comes from curriculum documents as well as articles from reputable academic journals that are analyzed qualitatively. For example, research by (Underwood, 2017) shows that although the communicative approach has been adopted in the national curriculum in many countries, its implementation still faces challenges, including a mismatch between the curriculum and standardized tests that emphasize grammar. In addition, research by (Rahmawati, 2018) revealed that some teachers in Indonesia have misconceptions about the communicative approach, perceiving it as a method that does not teach grammar and focuses only on speaking skills. Furthermore, an analysis by (Babaniyazova, 2024) compared traditional and digital educational technologies in foreign language teaching, finding that a balanced approach between the two can create a more effective and engaging educational model.

In the early stages of the development of English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula in various countries, such as Indonesia and Hong Kong, the dominant methods used were the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). GTM emphasizes text translation and mastery of grammar rules, with teaching conducted primarily in the students' native language. This method often neglects oral communication skills and deep understanding of the text. Research by (Mazher et al., 2015) shows that GTM emphasizes on learning vocabulary and sentence structure patterns, but fails in

the practical application of English in real situations, making it difficult for students to communicate in English. Meanwhile, ALM focuses on repetition and memorization of sentence patterns through listening and speaking exercises, hoping that students can internalize language structures automatically. However, this approach has been criticized for lacking contextual understanding and creativity in language use. In the Hong Kong context, the 1975 curriculum reflects this approach by emphasizing structural exercises and grammar mastery (Chan, 2021). The limitation of these traditional methods lies in the excessive focus on structural accuracy and repetition, which hinders students' ability to use English effectively in real communication situations.

During the transition period of English language teaching in Indonesia, there was a shift from traditional methods to more communicative approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). This shift changes the focus of learning from simply mastering grammar to developing effective communication skills in real situations. The implementation of CLT and TBLT in the Indonesian context brings various benefits, such as improving students' speaking and listening skills (Izzuddin & Mustain, 2024). However, the implementation of these approaches also faces challenges, including teachers' lack of understanding of TBLT concepts and limited educational resources (Sholeh, 2021). Nonetheless, with adequate teacher training and the development of appropriate materials, TBLT has the potential to increase the effectiveness of English language learning in Indonesia (Hima et al., 2021).

The modern English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum has undergone significant developments that reflect the global role of English and the learning needs of the 21st century. Teaching approaches now emphasize context-based learning, intercultural competence, and the integration of technology in the learning process. The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method has been applied to improve students' reading skills by linking learning materials with local contexts, thus making learning more relevant and meaningful for students (Pratama & Sumardi, 2022). In addition, the CTL approach has also proven effective in improving students' narrative writing skills, by providing a more contextualized and applicable learning experience (Jubhari et al., 2022). The integration of technology in English language learning enables the use of digital platforms and e-learning materials that support cross-cultural interaction and communication, in line with the concept of English as an International Language (EIL). However, challenges arise in ensuring that teachers have adequate understanding and skills to integrate technology and contextual approaches in their teaching. Therefore, continuous training and professional development for educators is required to achieve effective learning objectives that are relevant to today's global needs.

In the context of primary education in Indonesia, evaluation of English language learning programs for early childhood (EYL) is crucial in tailoring the

curriculum to the real needs of students and the school context. The study by (Primary et al., 2023) emphasizes the importance of regular program evaluation to encourage curriculum development that suits students' needs and the local context. Teachers face challenges in lesson planning, material development, teaching methods and assessment practices. They expect the EYL program to be tailored to a contextualized, character-based and school-based curriculum. In addition, research by (Sminar et al., 2019) found a mismatch between the planned curriculum and classroom practices, suggesting the need for assessment and evaluation to ensure effective implementation. Furthermore, (Zein, 2017) highlighted the important role of teachers, parents and administrators in providing English language education for children, given challenges such as the lack of official curriculum guidelines and inadequate teacher quality. Thus, program evaluation involving the voices of teachers and other stakeholders is essential to improve the quality of English language teaching at the primary school level in Indonesia.

Overall, the evolution of ELT curricula reflects a major shift from structural, teacher-centered approaches to communicative, contextual and global-based approaches. The findings show that modern ELT curricula emphasize not only language acquisition, but also intercultural awareness, digital literacy and learning independence. This transformation is influenced by social, cultural and technological changes that increasingly position English as a tool of international communication. However, the sustainability of this reform depends heavily on the flexibility of curriculum design, ongoing program evaluation, and the ability of the curriculum to respond to the needs of learners and educators.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum has undergone significant changes, moving from a teacher-centered structural approach to a communicative, contextual, and global-based approach oriented to the needs of learners in the 21st century. This shift not only reflects methodological developments in language teaching, but also responds to social dynamics, technological advances, and the demands of globalization that increasingly place English as a cross-cultural communication tool. The findings in this study underline that today's ELT curriculum no longer focuses solely on grammar mastery, but emphasizes the ability to communicate effectively, intercultural awareness, digital literacy, and contextual and meaningful learning. However, this transformation faces various challenges, such as teachers' limited understanding of new approaches, lack of professional training, and limited educational resources, especially in local contexts such as Indonesia. Therefore, the success of ELT curriculum reform depends on the flexibility of curriculum design, the involvement of stakeholders such as teachers and policymakers, and continuous program evaluation to ensure the congruence between the designed

curriculum and its implementation in the field. Thus, the results of this study are expected to serve as a theoretical and practical basis for curriculum developers, educators, and policy makers in designing an adaptive, relevant, and future-oriented ELT curriculum.

REFERENCES

Babaniyazova, N. (2024). Integration of traditional and digital educational technologies: points of contact and differences in teaching a foreign language. *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University Series Physics*, *2024*(55), 2161–2173. https://doi.org/10.54919/physics/55.2024.216kb1

Bekteshi, E., & Xhaferi, B. (2020). Learning about Sustainable Development Goals through English Language Teaching. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, *5*(3), 78–94. https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.05.03.4

Berliana, D., & Atikah, C. (2023). TEORI MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES DAN IMPLIKASINYA DALAM PEMBELAJARAN. *Jurnal Citra Pendidikan*, *3*(3), 1108–1117. https://doi.org/10.38048/jcp.v3i3.963

Bowling, J., & Henschke, J. A. (2023). Pedagogy and Andragogy. In *The Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (pp. 158–167). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447849-20

Chan, J. Y. H. (2021). Four decades of ELT development in Hong Kong: Impact of global theories on the changing curricula and textbooks. *Language Teaching Research*, *25*(5), 729–753. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168819865563

Hima, A. N., Saputro, T. H., & Farah, R. R. (2021). Benefits and challenges of doing task-based language teaching in Indonesia: Teachers' perception. *KEMBARA Journal of Scientific Language Literature and Teaching*, *7*(1), 131–142. https://doi.org/10.22219/kembara.v7i1.15805

Izzuddin, & Mustain. (2024). Task-Based Language Teaching in Indonesia: Overcoming Constraints for Effective Language Learning. *Nusantara Journal of Multidisciplinary Science*, *2*(4). https://jurnal.intekom.id/index.php/njms

Jubhari, Y., Sasabone, L., & Nurliah, N. (2022). The Effectiveness of Contextual Teaching and Learning Approach in Enhancing Indonesian EFL Secondary Learners' Narrative Writing Skill. *REiLA : Journal of Research and Innovation in Language*, *4*(1), 54–66. https://doi.org/10.31849/reila.v4i1.8633

Khosiyono, B. H. C. (2019). Kebijakan pendidikan bahasa asing di Indonesia dalam perspektif masyarakat global. *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi Dan Aplikasi*, *6*(1), 70–82. https://doi.org/10.21831/jppfa.v6i1.20612

Mazher, U., Ahmed, M., & Aslam, M. (2015). Grammar Translation Method In ELT: Hindering The Development Of Communicative Skills At Secondary Level. *An International Peer-Reviewed Journal*, *6*. www.iiste.org

Pratama, A., & Sumardi, M. S. (2022). Contextual Teaching and Learning Using Local Content Material on Students' Reading Comprehension at a Junior High School in Indonesia. *SALEE: Study of Applied Linguistics and English Education*, *3*(2), 184–194. https://doi.org/10.35961/salee.v3i2.494

Primary, M. A., Emilia, E., & Sukyadi, D. (2023). Program evaluation of English language learning for EYL curriculum development in Indonesia: teachers' perception, challenges, and expectation. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, *13*(1), 314–338. https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v13i1.6068

Rahmawati, Y. (2018). TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN INDONESIAN CLASSROOMS. *IJEE (Indonesian Journal of English Education)*, *5*(1), 92–100. https://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v5i1.9881

S, Azimova. (2019). The communicative approach in english language teaching. *Bulletin of Science and Practice*, *5*(4).

Sholeh, M. B. (2021). Implementation of Task-based Learning in Teaching English in Indonesia: Benefits and Problems. *Journal of English Teaching, Applied Linguistics and Literatures (JETALL)*, *4*(2), 129. https://doi.org/10.20527/jetall.v4i2.9327

Sminar, A., Setiawati, P., Nurjamin, L., & Fajriah, Y. (2019). Indonesian EYL Curriculum Issues: Between Education Policy and Classroom Practices. *Proceedings of the Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Business, Law And Pedagogy, ICBLP 2019, 13-15 February 2019, Sidoarjo, Indonesia*. https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.13-2-2019.2286156

Suteja, J. (2017). Model-model pembelajaran dalam kurikulum berbasis kompetensi kkni di perguruan tinggi (perubahan dari teacher centered learning ke arah student centered learning). https://doi.org/DOI:10.24235/edueksos.v6i1.1412

Tohari, B., & Rahman, A. (2024). Konstruktivisme Lev Semonovich Vygotsky dan Jerome Bruner: Model Pembelajaran Aktif dalam Pengembangan Kemampuan Kognitif Anak. *Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, *4*(1), 209–228. https://doi.org/10.14421/njpi.2024.v4i1-13

Underwood, P. R. (2017). Challenges and Change: Integrating Grammar Teaching With Communicative Work in Senior High School EFL Classes. *Sage Open*, *7*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017722185

Zein, M. S. (2017). Elementary English education in Indonesia: Policy developments, current practices, and future prospects. *English Today*, *33*(1), 53–59. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078416000407