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BA English Honours | Semester I | Calicut University

English Language Teaching: Foundations and Practice Level 1

Course Code: ENG1MN103 • Module 1 Notes

MODULE I: INTRODUCTION TO ELT

1. Overview of English Language Teaching: Historical and Global Dimensions

English Language Teaching (ELT) has established itself as one of the most expansive, influential pedagogical domains globally. In the twenty-first century, English functions as humanity's undisputed global *lingua franca*—the primary medium of international diplomacy, global commerce, scientific scholarship, aviation, and digital communication. Sociolinguist Braj Kachru famously conceptualized the global spread of English through his "Three Concentric Circles" model: the *Inner Circle* (traditional native-speaking nations: UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), the *Outer Circle* (post-colonial nations where English serves institutional, administrative, and educational roles: India, Nigeria, Singapore, Philippines), and the *Expanding Circle* (nations where English is learned as a foreign language for international communication: China, Japan, Brazil, Germany).

Within applied linguistics, crucial distinctions are maintained between:

- **ESL (English as a Second Language):** Taught in environments where English is widely used outside the classroom for governance, media, and daily commerce (as in India).
- **EFL (English as a Foreign Language):** Taught in nations where English has no official domestic status and is rarely encountered outside educational institutions.
- **ELF (English as a Lingua Franca):** The use of English as a contact language between individuals who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture.

2. Fundamental Principles of Language Teaching and SLA Cognition

Effective language teaching is anchored in evidence-based psycholinguistic principles governing how human minds acquire non-native languages. Language is not merely a set of intellectual facts to be memorized; it is a complex, dynamic cognitive and social behavior.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model (1982)

Krashen formulated five foundational hypotheses that reshaped modern ELT:

- *The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis:* Acquisition is subconscious and natural, resulting in intuitive communicative fluency; learning is conscious and formal, resulting only in grammatical knowledge.
- *The Natural Order Hypothesis:* Grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable developmental sequence, regardless of the order in which they are taught.
- *The Monitor Hypothesis:* Consciously learned grammar acts only as an editor or 'monitor' to correct utterances after production, provided the speaker has sufficient time and focuses on form.
- *The Input Hypothesis:* Learners acquire language only by comprehending messages containing structures slightly beyond their current level of competence (Input i+1).
- *The Affective Filter Hypothesis:* Emotional barriers (anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of motivation) can block comprehensible input from reaching the brain's language acquisition device.

3. Classical Language Teaching Methodologies: Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)

The Grammar-Translation Method (originally known as the Prussian Method) dominated European and colonial school systems throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Originally designed to teach classical Latin and Greek, it was adopted for modern vernacular languages, including English in colonial India.

- **Methodological Characteristics:** The primary goal is to read classical literature and develop mental discipline. Classes are conducted almost exclusively in the students' mother tongue (L1). Vocabulary is memorized through bilingual bilingual word lists. Grammar is taught deductively through elaborate abstract rules, followed immediately by sentence-by-sentence translation exercises between L1 and the target language (L2).
- **Pedagogical Limitations:** GTM prioritizes reading and writing to the complete exclusion of listening and speaking. Learners frequently develop encyclopedic grammatical knowledge yet remain completely incapable of holding a simple spontaneous conversation in English.

4. The Naturalistic Reaction: The Direct Method

In the late nineteenth century, linguists such as François Gouin, Wilhelm Viëtor, and Maximilian Berlitz launched the "Reform Movement," rejecting GTM in favor of the *Direct Method* (or Natural Method). The Direct Method posits that second languages should be learned in the exact same natural manner that a child acquires their first language: through direct sensory association between objects, actions, and spoken sounds without translation.

- **Key Principles:** Complete prohibition of the mother tongue in the classroom; lessons are conducted 100% in English. Grammar is taught inductively—learners infer rules through listening and oral interaction. Vocabulary is taught through concrete realia, demonstrations, pictures, and pantomime. High priority is placed on correct pronunciation and spontaneous oral question-and-answer exchanges.
- **Challenges:** Demands highly proficient, native or near-native teachers. Abstract vocabulary and complex philosophical concepts are difficult and time-consuming to demonstrate purely through physical mime or visual realia.

5. The Structural-Behaviorist Epoch: The Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)

Developed in the United States during the Second World War (originally known as the "Army Specialized Training Program" or Army Method), the Audio-Lingual Method synthesized structural linguistics (Leonard Bloomfield) with B.F. Skinner's behaviorist psychology.

- **Behaviorist Foundations:** ALM views language as a set of verbal habits formed through the stimulus-response-reinforcement cycle. Language learning is habit formation: learners mimic native models, receive positive reinforcement for correct utterances, and avoid errors to prevent bad linguistic habits from solidifying.
- **Classroom Mechanics:** Structural sentence patterns are drilled systematically in language laboratories through repetitive exercises: repetition drills, substitution drills, transformation drills, and backward build-up drills. Dialogues are memorized verbatim. Spoken language precedes written text by weeks or months.
- **The Cognitive Collapse:** In 1959, linguist Noam Chomsky published a devastating critique of Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*, proving that language cannot be explained by behaviorist habit formation. Human beings possess an innate Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and Universal Grammar, enabling

them to generate infinitely novel, creative sentences they have never previously heard. ALM rapidly declined as teachers recognized that drill-trained students could not transfer mechanical patterns into creative real-world communication.

6. The Paradigm Shift: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Emerging in Britain and Europe during the 1970s through the work of linguists such as Dell Hymes, Michael Halliday, Henry Widdowson, and Keith Morrow, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) fundamentally revolutionized modern language pedagogy.

Hymes rejected Chomsky's narrow notion of "linguistic competence" (abstract knowledge of grammatical rules), introducing **Communicative Competence**: knowing not only what is grammatically correct, but what is socially appropriate—when to speak, when not, what to say to whom, when, where, and in what manner. Canale and Swain (1980) codified communicative competence into four interrelated dimensions:

- **Grammatical Competence:** Mastery of vocabulary, syntax, morphology, and phonology.
- **Sociolinguistic Competence:** Appropriateness of utterances within socio-cultural contexts (politeness, registers, cultural conventions).
- **Discourse Competence:** The ability to connect sentences to form coherent, unified spoken or written texts (cohesion and coherence).
- **Strategic Competence:** Verbal and non-verbal compensatory strategies used to repair communication breakdowns (paraphrasing, gesturing, asking for clarification).

In the CLT classroom, communication is the goal, the medium, and the organizing principle. Lessons utilize authentic realia (newspaper clippings, menus, train schedules, recorded interviews). Fluency takes precedence over formal grammatical accuracy. Learners engage in dynamic pair work, small group problem-solving, and role-plays, while the teacher steps back from authoritarian lecturer to become a facilitator, manager, and participant.

Advanced Applied Linguistics, SLA Theory & Pedagogical Frameworks

In contemporary applied linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) scholarship, mastering *English Language Teaching: Foundations and Practice Level 1* requires developing a critical, research-informed understanding of language pedagogy, psycholinguistic cognition, and socio-educational contexts. English Language Teaching (ELT) is not a collection of arbitrary classroom tricks; it is an evidence-based pedagogical discipline informed by cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics, educational technology, and critical pedagogy. Contemporary language educators synthesize empirical SLA research with reflective classroom practice to foster autonomous, fluent, and culturally sensitive communicators.

1. Core Psycholinguistic Principles and SLA Debates

Academic inquiry into Foundations of ELT, SLA Principles, and Methodological Evolution centers on foundational psycholinguistic and methodological tensions:

- **Explicit Instruction versus Implicit Acquisition:** Stephen Krashen's celebrated Input Hypothesis posited a rigid division between 'learning' (conscious metalinguistic knowledge) and 'acquisition' (subconscious internalized competence through comprehensible input). Modern cognitive SLA scholars (such as Rod Ellis and Michael Long) qualify this, demonstrating that *Focus on Form* (FonF)—brief, context-sensitive attention to linguistic elements during meaning-focused tasks—significantly accelerates acquisition compared to purely incidental exposure.

- **The Sociocultural Turn and Vygotskian Scaffolding:** Following Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, language development is understood as an inherently dialogic, socially mediated activity. Learning occurs within the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD)—the distance between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with instructional scaffolding from a teacher or more proficient peer.
- **Post-Method Condition and Critical Pedagogy:** B. Kumaravadivelu famously critiqued the imperialist imposition of Western 'methods' (such as CLT), arguing for the *Post-Method Condition*. Language teachers must develop localized pedagogies grounded in three operating parameters: *Particularity* (sensitive to local linguistic and institutional realities), *Practicality* (teachers theorizing from their own practice), and *Possibility* (empowering learners to interrogate social inequalities).

2. Comparative Evaluation Matrix of Historical & Contemporary ELT Methods

A structured comparative assessment delineates the theoretical foundations, classroom roles, and learning targets across ELT paradigms:

Methodological Paradigm	Underlying Linguistic & Psychological Theory	Teacher & Learner Roles	Target Competency & Error Treatment
Grammar-Translation (GTM)	Faculty Psychology & Traditional Prescriptive Grammar.	Teacher is supreme authority; learners are passive memorizers.	Reading literary classics & deductive accuracy; immediate rigorous error correction.
Direct Method	Naturalistic SLA & Monolingual Reform Movement.	Teacher directs active oral dialogue; learners participate actively.	Spoken fluency in everyday registers; self-correction guided by teacher modeling.
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Communicative (CLT) & TBLT	Hymesian Communicative Competence & Cognitive Interactionism.	Teacher is facilitator, resource manager, and guide; learners are active negotiators.	Authentic real-world communicative competence; errors treated as natural developmental milestones.

3. Glossary of Essential Applied Linguistics and ELT Terminology

Pedagogical Term	Theoretical Origin	Standard Applied Definition & Application
Communicative Competence	Dell Hymes (1972)	The holistic ability to use language appropriately in social contexts, encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.
Washback (Backwash) Effect	Language Assessment Theory	The direct impact that an examination has on the teaching curriculum and learning behaviors that precede it (can be positive or negative).
Interlanguage	Larry Selinker (1972)	The dynamic, rule-governed linguistic system developed by a second language learner that evolves gradually toward the target

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		language norm.
Information Gap	Task-Based Language Teaching	A communicative situation where one learner possesses information that another learner lacks, necessitating authentic communicative negotiation.
Teacher Talk Time (TTT) vs. STT	Classroom Management	The ratio of time spent talking by the instructor versus Student Talk Time (STT); modern pedagogy prioritizes maximizing STT for active language use.
Formative Assessment	Educational Evaluation	Ongoing diagnostic evaluations (quizzes, peer reviews, classroom observations) conducted during the learning process to modify teaching and improve student learning.

4. Professional Instructional Design and Lesson Delivery Framework

Designing effective ELT lessons within Foundations of ELT, SLA Principles, and Methodological Evolution adheres to a structured four-stage instructional protocol:

- **Stage 1: Needs Analysis and Objective Setting:** Formulating observable, measurable communicative objectives aligned with CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) proficiency benchmarks.
- **Stage 2: Material Selection and ICT Integration:** Curating authentic linguistic materials and digital tools (podcasts, interactive quizzes, LMS discussion boards) adapted to learners' cognitive maturity.
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