ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORIES AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES OF 21ST CENTURY: A SYSTEMIC SCENARIO

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Abstract
English language learning has long relied on foundational theories such as behaviourism, mentalism, and social constructivism. With the advent of digital technologies, traditional pedagogical methods have evolved significantly, enabling innovative practices like flipped classrooms, pedagogical blended learning, gamification, and AI integration. This paper explores the synergy between English language learning theories and digital tools, emphasising their practical implications for TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). A comparative study, based on the TESOL Audit framework highlights best practices from UK and Pakistani contexts. Findings suggest that while digital methods enhance engagement and learner autonomy, challenges remain in assessing social and cognitive development comprehensively. The study concludes with recommendations for incorporating technology-driven solutions to meet diverse learner needs.

Keywords
English Language Learning, Behaviorism, Mentalism, Constructivism, Social Interaction, TESOL, Digital Learning, Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Introduction
The field of English language learning has undergone a profound transformation over the years, shaped by theoretical frameworks and technological advancements. Traditional theories like behaviourism and mentalism provided the foundation for understanding language acquisition processes. More recent approaches, such as social constructivism, emphasise the role of social interactions and real-world contexts. The digital era has further revolutionised language learning, introducing tools like artificial intelligence (AI), gamification, and personalised learning platforms. This paper investigates how these theoretical and technological paradigms intersect, offering new opportunities for enhancing language acquisition. It also evaluates the practical application of these advancements through a TESOL Audit framework, based upon good practices of UK and Pakistani educational contexts.

Literature Review
Behaviourist Theories in Language Learning
Behaviourist theories emphasise the role of environment, repetition, and reinforcement in language acquisition (Skinner, 1957). Early innovations like language laboratories (Dakin,

1973) and computer-assisted language learning (Cook, 1985) were grounded in behaviourist principles. However, despite their initial popularity, these methods faced challenges, including high costs and limited focus on higher-order cognitive skills. Nevertheless, behaviourism's emphasis on structured practice and reinforcement remains influential, particularly in digital platforms that support drills and rote learning.

Mentalist Perspectives on Language Acquisition

Mentalist theories, pioneered by Chomsky (1968), critique behaviourism's focus on habit formation, instead highlighting innate cognitive processes. Chomsky's concept of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) underscores the human brain's intrinsic capacity for language learning. Task-based approaches, which emphasise real-life problem-solving and meaningful input, are rooted in mentalist principles. However, these approaches often overlook social and contextual factors, making their integration with digital tools particularly valuable in addressing these gaps.

## Interactionist and Social Constructivist Theories

Interactionist theories, as proposed by Nunan (1992), advocate for collaborative learning environments where communication and interaction drive language acquisition. Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasises guided learning through scaffolding, where teachers and peers support learners in achieving higher levels of competence. Social constructivism builds on these ideas, emphasising the collaborative (in groups) construction of knowledge through real-life interactions. Digital tools like collaborative platforms and role-play simulations align with these theories, although challenges remain in measuring cognitive development and assessing learning outcomes.

Blended Learning and Digital Integration

The digital revolution has introduced innovative models like blended learning, which combines traditional classroom instruction with online components. Flipped classrooms allow students to learn concepts online and apply them during in-class activities, promoting personalised learning (Ellis, 1997). AI-powered tools offer enhanced engagement through interactive content, gamification, and real-time feedback. These advancements align with constructivist and interactionist principles, creating immersive and learner-centred environments. However, they also necessitate robust teacher training to effectively integrate technology into pedagogy.

Methodology

The TESOL Audit framework (Jawaid 1998), developed using a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), served as the primary tool for evaluating English language learning practices. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and document analysis across best schools in Birmingham (UK). The audit framework identified quality characteristics and performance standards in TESOL, allowing for comparative analysis of practices. Grounded theory ensured that findings were closely tied to empirical data, enabling a systematic examination of pedagogical approaches and their alignment with theoretical frameworks.

TESOL Model (Jawaid, 1998)
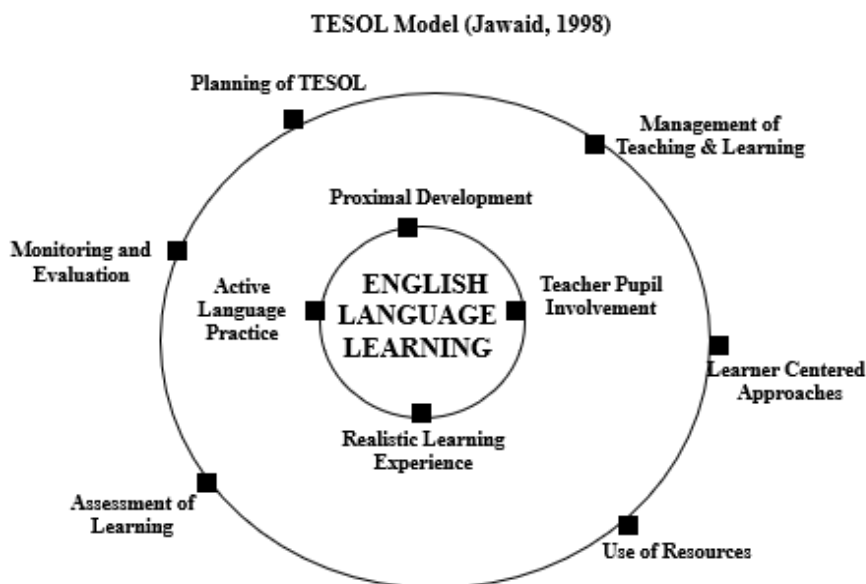
TESOL Model (Jawaid, 1998): A Comprehensive and Impactful Framework for English Language Learning

The TESOL model designed by Jawaid (1998) offers a rich and comprehensive approach to English language learning that addresses both the pedagogical and practical dimensions of language learning and teaching. It provides educators with a structured framework to guide learners effectively in their language acquisition journey. At its heart lies "English Language Learning," supported by ten essential components that collectively serve as pillars for creating a dynamic, learner-centred, and goal-oriented teaching environment. Each component contributes to a holistic understanding of how language teaching should be planned, executed, and evaluated to meet the diverse needs of learners in an increasingly globalised world. The following contents expand on each element of the model, emphasising its theoretical foundations and practical implications.

a. Planning of TESOL

Effective planning is the bedrock of successful language teaching. The TESOL model begins with careful planning that aligns learning objectives with the needs of learners, curriculum goals, and desired outcomes. This component involves designing a systematic roadmap that ensures learners are guided through their language learning journey with clear, achievable goals. Key aspects of planning include the incorporation of scaffolding techniques, which allow learners to build on their prior knowledge, and the flexibility to adapt lessons to individual learning styles and classroom dynamics.

Moreover, planning encompasses more than just lesson design. It also involves anticipating potential challenges learners may face and proactively creating solutions, such as incorporating differentiated instruction for diverse learning paces. As Jawaid (20214) Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasise, well-structured planning is essential for ensuring coherence and progression in the curriculum, creating a learning environment that nurtures both cognitive and linguistic growth.

b. Management of Learning and Teaching

Effective classroom management is central to the successful implementation of TESOL practices. This component focuses on creating a structured yet engaging learning environment where learners feel supported and motivated. Teachers must employ diverse strategies to manage instruction, such as interactive activities, group projects, and multimedia resources, to keep students engaged. At the same time, they must monitor student comprehension and progress, using real-time feedback to refine their teaching methods.

Harmer (2007) highlights the role of dynamic classroom management in fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and active participation. In this model, teachers act as facilitators, guiding learners through tasks while providing clear instructions, maintaining discipline, and encouraging peer-to-peer interaction. This creates a classroom ecosystem where learners can thrive and make meaningful progress in their language skills.

c. Learner-Centered Approaches

The TESOL model places learners at the centre of the teaching process, recognising that each individual brings unique needs, experiences, and learning styles to the classroom. A learner-centred approach emphasises active participation, autonomy, and personalised learning pathways. Teachers must adapt their methods to cater to the specific interests and goals of their students, fostering a sense of ownership over their educational journey.

Nunan (2013) argues that learner-centred approaches are critical for promoting intrinsic motivation, as they empower students to take responsibility for their progress. By incorporating activities such as reflective journals, student-led discussions, and collaborative problem-solving tasks, educators create a classroom environment that encourages self-directed learning and builds learners' confidence in using the language.

d. Use of Resources

The integration of diverse resources is a cornerstone of the TESOL model, enriching the teaching and learning experience. Resources can range from traditional tools like textbooks, workbooks, and flashcards to modern innovations such as language-learning apps, multimedia platforms, and virtual simulations. Additionally, authentic materials—such as newspaper articles, podcasts, and videos—play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

Reinders and Hubbard (2013) emphasise that the thoughtful use of technology in TESOL practices has revolutionised the way language is taught, making it more accessible and engaging. For example, interactive online platforms allow learners to practice their speaking, listening, and writing skills in simulated environments, creating immersive experiences that accelerate language acquisition.

e. Assessment of Learning

Assessment is a vital tool for measuring learner progress and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching strategies. In the TESOL model, assessment is both formative and summative, providing a comprehensive understanding of learners' strengths and areas for improvement. Formative assessments, such as quizzes, assignments, and in-class activities, offer ongoing feedback that helps teachers refine their methods. Summative assessments, including final exams, projects, and standardised tests, evaluate learners' overall achievement and readiness for the next stage of their language journey.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) stress the importance of using varied and inclusive assessment techniques to capture a holistic picture of learner progress. For instance, incorporating oral presentations, written reflections, and peer reviews into the assessment process ensures that all aspects of language proficiency are evaluated.

f. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are essential for maintaining the quality and effectiveness of language instruction. Monitoring involves systematically tracking learners' performance, attendance, and participation, while evaluation focuses on assessing the broader success of teaching practices and curriculum design. Together, these processes ensure alignment with educational goals and provide insights into areas that require improvement.

Scrivener (2011) highlights that ongoing evaluation fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where educators regularly reflect on their methods and make data-driven decisions to enhance learning outcomes. This component also emphasises the importance of collecting feedback from students, colleagues, and stakeholders to create a more inclusive and responsive teaching environment.

g. Proximal Development

Rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), this component underscores the importance of providing learners with structured support to help them achieve higher levels of competence based upon their maximum level of learning. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding learners as they move from their current capabilities to their potential achievements. This is achieved through scaffolding techniques, such as breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps and gradually reducing assistance as learners gain confidence and proficiency.

Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) argue that scaffolding is not only a teaching strategy but also a way to build trust and rapport between educators and learners. By providing tailored support, teachers enable learners to tackle challenges and develop their language skills in a safe and encouraging environment.

h. Teacher-student Involvement

The relationship between teachers and learners is at the heart of the TESOL model. This component emphasises the importance of collaborative engagement, where teachers and students work together to achieve educational goals. Regular interactions, constructive feedback, and empathetic understanding create a supportive classroom atmosphere where learners feel valued and motivated.

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) highlight that strong teacher-pupil relationships enhance learner motivation, self-esteem, and overall performance. Teachers who actively involve their students in the learning process foster a sense of community and shared responsibility, making language learning a more meaningful and enjoyable experience.

i. Realistic Learning Experiences

Providing learners with authentic and context-based experiences is a key feature of the TESOL model. This provision includes frequently used real-life tasks and activities. Realistic learning experiences allow students to apply their language skills in practical settings, such as role plays, simulations tasks, cases and project-based tasks. For example, simulating a job interview or participating in a group discussion prepares learners for real-world communication challenges.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) advocates for contextualised teaching as a way to make language learning relevant and engaging. By incorporating real-life scenarios into the curriculum, educators help learners develop the communicative competence needed to navigate social, academic, and professional environments.

j. Active Language Practice

The final component of the TESOL model emphasises consistent and purposeful engagement with the four language domains—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Active practice involves interactive real-life tasks pertaining to close environment such as debates,

presentations, and collaborative writing projects, that encourage learners to use the language in meaningful ways.

Nation and Newton (2009) highlight that sustained practice is essential for developing fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Teachers should provide opportunities for learners to practice their skills regularly active conversation both inside and outside the classroom, to reinforce their learning and build long-term competence.

Jawaid (1998) TESOL Audit framework was revised again to incorporate more diverse English Language good practices and learning good practices. This incorporation process idea of inclusions is brought so that English teaching is aware of the plethora of good practices available. He/She can make pick and choose of good practices well suited to his learning context. For this process, the concept of inclusions is introduced so that English teachers are aware of the abundance of best practices available. He/she can pick and choose good behaviors that are appropriate for his learning situation.

For example, good practices used in IELTS, Jawaid 4F Formulla, CEFR and many other were considered. Finally, Jawaid (1998) TESOL model was expanded to meet the requirements of the present digital era.

Systemic English Language Learning and Teaching Model 2025

strategic plan considers all the above theories and identifies language themes, goals/outcomes, strategic initiative, responsibilities, and key performance indicators (KPIs).

2. Learner-Centered Approach, Contextualised Teaching, Task-Based Learning, and Project-Based Learning

The model emphasises a **learner-centred approach** where teaching is tailored to students' needs and interests, fostering engagement and autonomy (Dewey, 1938). **Contextualised teaching and learning** connect academic concepts to real-world scenarios, making learning meaningful and practical. **As Willis (1996) outlined, task-based learning** encourages students to complete meaningful tasks, enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. **Project-based learning** further extends this by involving students in extended, collaborative projects that integrate knowledge and application. Together, these approaches prepare learners for practical challenges while promoting active participation.

3. Self-Learning (Online), Peer-to-Peer Learning, and Technology-Integrated Learning

Modern education leverages technology to empower students through **self-learning**, which allows learners to access resources independently, fostering lifelong learning habits. **Peer-to-peer learning** emphasises collaboration, enabling students to learn from each other while developing interpersonal skills. **Technology-integrated learning**, supported by the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), combines pedagogy with technology to create interactive and personalised learning experiences. These methods ensure that students are equipped with the skills to thrive in a digitally connected world.

4. T-Made, SS-Made, AI Tools, E-Library, and Language Laboratory

The model encourages the effective use of diverse resources, including teacher-made (T-Made) and student-made (SS-Made) materials, which ensure contextual relevance and creativity. AI tools provide personalised learning experiences, such as adaptive assessments and grammar correction. E-libraries offer access to a vast array of academic resources, while language laboratories provide practical, hands-on opportunities for learning. These tools and resources create an enriching, engaging learning environment.

5. Praise and Instant Feedback, Portfolios, Assessments, and Clear Rubrics

Feedback and assessment are central to effective learning. **Praise and instant feedback** motivate learners and reinforce positive behaviours. **Portfolios** help students track their progress over time, showcasing their growth and achievements. Regular **daily, weekly, and term assessments**, guided by **clear rubrics**, ensure that evaluations are consistent and transparent. These practices not only help monitor learning but also promote self-reflection and goal-setting among students.

6. Level of Effectiveness, Student Progress Feedback, Areas of Improvement, and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Measuring the **level of effectiveness** ensures that teaching methods achieve their intended learning outcomes, often evaluated using KPIs and learning analytics (Bloom, 1956). Providing **student progress feedback** is essential for helping learners identify their strengths and weaknesses, with both formative and summative approaches fostering continuous improvement. Highlighting **areas of improvement** allows for targeted interventions and personalised learning strategies. **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)** ensures that the

teaching-learning process remains dynamic and adaptive through regular reviews and data-driven enhancements.

7. Re-Planning, Professional Training, Learning Outcomes (KPIs), and CQI

Re-planning is key to aligning institutional goals with teaching practices. It involves setting clear objectives and ensuring educators receive **professional training** to stay updated with modern methodologies. Defining **learning outcomes (KPIs)** allows institutions to measure success and make informed decisions. Combined with **CQI**, re-planning ensures that education systems remain innovative, effective, and aligned with learners' needs.

The Systemic English Language Learning and Teaching Model 2025 integrates various selected educational philosophies and practices to enhance learning outcomes. To reiterate the Behaviorist approach, rooted in Skinner's theory, focuses on reinforcement and repetition to develop habits, particularly in vocabulary and grammar acquisition. Inspired by Chomsky, the Mentalist perspective highlights learners' innate capacity to grasp linguistic structures. The Interactionist approach, based on Vygotsky's work, emphasises social interaction and collaborative learning, while Social Constructivism, as proposed by Bandura, underlines active participation and co-construction of knowledge. These theories collectively contribute to leading learning by adopting diverse strategies to cater to students' unique needs.

A learner-centred approach forms the cornerstone of this model, ensuring the focus is on students' learning needs and contexts. Contextualised teaching and learning connect academic content to real-world applications, making it more relevant and engaging. Real-life task based learning promotes active problem-solving (Jawaid, 2014). while project-based learning enables students to work on extended tasks that develop critical thinking and collaborative skills. These approaches are supported by modern methods like self-learning through online platforms, peer-to-peer learning, and technology-integrated learning, which empower students to take charge of their educational journeys while leveraging technological tools.

This model also emphasises the effective use of resources, including teacher-made (T-Made) and student-made (SS-Made) materials, AI tools, e-libraries, and laboratories. These resources enhance the learning experience by providing hands-on, personalised, and diverse opportunities for engagement. Additionally, praise and instant feedback motivate students, while tools like portfolios, daily and weekly assessments, term assessments, and clear rubrics ensure a comprehensive and transparent evaluation process. These strategies not only track progress but also promote accountability in learning.

The model integrates mechanisms for assessing the level of effectiveness of teaching methodologies, supported by continuous student progress feedback and the identification of areas for improvement. The inclusion of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) ensures the learning environment remains dynamic and adaptable, constantly evolving based on data-driven insights and feedback.

Finally, the model's success is anchored in strategic planning, which involves setting clear language goals, learning themes providing professional training for educators, and defining key performance indicators (KPIs). Combined with CQI, this ensures that the teaching-learning process remains aligned with institutional objectives and fosters a culture of excellence. This comprehensive approach demonstrates a commitment to creating impactful, sustainable, and adaptive language learning system.

Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of integrating traditional language learning theories with digital innovations. Behaviorism, mentalism, and constructivism each offer unique insights into language acquisition, while digital tools provide practical solutions for addressing contemporary challenges. The TESOL Audit framework highlights the potential

for cross-contextual learning, offering a systematic approach to implementing, evaluating and improving language education practices. To enhance TESOL practices, this study recommends incorporating a balanced blend of theoretical principles and digital tools. Behaviourist methods can be effectively integrated into AI-driven platforms for foundational language skills. Constructivist and interactionist approaches should leverage collaborative digital environments, enabling meaningful and socially relevant learning experiences. Policymakers and educators must also address the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology across diverse educational contexts. Future research should explore the long-term impact of digital tools on language proficiency and cognitive development, with a focus on inclusivity and equity.

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