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LANGUAGE (ESL) AND ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE (EFL): THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY,
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND DIGITAL LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS ON ESL/EFL TEACHING METHODS**

LA TRANSFORMACIÓN DEL INGLÉS COMO SEGUNDA LENGUA
(ESL) Y DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA (EFL): EL
IMPACTO DE LA TECNOLOGÍA, LA INTELIGENCIA ARTIFICIAL Y
LOS ENTORNOS DIGITALES DE APRENDIZAJE EN LOS MÉTODOS
DE ENSEÑANZA DE ESL/EFL

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The Transformation of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL): The Impact of Technology, Artificial Intelligence, and Digital Learning Environments on ESL/EFL Teaching Methods

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ABSTRACT

This Reflective Study investigates Contemporary Didactics in EFL Teaching today. It discusses the Transformations in EFL Teaching due to Technological Innovation, Active Methodologies, Inclusive Education and Communicative Competence Development. Literature from 2020-2026 was used to analyze how Digital Tools and Artificial Intelligence have transformed the environment for Learning a Second/Foreign Language; Promoting Autonomy, Personalization, Intercultural Communication but creating Ethical and Pedagogical Challenges. In addition, this study will examine the role of Active Methodologies in developing Learner Engagement through Project-Based Learning and Transmedia Approaches. Also discussed are Inclusive Didactic Strategies to Support Diverse Student Needs. Differentiated Instruction and Equitable Access to Learning Opportunities were emphasized. Lastly, the development of Communicative Competence is viewed as a primary objective, with consideration given to both Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Pragmatic Dimensions in Hybrid and Digitally Mediated Contexts. These results indicate that Contemporary EFL Didactics should incorporate Technology and Pedagogy equally. Further, Teacher Training Programs and Institutional Frameworks will support these efforts. Overall, the ultimate argument made in this study is that successful Language Teaching must be Adaptive, Learner-Centered and Socially Situated; providing Meaningful and Fair Learning Experiences in an Increasingly Global World.

Keywords: contemporary didactics; EFL teaching; artificial intelligence; digital learning; active methodologies; inclusive education; communicative competence; language teaching innovation.

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La Transformación del Inglés como Segunda Lengua (ESL) y del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL): El Impacto de la Tecnología, la Inteligencia Artificial y los Entornos Digitales de Aprendizaje en los Métodos de Enseñanza de ESL/EFL

RESUMEN

Este artículo reflexivo pone su mirada en las didácticas contemporáneas específicas de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) a partir de las transformaciones que la innovación tecnológica, las metodologías activas, la educación inclusiva y el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa han impulsado en ella. Tomando como base literatura especializada reciente (2020–2026), esta revisión reflexiva se interesa por cómo –y en qué medida– la incorporación de las herramientas digitales y de la inteligencia artificial han llegado a reconstruir los entornos de aprendizaje, promoviendo la autonomía, la individualización y la comunicación intercultural, pero también generando dilemas éticos y pedagógicos. El artículo de investigación se interesa, al mismo tiempo, por cuestiones relacionadas con las metodologías activas, tales como el aprendizaje basado en proyectos y sus enfoques transmedia, que promueven la participación y el uso significativo del lenguaje. Por otra parte, también muestra la importancia de que las estrategias didácticas se enmarquen en la educación inclusiva para dar respuesta a la diversidad del alumnado, priorizando la enseñanza diferida y el acceso equitativo a oportunidades de aprendizaje. El desarrollo de las competencias comunicativas es considerado un objetivo subordinado, que abarca las dimensiones lingüísticas, sociolingüísticas y pragmáticas en los contextos híbridos y digitales. Los resultados llevan a concluir que las didácticas contemporáneas del EFL requieren un enfoque equilibrado entre tecnología y pedagogía, ya que no hay una buena docencia de EFL si la formación docente y el apoyo institucional no vienen acompañados de transferencia. En definitiva, este artículo de investigación finaliza de una manera que sugiere que el proceso de enseñanza del inglés debe ser adaptable, centrado en el alumno y contextualizado de una forma socialmente adecuada, y debe garantizar experiencias de aprendizaje significativas, informadas y equitativas en un mundo globalizado como el nuestro.

Palabras clave: didácticas contemporáneas; enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera; inteligencia artificial; aprendizaje digital; metodologías activas; educación inclusiva; competencia comunicativa; innovación educativa.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalized and digitally connected world, English is being used as an international language or Lingua Franca, and it will continue to grow and evolve. As the most widely spoken foreign language worldwide, there is no doubt that English will play an even greater role than ever before in both the business world and academic communities. In addition, the growing need for intercultural communication in both domestic and international arenas has further emphasized the importance of acquiring proficient levels of English language proficiency.

As a result, traditional methods of ESL/EFL instruction have come under increasing scrutiny. Historically, ESL/EFL instruction was largely based upon grammar-translation and rote memorization techniques. However, these traditional methods have given way to new pedagogical paradigms which focus on learner-centered approaches to second/foreign language acquisition. In fact, research indicates that students learn better when they are actively engaged in their own learning processes. Therefore, many ESL/EFL instructors are now using a variety of new instructional strategies including but not limited to, task-based learning, project-based learning, flipped classrooms, gamification, etc., all designed to encourage student engagement and participation.

The teaching of ESL/EFL is an area where we see the intersection of several disciplines such as applied linguistics, educational psychology, social-cultural theory, and digital pedagogy. In terms of how we approach our learners, modern ESL/EFL instruction emphasizes communication, interaction, inclusivity, and the meaningful use of language in real-life situations. Moreover, rapid developments in technologies, particularly those related to artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual learning environments (VLEs), have significantly changed what is possible and challenging in ESL/EFL instruction.

Therefore, this reflective essay provides a review of current trends in ESL/EFL didactics along four major themes: (1) the impact of AI and VLEs on ESL/EFL instruction; (2) the influence of active methodologies and innovative pedagogical approaches on ESL/EFL instruction; (3) the application of various didactic strategies and inclusive education practices in ESL/EFL instruction; and (4) communicative competence and language skills development in ESL/EFL instruction. Based on literature reviews from the last seven years (2020-2026), this study not only identifies relevant findings but also examines the implications of such studies for ESL/EFL teachers.



Finally, this paper concludes that ESL/EFL didactics is best viewed as a complex, adaptive, socially mediated system that requires ESL/EFL teachers to continuously weigh competing demands for innovation versus pedagogical coherence, technological integration versus human interaction, and global trends versus local realities.

The inclusion of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning is one of the key drivers of current transformations in English as Foreign Language (EFL) didactics

Technology has fundamentally changed the way that language users have access to language, how they process language and how they generate language. As a result, technology has enabled entirely new ways of interaction that extend far beyond the confines of the classroom.

Digital English teaching using technology has led to an increase in learner engagement, autonomy and access to authentic materials, according to Fernandez-Cando et al. (2026). Digital tools such as learning management systems; Mobile Applications; Virtual Classrooms enable flexible, personalizable and autonomous learning experiences for learners. Learners are able to learn languages at their own speed and receive instant feedback from their learning activities. Instantaneous feedback is crucial for language learning.

Although technology offers many positive advantages, there are many challenges associated with its inclusion in teaching. According to Fernandez-Cando et al. (2018), digital tools require teachers to possess high levels of digital competences. Additionally, digital tools require adequate technological infrastructure. Where this is not available, the digital divide can exacerbate existing inequities in education.

The development of artificial intelligence has provided further possibilities for EFL digital learning. There are now AI powered tools being used in the EFL field. Examples include Chatbots; Automated Writing Evaluators; Adaptive Learning Platforms. These tools enable learners to participate in personalized learning experiences that reflect individual needs. Giraldo (2026) provides an example of how learners can take part in authentic communications with learners from other cultures through AI driven telecollaborations. These experiences not only enhance learners' linguistic ability but also promote learners' intercultural knowledge.



Woo et al. (2023) investigate learners' interactions in EFL environments where AI is used to mediate learning. They identify a relationship between learners' agency and machines' provision of support. Although AI can assist learners, when necessary, AI can lead to excessive reliance on machines, which diminishes learners' ability to think critically or solve problems independently. Therefore, there exists a need for a balanced approach to integrating AI.

In a similar fashion, Woo et al. (2025) describe "Vibe Coding" as a pedagogical framework that enables learners to create and interact with AI in creative ways. Through Vibe Coding learners will develop both language and digital literacies so that they can become active participants in technologically mediated communication.

Talukder (2023) claims that AI can transform EFL teaching by enabling adaptive learning systems that meet each learner's individual needs.

Woo et al. (2025) illustrate the effective use of AI-reading support tools in improving comprehension and vocabulary acquisition among learners. Reading support tools provide scaffolds that help learners navigate challenging texts and make language acquisition more accessible and efficient.

There exist significant ethical issues surrounding the application of AI in EFL settings. For instance, the collection and processing of data regarding learners raises serious concerns about learners' rights to data privacy. Furthermore, AI algorithms may contain biases that affect the type and quality of support offered to learners. Finally, if educators rely too heavily on technology, they risk diminishing opportunities for face-to-face interaction and therefore deprive learners of essential opportunities to develop communicative competence.

Ultimately, technology should be viewed as a mediator of pedagogy rather than a replacement for pedagogy. Effective EFL teaching includes a thoughtful integration of technology that increases opportunities for human interaction rather than replacing them. Educators must acquire not just technical proficiency but also critical awareness of the pedagogical implications of their use of technology.

Active Methodologies and Contemporary Approaches

Active methodologies and modern approaches to EFL didactics — an important area of development in contemporary EFL didactics — provide another critical aspect of what has been called the “shift”



toward learner-activity based methodologies, away from the more traditionally teacher-centered models. Molina (2026), discusses the idea that many learners benefit from using inclusive and participatory methodologies, which facilitate learner participation in the learning process. Active methodologies, such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and gamification, all provide opportunities for meaningful language use in authentic contexts. Therefore, this type of methodology is consistent with the ideas of the constructivists who view knowledge as being constructed by learners through experience; not simply transmitted to learners by teachers. Transmedia learning, is yet another example of an evolving methodology that demonstrates the increasing multimedia nature of today's communication. Investigators (Investigarmqr 2025) have demonstrated that learners can engage with language through various multi-modal platforms including video, social media, and interactive applications. As well as developing learner motivation, transmedia learning enables learners to develop the skills needed to navigate complex communicative environments. In addition, teacher cognition is a significant factor when implementing active methodologies. Areiza-Restrepo (2026), examined the beliefs and perspectives of prospective teachers regarding active methodologies. The results revealed a dichotomy between traditional and innovative teaching methods. Although many teachers recognized the value of active methodologies, they were unable to successfully integrate them into their practice due to institutional limitations, or because they had not received sufficient support/training. Similarly, assessment methodologies must be revised to be aligned with current pedagogical approaches. Alvarado Reyes et al. (2026), advocate for shifting towards formative/competency assessments that assess students' ability to apply language in real world situations. While assessing student proficiency in writing/speaking is important, traditional assessment methodologies do not effectively measure the complexity of communicative competence. Therefore, there is a growing demand for new forms of assessment. There are several advantages associated with the integration of active methodologies. However, the successful implementation of these methodologies requires overcoming several barriers including large classroom sizes, limited resources, and inflexible curriculum structures. Additionally, integrating active methodologies requires a great deal of time/planning/preparation from teachers. Considering these challenges, it appears that the application of active methodologies is not a "one size fits all" solution. Rather, the level of success achieved will depend upon the context in which they are



applied, and the degree to which teachers are able to modify/adapt them to fit their own unique teaching environment. Regardless of the barriers associated with the application of active methodologies, they do provide a more interesting and effective way to teach languages.

Didactic Strategies and Inclusive Education

When we consider inclusion as a primary aspect of current educational practices; it follows then that EFL will follow suit. The idea behind an inclusive pedagogy is to produce educational environments that are accessible for various types of learners so that each student has access to the same educational opportunity regardless of ability or disability.

The work of De La Cruz et al. (2020), provides a number of important examples of how EFL can be taught to students who have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The authors note that incorporating structure, giving explicit directions, and providing multimodal input to support learners with difficulty maintaining focus on specific tasks. These instructional supports do not only help students with ADHD but also improve the learning experience of all students by increasing clarity and improving the overall engagement of the students.

Sánchez-Perdomo (2020), promotes a context-based learning methodology called scenario-based learning. Scenario-based learning incorporates language usage into realistic scenarios, creating relevance and interest for learners. This type of learning methodology supports sociocultural theory's emphasis on the critical role of social interaction and cultural mediation in the development of knowledge.

An additional component of inclusive education is acknowledging and appreciating linguistic and cultural differences. Multicultural classroom environments present a challenge for teachers in terms of being aware of and sensitive to the background and experiences of their learners while developing ways to modify their instructional methodologies. Therefore, teachers need to develop a high degree of cultural competency along with reflecting upon their own praxis.

Another major area within the realm of inclusive education is differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction means that teachers must be able to adapt their instruction to meet the requirements of learners at different levels of proficiency, with different learning preferences, and with different



capabilities. Developing a variety of instructional strategies, materials, and assessments are some of the ways in which teachers can differentiate their instruction.

Although there are many benefits associated with creating inclusive learning environments there are several challenges involved. Some of these challenges include resource limitations, lack of professional development related to culturally responsive teaching practices, and institutional barriers. Teachers may also feel challenged to address the needs of multiple learners simultaneously due to time and logistical demands.

Reflectively speaking, creating inclusive educational environments require a mindset transformation. Educators must begin to think outside the box relative to standardized instructional methodologies and acknowledge the complexities associated with educating learners from diverse backgrounds.

Communicative Competence and Language Skills Development

In addition to the goal of developing communicative competence in students, contemporary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching focuses primarily on how well students will perform when using English in everyday life versus merely being able to follow grammar rules.

TESLA Journal (2026) notes that oral communication skills are vital and therefore suggests that all teachers incorporate interactive and communicative elements in their lessons; likewise, speaking and listening skills are integral components of language proficiency and therefore should provide students with ample opportunities to interact meaningfully.

Regarding teaching methodologies, Bui (2022) examines mixed methodology techniques for teaching languages and the benefits of combining data collected through both quantitative and qualitative research methods. A primary benefit of this type of research is that the results may help teachers develop more informed and responsive teaching practices based on an overall assessment of student needs and progress.

Although there has been increasing popularity of "hybrid" models of education since the advent of COVID-19, few studies examine the instructional aspects of hybrid models. For example, while Wang (2024) discusses several advantages of combining face-to-face and virtual learning experiences (such as flexibility and accessibility), he does not discuss how hybrid learning should be designed or implemented effectively.



Additionally, Hasumi (2024) discussed how digital pedagogy can play a critical role in helping teachers develop students' communicative competencies. Specifically, she argues that incorporating digital tools into EFL instruction is especially important in online and blended learning settings because digital tools can support interactivity, collaboration and access to relevant, authentic materials.

Another key area of research regarding the development of communicative competence is collaborative learning. In particular, Sahayu et al. (2025) found that online collaborative learning can enable students to engage in meaningful communication with one another in ways that promote both linguistic and social competences.

Bhandari (2025) and Rengifo-Fernández et al. (2024) expand upon this idea by examining both the potential for technology-enhanced language learning and the associated challenges. As such, while digital tools potentially offer many new possibilities for language learners, they must be employed carefully if they are to contribute positively to pedagogy.

Ultimately, a review of the literature on communicative competence reveals that communicative competence is a multidimensional concept. Therefore, effective EFL instruction should attend to students' linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic competences simultaneously. To do so will require a holistic approach that incorporates multiple instructional strategies and technologies.

CONCLUSION

The study of modern-day didactics in EFL classrooms demonstrates an ever-evolving area of study, marked by innovation, increased complexity and continued evolution. New technologies and AI are now providing numerous avenues for language acquisition; new methodologies (active) are providing the opportunity for both teachers and students to redefine their roles. Modern inclusive strategies emphasize the necessity of meeting student needs across diverse learning contexts; and communicative methodology emphasizes the need for students to utilize language effectively in order to communicate successfully.

However, the same factors that provide opportunities for advancement within this area of study also create numerous barriers. Successful implementation is contingent upon not only having access to necessary technology and AI systems, but also possessing pedagogical knowledge/skills, institutional support and reflective practice.



Teachers will continue to experience rapid changes in the educational environment, yet they will still be responsible for maintaining a focus on the fundamental purposes of language instruction.

Therefore, modern day EFL didactics may best be viewed as a comprehensive and adaptable process which combines technological innovations with pedagogical processes and commitment to inclusiveness. Through a consideration of this perspective, educators may be able to develop meaningful and successful learning environments for students who have confidence in communicating through English.

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