

# 21st Century Teaching Strategic Competencies to be Developed by ELT Instructors

## Estrategias y Competencias del siglo XXI a Desarrollar por los Profesores de ELT

Alejandro Pachon Jaramillo

[apachonj@unal.edu.co](mailto:apachonj@unal.edu.co)

English Philology Student

Universidad Nacional de Colombia sede Bogotá

### Abstract

This reflective article dives into the imperative need for ELT instructors to teach 21st-century skills. The study investigates various strategies to foster language learning through ICTs' core elements integration within culturally responsive classrooms. Data were gathered through an extensive bibliographic analysis, encompassing papers, articles, and documents from diverse sources. The resultant findings underscored the vital need to incorporate ICTs and culture-based strategies by ELT instructors to propel students toward success in the dynamic horizon of 21st-century language acquisition.

**Keywords:** ELT, ICTs, Culture-based teaching, Language Learning, Emerging Pedagogies.

Este artículo reflexivo profundiza en la necesidad imperante de que los instructores de ELT enseñen habilidades del siglo XXI. El estudio aborda diversas estrategias para fomentar el aprendizaje de idiomas mediante la integración de los elementos centrales de las TIC en aulas culturalmente receptivas. Los datos fueron recopilados a través de un análisis bibliográfico exhaustivo, que abarca documentos, artículos y trabajos obtenidos de diversos repositorios. Los hallazgos subrayan la vital importancia de que los instructores de ELT incorporen, de manera efectiva, las TIC y estrategias basadas en la cultura para impulsar a los estudiantes hacia el éxito en el horizonte dinámico del aprendizaje de idiomas del siglo XXI.

**Palabras Clave:** ELT, TICs, Enseñanza basada en cultura, Aprendizaje de idiomas, Pedagogías Emergente.

## Introduction

In the 21st century, the world is experiencing quick and unprecedented changes, primarily driven by advances in technology, communication, and globalization. As societies become increasingly interconnected, the need for proficiency in the English language has grown, turning English Language Teaching (ELT) into a critical educational endeavour that has caused us to face challenges unique to our time, such as resistance to change, limited access to technological resources, and a rapidly changing ELT classroom (*Lorrimer, C. n.d.*). In light of the unique challenges of our time, ELT instructors must skillfully adapt to resistance to change, limited technological resources, and the constantly evolving ELT classroom which has led them to practical pedagogical opportunities close to an unexpected benefit from the musical approach. Thus, their role goes beyond confronting contemporary obstacles, including reluctance to adapt, restricted availability of technological tools, and the constantly evolving environment of English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. It poses a distinctive challenge in nurturing digital literacy and adaptability in students, aligning with the demands of the 21st century and new emerging pedagogies.

A lack of resources in the language learning classroom isn't unique to the 21st century, but this challenge seems to have intensified in recent times due to the pressing need for technology tools and reliable access to internet-based communication within the English language classroom. (*Lorrimer, C. n.d.*) The shortage of assets in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms has been an ongoing issue, and in the 21st century, it has become more pronounced due to the growing technological requirements and the necessity for reliable internet-based communication channels in the English language classroom. In the current era, the importance of technological proficiency is escalating to the point where it is crucial to motivate students to employ metacognitive strategies, leveraging artificial intelligence and online tools to enhance their learning experiences.

In our contemporary, interconnected world, an individual's abilities should enable them to earn a livelihood in various places and thrive in any setting where their presence is required. This skill set encompasses particular elements, including creative thinking and linguistic proficiency, adaptability to constantly evolving circumstances, and the capacity to adapt to shifting demands. In today's small and globally connected world, an individual's skill set should help him/her make a living in any number of locations, and operate in any environment where he/she is needed. Such a skill set contains specific content, such as creative thinking and linguistic skills, adaptability to ever-changing conditions, and flexibility to respond to changing requirements." (*Hakkı Bağcı, E., Mehmet Koçyiğit, E., & Nigar Pösteki, E. 2019*). These skills are indispensable in the 21st century due to the increasingly globalized and interconnected nature of our world. In a digital age where communication knows no borders, being proficient in languages beyond one's native tongue opens doors to cross-cultural collaboration, international business opportunities, and the exchange of

diverse perspectives. It fosters effective communication and empathy, breaking down barriers and enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of a multicultural and multilingual society. Moreover, as technology enables seamless connections worldwide, linguistic proficiency becomes a powerful tool for personal and professional growth, transcending geographical boundaries and enhancing one's ability to adapt and succeed in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Along the lines of culture, emerging pedagogies might significantly contribute to a multifaceted and enriched language experience. Hence, commencing music in education from a very early age could potentially enhance the acquisition of foreign language phonology over time. In everyday life, parents must immerse their children in a stimulating musical atmosphere and involve them in music-related training programs and activities. Educational institutions should incorporate music into their curriculum and employ trained music educators, as educators lacking a background in music are ill-prepared to deliver the superior musical experiences essential for students. Music education started at the youngest possible age may facilitate foreign language phonology learning in due course. In daily practice, it is imperative for parents to immerse their children in a rich musical environment and engage them in musical training programs and activities. Schools should integrate music into curricula and provide qualified music teachers, as teachers with no training in music are not equipped to provide the high-quality musical experiences necessary for pupils.” (*Pei, Zhengwei; Wu, Yidi; Xiang, Xiaocui; Qian, Huimin 2016*). Musical training is deemed essential for bolstering language acquisition skills due to its multifaceted cognitive benefits. Learning to play an instrument or sing, for instance, requires a high degree of auditory discrimination, as musicians need to differentiate between various pitches and tones. This finely tuned auditory perception can be instrumental in language acquisition, as it allows individuals to discern the subtle phonetic distinctions and intonations in foreign languages.

## **Methodology**

The present reflective article was born from the compilation, analysis and juxtaposition of bibliographic sources delving into several aspects of ELT teaching in the 21st century and the assortment of challenges it might pose for educators. References were selected under specific criteria provided they harmonized and expanded the hypothesis and ideas. Attribute-driven research in Education grants people the opportunity to have a wider understanding of social phenomena concerning critical thinking. Upon compilation, contrasting, and analyzing scientific papers concerning a particular phenomenon, is when one can observe the genesis of Documentary Research. Frequently, documents are disregarded and underestimated, feeling foreign and detached despite their commonality, closeness, and abundance. However, they serve as a foundation for a fresh comprehension of our societal and historical environment. (*Carillo Cruz, C.E, 2021*)

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, the importance of research through bibliographic seeking becomes even more pronounced. The methodology of compiling, analyzing, and juxtaposing bibliographic sources is particularly crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of EFL teaching and addressing the unique challenges associated with language instruction. In EFL contexts, where learners are acquiring English in environments where it is not the primary language, research through bibliographic seeking allows educators to tap into a wealth of materials that cater specifically to the needs of EFL learners. By carefully selecting references based on criteria that align with the challenges and goals of EFL instruction, educators can tailor their teaching methods to better suit the linguistic and cultural context of their students.

Bibliographic seeking supports the development of pedagogical approaches that are grounded in evidence-based practices. By examining a variety of scholarly materials, educators can stay abreast of the latest research findings, methodologies, and theories related to language acquisition and EFL teaching. This, in turn, enables them to make informed decisions about instructional strategies, curriculum design, and assessment methods. In the realm of EFL, attribute-driven research gains added significance. Understanding the social and cognitive aspects of language learning in diverse cultural settings is crucial for effective teaching. Bibliographic seeking allows educators to explore research on language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of language use in different contexts. The process of seeking and selecting references in EFL research contributes to the ongoing professional development of educators. It encourages a continuous engagement with scholarly literature, fostering a culture of lifelong learning within the teaching community. This is particularly important in a field like EFL, where language teaching methodologies and theories are dynamic and subject to evolution.

Research through bibliographic seeking is indispensable in the realm of EFL instruction. Not only does it provide educators with a diverse array of resources tailored to the needs of EFL learners but also empowers them to adopt evidence-based practices, adapt to cultural nuances, and contribute to the ongoing improvement of EFL pedagogy.

## **Discussion**

In the intricate tapestry of education, the ability of learners to self-assess their comprehension emerges as a cornerstone for cultivating a superior problem-solving aptitude. As we navigate through the realms of 21st-century teaching and its strategic competencies, it becomes evident that metacognitive practices play a pivotal role in shaping the skills essential for the challenges of tomorrow. According to *Flavell (1979)*, students who actively monitor their understanding not only exhibit heightened problem-solving skills but also engage in a profound journey of self-discovery within the learning process. This metacognitive awareness transcends the boundaries

of problem-solving and permeates into EFL learning; it empowers learners to identify and bridge gaps in understanding, fostering a sense of responsibility and autonomy crucial for lifelong learning and intellectual development. The implications extend beyond individual growth, intertwining with the broader narrative of 21st-century skills that prepare students for the multifaceted challenges awaiting them in college and employment.

In the past few years, several new aspects of student success have come to light, introducing fresh dimensions, variations in commonly used benchmarks, and qualities that are challenging to quantify. Instances of these indicators include an understanding and respect for human differences, dedication to democratic values, the ability to collaborate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds to address challenges, proficiency in information literacy, and a strong sense of identity (Lorrimer, C. n.d). Learners who possess the capability to self-assess their comprehension exhibit a superior problem-solving aptitude compared to their counterparts lacking this skill (Flavell, J. H. 1979). This ability to independently monitor one's understanding not only enhances problem-solving skills but also fosters a deeper engagement with the learning process. When students actively gauge their comprehension levels, they are more likely to identify gaps in their understanding, allowing for targeted efforts to address and bridge those gaps. This metacognitive awareness empowers students to take ownership of their learning, contributing to a more effective and efficient problem-solving approach. Moreover, cultivating self-monitoring skills instils a sense of responsibility and autonomy in learners, qualities that are invaluable for lifelong learning and intellectual development.

Language serves as the gateway to unravelling the myriad facets of human experience. In delving into diverse languages, we embark on a journey that expands our cognitive horizons and enriches our comprehension of the world (Rapaille, C. (2003) Through linguistic exploration, we encounter not only vocabulary and syntax but also nuanced expressions and cultural identities embedded in language. Each language contributes uniquely to the grand narrative of human existence, reflecting historical, philosophical, and collective dimensions. Beyond mere communication, language serves as a repository of history and cultural heritage. Immersing ourselves in diverse languages allows us to appreciate the evolution of thought, cultural resilience, and the interplay of human dynamics. This linguistic exploration transforms us into observers of the linguistic landscapes, navigating the terrain shaped by centuries of human interaction, conflict, and collaboration.

The ability to empathize is something that can be acquired. Through education and firsthand experiences, individuals can cultivate this skill. Nurturing socio-affective competencies, including empathy, is crucial for students as it facilitates the development of their social and emotional skills. Eisenberg, N., & Bergin, C. (2005) Eisenberg's perspective underscores the malleability of empathy,

emphasizing that through intentional educational strategies and direct personal experiences, individuals can actively develop and enhance their empathetic capacities. In practical terms, this perspective aligns with the idea that empathy is not an inherent, fixed trait but rather a dynamic quality that can be honed over time. Educational interventions, whether formal or experiential, serve as vehicles for individuals to gain a deeper understanding of others' perspectives and emotions. The deliberate cultivation of empathy contributes not only to individual growth but also to the broader societal fabric, fostering a more compassionate and interconnected community.

Incorporating music into learning environments diminishes the effectiveness of students' mental filters, creating a more enjoyable atmosphere. This, in turn, has a positive impact on language acquisition by fostering a comfortable and conducive setting for learning (*Murphey, 1992*). The integration of music into learning environments not only diminishes the effectiveness of students' mental filters, creating a more enjoyable atmosphere but also underscores the pivotal role of music abilities in language acquisition. This dual impact emphasizes the importance of recognizing and leveraging musical elements as valuable tools for enhancing language learning experiences. The idea that music can reduce cognitive filters and contribute to a positive learning atmosphere suggests that the auditory engagement facilitated by music plays a crucial role in shaping the cognitive and emotional states of learners. In particular, the positive influence on language acquisition highlights the significance of musical abilities in creating a comfortable and conducive setting for linguistic development. Practically, this perspective implies that educators should consider the incorporation of music not merely as a background element but as a purposeful tool to enhance language learning. The auditory stimulation provided by music has the potential to activate and strengthen neural pathways associated with language processing, offering learners a multi-sensory experience that aligns with diverse learning styles.

In educational practice, this insight encourages a deliberate focus on music abilities as integral components of language acquisition strategies. By strategically utilizing musical elements, educators can tap into the inherent connections between auditory processing and language development, providing students with a holistic and enriching approach to language learning. Recognizing the symbiotic relationship between music and language acquisition offers educators a valuable avenue to optimize language learning environments, ultimately fostering a more effective and enjoyable educational experience for learners.

## **Conclusions**

The prevailing belief is that the conventional approach of transmitting knowledge solely through content in traditional educational systems is no longer sufficient for preparing the upcoming generation of learners. There is recognition of the need for new skill sets and abilities to effectively

address the challenges presented by our rapidly evolving digital environment (*Gümüş, A. 2022*). In the 21st-century educational landscape, characterized by technological advancements and global interconnectedness, English Language Teaching (ELT) faces unique challenges, including resistance to change, limited technological resources, and a dynamically evolving classroom environment. ELT instructors are not only confronting these obstacles but also discovering unexpected pedagogical opportunities, such as integrating a musical approach into language instruction. The scarcity of resources in language learning classrooms, particularly in the context of heightened technological requirements, emphasizes the urgent need for technological proficiency. Proficiency in languages, viewed as an indispensable skill set, goes beyond linguistic mastery, opening doors to cross-cultural collaboration and international opportunities. The incorporation of culture and emerging pedagogies, like music education from an early age, enhances language learning experiences by fostering auditory discrimination skills crucial for phonology acquisition. This holistic approach to language education aims to cultivate adaptable, globally competent individuals ready to navigate the challenges of our interconnected world.

The findings highlight the multiple challenges faced by English Language Teaching (ELT) instructors in the 21st century, particularly regarding technological advancements, globalization, and evolving pedagogies. Educators are held back by issues such as resistance to change, limited access to technological resources, and the dynamic nature of the ELT classroom. The lack of resources in language learning classrooms, intensified by the growing need for technology tools, has become a concern. Thus, there is a rising emphasis on the importance of technological proficiency, motivating students to employ metacognitive strategies and employ artificial intelligence and online tools for enhanced learning experiences. Moreover, the interconnected and globalized nature of the contemporary world accentuates the significance of individuals acquiring specific skills, including linguistic proficiency, creative thinking, adaptability, and flexibility. The advent of the new pedagogical horizon painted by the 21st century brought emerging strategies that seek to introduce the innovative idea of incorporating music into education as a pedagogical approach that can potentially enhance foreign language phonology acquisition. This proposal suggests that music, when integrated into curricula from an early age, may offer unique benefits for language learners. Overall, the findings stress the need for ELT strategies to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century, incorporating technology, addressing resource limitations, and recognizing the role of culture and emerging pedagogies in providing enriching language learning experiences.

Under the same findings, the imperative need for technological proficiency in language learning classrooms was highlighted, and the recognition of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as crucial tools for motivating students and enhancing their learning experiences was emphasized. ELT instructors are opting for a holistic approach to language education, incorporating culture-based strategies and emerging pedagogies, such as music

education from an early age, to enrich the language learning experience. Unexpected pedagogical opportunities such as integrating a musical approach into language instruction, acknowledge the importance of bolstering language acquisition skills through cognitive benefits like auditory discrimination.

Addressing and assessing language proficiency in the 21st century requires a multifaceted and innovative approach, as it advocates for the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as essential tools to motivate students and enhance language learning experiences. Additionally, the inclusion of culture-based strategies and emerging pedagogies, such as early music education, is highlighted as a means to enrich language acquisition. Metacognitive practices, encouraging learners to actively monitor their understanding, fostering problem-solving skills, and promoting a sense of responsibility and autonomy crucial for lifelong learning are just but a few of them. Furthermore, the research recognizes the significance of bibliographic seeking in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, emphasizing evidence-based practices grounded in the latest research findings. The holistic approach to language education, encompassing technological proficiency, cultural integration, metacognitive awareness, and dynamic pedagogies, is proposed as an innovative way to prepare learners for the challenges of the interconnected and evolving 21st-century landscape.

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### **Appendix 1 (AI proofreading)**

 Appentix 1. AI Proofreading