



The Goals and Beliefs of Progressivism in the Approaches and Methods of English Language Teaching: A Literature Review

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Progressivism is the educational ideology that opposes the traditional paradigm of teacher authority and promotes the students' autonomy, experiential learning, and democratic collaboration. This research aims to present the main goals and beliefs of Progressivism in education from the pertinent literature and their accommodations in the approaches and methods of English Language Teaching (ELT). To achieve these aims, the researcher used a literature review by collecting the related finding that consists of collective e-books and journals. Then, categorizing the key terms that are related to basic concepts or main values. After that, synthesizing the values such as philosophical foundations, aims of education, and their influence in curriculum design, which focuses on the teacher and students' role, curriculum focus, and teaching methods. Next, the researcher synthesizes and reveals these main values or principles of progressivism for accommodation in approaches and methods in existing English Language Teaching (ELT) programs. A review of six empirical studies and two foundational texts identified five core progressivist values, experiential learning, student-centeredness, democratic participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving, and traced their influence on curriculum components (teacher and learner roles, curriculum focus, and teaching methods). Analysis of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) showed how these values are operationalized through authentic, learner-driven tasks: CLT fosters democratic peer interaction and experiential use of language in real contexts, while TBLT embeds problem-solving and collaborative inquiry in purpose-built tasks. Together, these approaches exemplify how progressivism shapes ELT to promote autonomy, social awareness, and active knowledge construction.

Keywords: Critical thinking, Education ideology, ELT methodologies, Problem solving skills, Progressivism.

INTRODUCTION

Progressivism is an educational ideology rooted in pragmatism, which strongly emphasizes acquiring knowledge through human experience by shifting from a focus on the school authority system to individual students. Progressivism was established in the mid1920s and remained one of the most influential philosophies of education through the mid1950s. This progressivism promotes values such as encouraging students to learn from direct experience by actively interacting and exploring their environment through real-world problem tasks in the learning process. It also develops students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills during the learning process. It originates from John Dewey's pragmatism, which emerged in the reform movement in American society and political life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, advocating a dynamic vision of education as a vehicle for personal growth and democratic participation (Orstein and Levine, 2008).

The core tenets of progressivism include experiential learning, student-centeredness, democratic engagement, and the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Experiential learning,

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driven by students' direct experiences, involves tackling authentic, real-world problems and constructing knowledge through active exploration. Progressivism shifts authority from the schools to students, fostering autonomy by aligning instruction with students' interests and needs. Collaborative activities further promote social awareness and democratic values as students work together to address challenges. By engaging in observation, analysis, and evaluation within practical contexts, students apply what they learn and propose solutions to social issues. These principles underscore progressivism's view of education as a vehicle for holistic human development, equipping students to face and solve life's varied problems (Cahyani & Suastra, 2024).

The values promoted by progressivism, such as experiential learning, student-centeredness, democratic engagement, and cultivating critical thinking and problem-solving skills, have influenced curriculum design in the general education system. However, it is rare to find studies that have examined how progressivism values accommodate the English Language Teaching (ELT) program. Thus, this research will explore how progressivism's values are accommodated in the English Language Teaching (ELT) program for the approaches and methods in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as described by Richards and Rodgers (2001). These methodologies emphasize social consciousness and problem-solving skills.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach involving a literature review to explore how progressivism values are integrated into curriculum design within English Language Teaching (ELT) programs. The procedures for this research include collecting data from literary sources, such as e-books and various journals focused on progressivism. These sources were obtained from academic databases like Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, and other relevant platforms. They cover the period from 2005 to 2025 and were identified using key terms such as progressivism in English language teaching, educational philosophy, and the values of progressivism in the curriculum. Where the main references are Ornstein & Levine (2008), followed by other references from scholars' works, such as Cahyani & Suastra (2024), Wardani & Sahayu (2024), Khadim et al (2023), Kurniawati (2024), Suastra et al (2024), Bahri & Mubarok (2024).

Then, during data analysis, the researcher gathered information such as categorizing the key terms of progressivism values. After that, the researcher synthesizes the meaning of the key terms for progressivism values. Next, analyzing how values dirumuskan dari goals and beliefs of progressivism, and how the values influence on curriculum design, like teacher and students' roles, curriculum focus, and teaching methods. Next, the researcher synthesizes and reveals these main values or principles of progressivism for accommodation in approaches and methods in existing English Language Teaching (ELT) programs by using theoretical frameworks of Richards and Rodgers (2001), such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The literature review from six empirical studies and two foundational e-books reveals progressivism values in curriculum design and how these values are accommodated in existing English Language Teaching, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). These findings and discussions are organized in detail by key categories for progressivism values, which consist of experiential learning, student-centered, democratic values, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills and construct them to the goals and beliefs of progressivism, it's influenced of curriculum design which include teacher and students' roles, curriculum focus, and teaching methods. After that, how these values are accommodated in approaches and methods of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

The Values of Progressivism

This session presents the core values of progressivism in education from several journals. Progressivism emphasizes experiential learning, where students actively explore their environment and construct their understanding of reality based on direct experience (Ornstein & Levine, 2008; Cahyani & Suastra, 2024; Suastra et al, 2024). It is implemented through projects or hands-on exercises, which involve observing, questioning, experimenting, and presenting. This means that knowledge is not just transmitted; instead, students are encouraged to organize and build their knowledge themselves (Khadim et.al, 2023; Bahri & Mubarok, 2024). Additionally, experiential learning also enhances students' thinking skills and enables knowledge to flow seamlessly as part of their lives (Kurniawati, 2024). Then, besides experiential learning, progressivism also encourages the shift from an

authoritarian school to a student-centered approach, which focuses on students' needs and interests (Ornstein & Levine, 2008; Kurniawati, 2024; Suastra et.al, 2024). Then, students are not an object of learning while becoming a subject in learning (Wardani & Rahayu, 2024; Khadim et.al, 2023). The next is democratic values means creating a learning process for cultivating students' social awareness through collaborative work with each other. For instance, students are doing a project, the results of learning are open-ended in that they lead to more experiences and socially charged in that they bring individuals into social contact (Ornstein & Levine, 2008). It aligns with other research that is emphasizing working in peer interaction for learning to be respectful and free to express opinions, which promotes students' liberation in learning (Cahyani & Suastra, 2024; Suastra et al, 2024; Khadim et.al, 2023; Bahri & Mubarok, 2024; Kurniawati, 2024). The last is critical thinking and problemsolving skills. Progressivism develops students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which enables students to analyze and evaluate the information through active inquiry during the learning process. Allowing students to find an innovative solution to social issues or real real-world problems (Cahyani & Suastra, 2024; Suastra et al, 2024; Khadim et.al, 2023; Bahri & Mubarok, 2024; Kurniawati, 2024).

The Goals and Beliefs of Progressivism in Education

A. Philosophical Foundations of Progressivism

Progressivism views human beings as active agents who are continuously capable of growth. This worldview gives rise to a student-centered approach, which holds that each learner is unique and develops at their own pace. People enter the world with innate abilities and motivations that flourish when they have the freedom to choose and express themselves creatively (Ornstein & Levine, 2008; Kurniawati, 2024; Suastra et al., 2024). From this perspective, students are not passive recipients of information but active participants whose interests and needs must be facilitated to support their development. Knowledge is constructed through exploration of the environment and direct experience, which fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills by enabling learners to analyze and evaluate (Ornstein & Levine, 2008; Wardani & Sahayu, 2024). This emphasis on experiential learning underscores its status as a core progressive value. Furthermore, progressivism champions democratic classroom processes, where students are free to voice opinions, interact respectfully, and collaborate in groups. Such a democratic ethos cultivates social consciousness and prepares learners to become responsible, contributing citizens (Cahyani & Suastra, 2024; Bahri & Mubarok, 2024; Khadim et al., 2023).

B. The Purpose of Education

Progressivism seeks to develop human resources by enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and respect for one another, resulting in positive societal outcomes (Khadim et.al, 2023; Suastra et.al, 2024). The abilities are not just for self-development, but also to solve various problems faced or challenges of modern times (Wardani & Sahayu, 2024; Kurniawati, 2024).

C. The Roles of Teachers and Students

a) Teacher's Role

In progressivist educational contexts, teachers act as facilitators in the learning process, where teachers do not merely transfer knowledge but promote learning and manage classrooms where students become active participants (Cahyani & Suastra, 2024; Suastra et.al, 2024). The teacher provides space for students for discussion without dominating it. (Orstein & Levine, 2008). Teachers guide and help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills while fostering a collaborative learning community (Putri & Ena, 2025; Wardani & Sahayu, 2024; Khadim, et.al, 2023; Kurniawati, 2024; Bahri & Mubarok, 2024). It reflects a student-centered approach in which the teacher empowers students to play an active role in the learning process. It also embodies democratic values by granting them the freedom to learn and the right to interact and express their opinions in discussions.

b) Students' Role

Students act as active agents who learn how to learn. They are involved in a learning process not as passive recipients of information, but as active seekers who explore and practice in order to construct meaning and understand concepts rather than merely memorizing facts (Ornstein & Levine, 2008; Cahyani & Suastra, 2024; Wardani & Sahayu, 2024). Students are active agents in the learning process, exploring learning materials, engaging actively in community life, and thinking critically (Kurniawati, 2024).

D. Teaching Methods

Progressivism believes that meaningful learning is achieved through experiential learning, where the teacher applies a repertoire of learning activities such as project work, field trips, and creative artistic expressions (Ornstein & Levine, 2008). It also aligns with other literature that argues that experiential learning, also known as learning by doing, is where students gain practical knowledge applicable to real-world situations (Suastra et.al, 2024; Bahri & Mubarak, 2024). It engages students in collaborative, project-based activities (including observation, experimentation, and presentation), thereby constructing knowledge and fostering critical-thinking, problem-solving, and democratic values (Cahyani Suastra, 2024; Putri & Ena, 2025; Wardani & Sahayu, 2024; Khadim et.al, 2023; Kurniawati, 2024; Bahri & Mubarak, 2024).

E. Curriculum Focus

Progressivism promotes a curriculum that centers on students' needs and interests by fostering an active, authentic, and adaptive learning process (Ornstein & Levine, 2008). This approach supports the development of critical thinking and collaboration, thereby nurturing holistic personal growth in both cognitive skills and social awareness (Kurniawati, 2024).

The Accommodation of Progressivism Values into English Language Teaching (ELT)

This part will explore how progressivism values are reflected in existing English Language Teaching Programs such as Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching, specifically in approaches and methods as defined by Richard & Rodger. It will focus more on progressivism values such as philosophical foundations, the view of education, aims of education, teacher and students' role, curriculum focus, and teaching methods and their accommodation in approaches and methods in ELT programs.

A. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

This ELT methodology views language as a tool for interacting and communicating with others. Communicative language teaching is defined as focusing on language use and must be contextualized and relevant to students' real-life situations. It goes beyond merely memorizing language structures but it encourages students to communicate and interact actively in social and cultural contexts, enabling them to engage in authentic and adaptive communication. For instance, students are not merely memorizing grammatical rules but also developing the ability to use language authentically in daily life contexts through the use of authentic materials and real-life simulations. It also engages students to understand by practicing language use through peer interaction or collaborative work (Richard & Rodger, 2001). This approach reflects progressivism values such as democratic values, where students explore information that is both accessible and relevant to their environment and engage in meaningful communication through peer interaction and collaboration (Ornstein & Levine, 2008; Wardani & Rahayu, 2024; Suastra, et.al 2024). It fosters students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills through negotiating meaning while also nurturing a sense of social awareness that encompasses cooperation, tolerance, and responsibility (Ornstein & Levine, 2008).

Furthermore, the student's role in CLT reflects progressive values by positioning students as active participants in the learning process, which is student-centeredness where the teacher focuses on students' needs, like helping students to think better, exciting, and active learning (Khadim et.al, 2023). In CLT, students are not passive recipients of knowledge but act as negotiators who interact, collaborate, and explore meaning together. This process involves discussing ideas, sharing information, and working in groups to coconstruct understanding. Students are responsible for managing their own learning while also contributing to their group's progress. Meanwhile, teachers support students not by directly transferring information, but by organizing meaningful learning experiences, encouraging collaboration, and fostering a communicative environment. Thus, in CLT, the teacher is not a passive transmitter of knowledge but an active participant who creates a student-centered environment. Moreover, teachers use teaching methods like experiential learning. This progressivism's value is reflected in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where students tackle assignments that require them to share information, negotiate meaning, and interact authentically. By comparing pictures to spot similarities and differences, sequencing events from a series of images, filling in missing details on a map, or participating in role-plays, discussions, and debates, learners practice language use directly,

communicate actively, and hone their problem-solving abilities in real-life situations. It aligns with the concept of experiential learning where students acquire knowledge by applying it or practicing skills (Khadim, et.al, 2023; Suastra, et.al, 2024). Overall, CLT's learning framework is designed around students' needs and authentic materials.

B. Tasks Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) views language as a tool for making meaning through real-life communication. It encourages students to use language to convey ideas and information effectively through completing communicative tasks, not just to perfect grammatical forms. In TBLT, language acquisition occurs through tasks that incorporate both input and output, particularly solving problems in real-life contexts. These tasks foster collaboration, leverage students' background knowledge, and encourage the use of diverse communicative styles (Richard & Rodger, 2001). Thus, TBLT reflects progressivism values by emphasizing meaningful use of language in context, which promotes critical thinking as students engage with authentic tasks that are relevant to students' environment, and it also reflects democratic values, which engage students in collaboration and freedom of expression (Kurniawati, 2024).

Then, according to Richard and Rodger (2001), students act as active participants, working in small groups to complete various communicative tasks in TBLT. They also serve as language monitors, paying attention to how language is used in both meaning and form while constructing knowledge, even when their linguistic resources are incomplete. Moreover, they are encouraged to take risks and express their ideas creatively, embodying progressive values by becoming active agents in their learning process. The teacher facilitates this process by designing tasks tailored to students' needs and interests, guiding them through activities that develop both cognitive and linguistic skills. Throughout the learning process, students engage in exploring information and constructing new knowledge, reflecting progressive values that position the teacher as a facilitator providing feedback and scaffolding. TBLT leverages experiential learning, using tasks that stimulate cognitive processes, authentic communication, and social interaction. For example, tasks oriented toward problem-solving, decision-making, and opinion exchange encourage students to engage in practical, real-world challenges. As a result, TBLT embodies progressive values that prepare students to approach problems critically and collaboratively.

SUGESSTION AND CONCLUSION

This literature review demonstrates that progressivism as an educational ideology rooted in John Dewey's paradigm, has significantly influenced curriculum design in approaches and methods in existing English Language Teaching (ELT) programs. The core values of progressivism influence the curriculum design which is categorized in progressivism values such as philosophical foundations, the view of education, aims of education and its implementation in the teacher and students' role, curriculum focus, and teaching methods. Progressivism advocates a curriculum design that prioritizes flexibility, authentic experience, and holistic development. The Curriculum shows this shift, granting educators and students autonomy to tailor learning to real-world contexts and individual interests. By emphasizing critical thinking, and collaboration, such curricula foster active, authentic, and adaptive learning process and skills essential for addressing contemporary societal challenges. Furthermore, the integration of democratic values cultivates classrooms as spaces for dialogue, mutual respect, and social responsibility, aligning education with broader goals of civic engagement.

Within ELT programs, progressivism manifests through methodologies like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). CLT and TBLT, as explored in this study, both integrate progressivism values in their approaches and methods. CLT emphasizes authentic communication and collaboration, placing students as active negotiators of meaning while teachers act as facilitators of interaction and critical thinking. TBLT builds on real-life tasks that promote problemsolving and decision-making, allowing learners to construct knowledge through meaningful use of language in context. Both approaches and methods reflect the progressive emphasis on learning by doing or experiential learning, student autonomy, and holistic development.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the goals and beliefs of progressivism are not only theoretically compatible but also practically implemented in ELT methodologies such as CLT and TBLT. These methodologies support the development of learners who are not only linguistically competent but also socially responsible, critical, and adaptive qualities that align with the ideals of progressivist education in preparing students to face the demands of a rapidly changing world.

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