

Aspects of ELT management

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Part 1: General considerations and questions for ELT operations of all kinds

There are many different types of ELT management situations, and roles within them, each with its own features and challenges, and different possible responses to them. By trying to cover virtually the whole of ELT management in this series of 4 articles, I'm taking on a lot and may end up being too general and superficial for many readers. However, for two reasons, I am going to take a broad, general approach, but dealing with *aspects* of ELT management, not very specific management situations and roles.

My first reason for taking such an approach is that most ELT management situations and roles don't stand alone but are connected with and dependent on others. In most cases, other situations and roles, above or below, should be taken into account. For example, in Mexico and other Latin America countries, public basic education ELT syllabuses, guidelines and sometimes textbooks, are produced at national level; norms for the employment and supervision of English teachers are established at national or state level; those norms are ignored by some school principals, who may also take key ELT decisions even though they can't speak English; in some schools there's ELT coordination, but in others teachers use different methodology (in spite of the national syllabuses) and give different tests. Imagine the challenge facing a teacher in a newly created ELT coordination post in a school with the worst combination of the above who wants to improve ELT for the specific students in the school and the local context. Perhaps you don't have to imagine!

My second reason for taking a broad, general approach is that almost every ELT management situation is unique in some ways and continually changing, so fixed formulas and prescriptions, even for a specific type of ELT operation, are seldom enough in practice. Good ELT management requires astute observation and analysis of the specific situation, followed when necessary by adjustments or changes. These may require considerable creativity and agility on occasions, as well as steadiness in general. For example, setting up and running a branch of an ELT institute is likely to be significantly different right now in São Paulo and in Porto Alegre in 2030. In the public sector, ELT programmes in Mexican secondary schools should be different (but aren't), or be implemented differently, in Mexicali (state capital on the US border), León (industrial and commercial city in central Mexico), Cancún (international beach resort, with tourist sites nearby), and Comitán (small town near the Guatemalan border). ELT managers have to deal with quite different situations in those different places, and at different moments in time.

Apart from those two reasons for taking on virtually the whole panorama of ELT management (or aspects of it, and focusing on Latin America) rather than focusing on one or two specific ELT management situations or roles, I'm emboldened by the wide range of ELT management work I was involved in, directly and indirectly, over some 50 years.

What is ELT management?

"The organisation and coordination of the activities of an ELT enterprise or operation". We could argue out a more detailed definition, but I'll take the one above as my starting point. What can organising and

coordinating the activities of an ELT operation involve? Well, in the private or independent sector for example, when setting up a new ELT enterprise or trying to radically change and improve one that's working very poorly, it can include all the following, while with an ELT operation that seems to be working quite well it would probably start at number 5:

- 1 Researching and analysing the context of the proposed ELT enterprise (with the target students at its heart) and the resources available, and establishing objectives.
- 2 Developing a plan for the ELT enterprise, including types and design of the EFL courses to be offered, as well as other services, like certification through proficiency tests, and premises, promotion, etc.
- 3 Finding and organising the requirements and resources for implementing the plan.
- 4 Promoting and launching the ELT enterprise.
- 5 On-going organisation and coordination of the ELT operation, partly routine and cyclical (periods or dates for promotion, timetabling, enrolment, course starts/tests/results, proficiency tests, teacher workshops, etc.), and partly reactional, trouble-shooting and developmental (teacher substitutions, students' complaints, staff problems-firing-hiring, on-going teacher development, change of textbooks, etc.).
- 6 Evaluation of the ELT operation, which might lead to modifications, or even to radical change, perhaps meaning a return to 1 above.

The different aspects or components of ELT management above can include many sub-components.

Initial and fundamental questions in ELT management

Researching and analysing the context of a proposed ELT enterprise or operation and the resources available, and establishing objectives (1 above) can mean very different things in different ELT cases. For example, if two or three English teachers, either with their own resources or with a business sponsor, are considering setting up an ELT centre or school, they should answer questions like these:

- Where are we going to aim our offer of courses – at adults, teenagers, children, all those, other?
- Is there room in our city/area for such a commercial ELT centre or is the market already saturated?
- If there is room, where would a good location be, are premises available there, and what might start-up costs be, and then running costs?
- How much should/can we charge for courses (checking existing language centres' fees), how much income might that generate (compare that with estimate of running costs)?

After answering such questions and more, the teachers might abandon the project, or they might move on to detailed and costed planning (2 above).

If, however, a new private primary-secondary school is being set up, some of the above questions would apply to the school as a whole, but ELT of some kind would be predetermined – you simply can't run a private school today without English classes throughout the curriculum. The first question that should be asked specifically about ELT might be: Should we aim at 'ordinary school ELT' or should we make 'high quality school ELT' a feature of the school? In other words, who are we aiming at – parents mostly only just able to pay for a private school or those able to pay, within reason and market norms, "whatever it takes to get the best"? According to the answer to that question, other questions follow.

ELT management in basic public education is a very different matter from the two examples above. In contrast to those examples of ELT operations, ELT in national public education is non-profit and, from the evidence, distinctly loss-making in Latin America in terms of 'profit-in-kind from investment'. That profit-in-kind, or benefits arising from the ELT, includes:

- Satisfied parents and school-leavers. (Currently, most parents and children in Latin America recognise that little English is learnt in public schools – or in many private ones.)
- Satisfied 'requirers' of English speakers. (Currently, institutions of higher education, employers in areas where English is needed, etc., find that most students from public schools – and from many private ones – start higher education, vocational training or work with little or no English).
- Improved national or regional economy. (All Latin American countries have foreign trade, investment and tourism, but they could be increased with more good English speakers, as could the quality of a country's scientists and other professionals.)

Also, in public education in Latin America ELT is never now a completely new operation (like a new language centre or private school) because there has been ELT in secondary schools for many decades. ELT in public education could, however, be radically changed (even virtually re-started). The most fundamental question then would be: How can we significantly improve on the results of our current ELT in public schools (which most honest ELT managers in public basic education in Latin America would recognise to be, not only unsatisfactory, but very poor)? That question, and different answers to it, is the topic of the next article, Part 2 of this series.

Management of up-and-running ELT operations

Setting up or radically modifying an ELT operation is an occasional or one-off project or challenge, while keeping an ELT operation running well is the continuous challenge of ELT management. Again it will be significantly different for different ELT situations, with some roles existing within certain situations and not others. Just consider the ELT in all the different schools, public and private, in the different cities and regions of your country; add the different institutions of higher education; add the different language centres, commercial and non-profit, individual or part of a chain of language centres; add the ELT management decisions taken by educational authorities in your city, state or nation. What can I say about up-and-running ELT management that applies to most of those – and in just half a page or so?

Well, let's go to the last point at the top of page 2, point 6: "Evaluation of the ELT operation, which might lead to modifications, or even to radical change, perhaps meaning a return to 1 above." Too many ELT operations do little or no evaluation of how they're working and, obviously, the management of the on-going ELT operation is usually weak or worse as a consequence.

Some ELT operations do have built-in evaluation instruments or systems (from occasional questionnaires for students and other stakeholders to boards or committees that meet regularly and consider results), or even pay for periodic external evaluations. However, some don't pay much or any attention to what's revealed. The consequences can be fatal for some ELT operations and chronically unhealthy for others.

Without continual evaluation and effective responses to it, ELT operations that depend on their clients' voluntary support (the income, recommendations to other potential clients, etc., that they provide) usually soon go into decline and eventually have to be terminated. In commercial and non-profit but

self-supporting ELT centres or institutes and private bilingual schools, there are powerful incentives for good ELT management: profit/sustainability vs. loss/closure, employment vs. unemployment from the staff's perspective. Poor or conflictive ELT managers are usually soon 'let go' by such ELT operations or, if they're owner-managers, their ELT enterprise sickens and dies under them.

In contrast, ELT operations not dependent on the students' and other stakeholders' support and the vital financing they provide can continue endlessly with poor (or worse) results and unhappy or indifferent students and stakeholders. Such is the case in many 'ordinary' private schools, where English is just one of many subjects and one in which parents are used to pass (and even high) grades in English even when their children clearly remain far from being able to communicate in the language. It's also the case in the massive ELT operations in public education.

To maintain or improve the quality of their ELT management, operations dependent for their survival on student/stakeholder satisfaction must answer questions like the following two, and operations not dependent on student/stakeholder satisfaction (nor learning results) *should* answer such questions:

- 1 Are our English courses and related services good enough to make the time students invest in them worthwhile? For example, Cambridge Assessment estimates up to 200 hours of guided study (in-class and required out-of-class study time) for each CEF level, so courses should generally achieve something not too far from that.
- 2 If our 'customers' (students, parents, institutions of higher education, employers requiring speakers of English, etc.) are not satisfied with our courses and services (irrespective of 1 above), what can we do, within our budget, to satisfy them?

Part 2: ELT in basic education

Almost all children and teenagers now study English at school, and that's where they're supposed to get a good start at learning the language. In countries where a considerable percentage of people speak English as a foreign or second language, like in northern Europe, most do indeed reach a functional level in English at school, mostly public school. However, in countries where only a small percentage of people speak English, like in Latin America, most of those learn it in private schools, higher education or language centres, not in public schools. In both types of country, ELT in schools is by far the largest area of ELT, for better or worse (better in northern Europe and worse in Latin America, for example).

Good models for ELT in basic education, that is, in schools

Naturally, we'd like ELT in basic education in our particular Latin American country, and in Latin America in general, to become significantly better and more effective than it is. Models of effective ELT and ELT management in schools may help us achieve that more than theory and grand plans, and there are good models in Latin America as well as in Europe and elsewhere. Most of the best models in Europe are public schools, but in Latin America most are private schools, though far from all of them. In some Latin American countries there are also public schools that are good models, but very few of them.

What makes certain Latin American private schools good models of ELT and ELT management? Among other things:

- The ELT is well planned and coordinated from pre-primary or primary through to upper secondary.

- The ELT is well coordinated across all teachers, who are expected to work as a team.
- Teachers that don't live up to expectations are 'worked on' and, if they don't respond, 'let go'.
- From their first year at the school, students see older students above them improving in English level by level and, expecting to improve in the same way, they do.
- Groups have a maximum of 30 students in them, usually less, and the conditions are generally good.
- Each school is independent and responsive to its local context, not locked into an enormous regional or national system, with its bureaucracy and political vagaries.

As I said above, only certain schools are good models, and most (almost all public schools and many private ones) don't get anywhere close. In the case of public schools, the first and the last points above are highly consequential. There is no good planning and coordination of ELT across all the school levels (ELT usually starts at beginner level in lower secondary, even after English in primary, and again in upper secondary), and external bureaucracy and politics can impact negatively on ELT in different schools all around the country (in the case of Mexico, that means from Tijuana on the border with the USA to Tapachula near the border with Guatemala, almost 4,000 km away).

That's almost all I'll say about ELT management in individual Latin American schools. I'll just add that, apart from the development of coordinated courses (with materials, tests, etc.), and the team leadership and management of teachers referred to above, many other things are usually part of ELT coordination in a school: timetabling and allocation of classes to teachers, substitution of absent teachers, records of students' results, etc. To learn more about good ELT management in a school, if you need to, you could identify one or more private schools (not bilingual) in your city or area with a reputation for good ELT and try to find out what they do. Perhaps your school is one of them!

Ministry of education management of ELT in Latin American public basic education

I'll now move on from effective ELT management in individual schools, which is vital for ambitious private schools, but often difficult or almost impossible in public schools, precisely because of what I'm moving on to: ministry of education management of ELT in public basic education.

One typical element in that management in many countries in Latin America is the imposition of the same syllabuses and course guidelines on all public schools across the country (e.g. as mentioned above, from Tijuana to Tapachula in Mexico, where ELT programmes and materials should really be 'rather different'). Another is stricter enforcement of the requirement that English teachers in public schools should have an ELT-related degree (from an Escuela Normal or one of the many universities that now have Licenciaturas in ELT). That's very positive, but the continued imposition of the same syllabuses and course guidelines across the country, inappropriate in itself, indicates that the central authorities don't trust the increasingly professional body of English teachers with key ELT decisions. They may be recognising that many teachers are still not professional and some are crudely improvised (especially in public primary ELT), but imposed syllabuses and guidelines won't help much, if at all, in those cases.

Key tasks in ministry of education management of ELT in public basic education are to evaluate results and, if necessary, make changes in order to improve them. In Mexico (and other Latin American countries) results seem to have been informally evaluated over a decade ago and found to be extremely poor, an assessment that matched research on the level of English of students entering higher education (most with beginner English) and estimates of the percentage of adult Mexicans with a

functional command of English (perhaps 10-15%). The response, attempting to improve results, was to start moving towards what has produced excellent results in northern Europe and good results further south: starting ELT in public primary schools. But Mexico (and the rest of Latin America) isn't Europe.

That approach was probably taken not only because of the example of Europe, but also because, "as everyone knows, young children learn languages better than older ones, adolescents and adults". Well, that's popular wisdom anyway, but the facts (as far as they're ascertainable) aren't so simple. Research and observation suggest that after late childhood it becomes more difficult to acquire an almost native command of a language (especially pronunciation), but that is acquired only in immersion-type contexts such as living in an English speaking community or attending a bilingual or semi-bilingual school. In other words, not only will it not be acquired in Mexican public primary schools as they are today, but little more than a bit of 'parrot English' will be learnt in most. And it's important to set against that the observable fact that teenagers and adults can learn a foreign language well (perhaps you're an example of that – I am). In fact, I'd bet that most English teachers in Latin America, certainly those in public schools, didn't get much beyond A1 level until their late teens or as young adults in higher education. I certainly know many English teachers with excellent English for whom that's the case.

So starting ELT at the beginning of primary school isn't the only way, or necessarily the best way, to improve results, and it doesn't work at all unless the ELT is high quality, as in northern European public schools. Also, centralised imposition of the same syllabuses and course guidelines (one size and style for all) on public schools across a country, especially a large and varied one, may not be a good idea even though it's hard to break from that 'tradition'. In the case of Mexico, it would perhaps have been much better some 10 years ago to explore and evaluate different options in different parts of the country or the educational system.

A very negative assessment of the results of current ELT should take ELT managers in ministries of education back to the first of the six ELT management steps in the first article in this series: "Researching and analysing the context of the ELT enterprise and the resources available, and establishing objectives". A comparison of a European and a Latin American context and its resources is revealing:

| THE NETHERLANDS | MEXICO |
|---|---|
| Almost all Dutch people need or want English because Dutch is hardly used outside their country and little used on the Internet, in business, science and technology. English is widely used in work in the Netherlands. Most Dutch people are well-off and frequently travel outside their tiny country. | Most Mexicans don't need English or want to put in the work to learn it because Spanish is a major international language, used in many countries (including USA), on the Internet, etc. Most available work in Mexico doesn't require English. Few Mexicans have the money for frequent (or any) foreign travel. |
| The Netherlands is a rich country that can afford very high quality public education. There's no shortage of English teachers with excellent English and high quality ELT training. | Mexico is a 'middle-income country', still struggling to eradicate poverty, provide quality public education, etc. Even for the current ELT in public basic education there's a shortage of competent English teachers. |
| <u>Appropriate objectives for ELT in public basic education in the Netherlands:</u> 100% of students should leave school (aged 17-18) with B1+ level English, many of them with B2+. | <u>Appropriate objectives for ELT in public basic education in Mexico:</u> Around 25% of students should leave school (aged 17-18) with A2+ level English, some of them with B1+. |

If you accept that “around 25% of school leavers with A2+ level English, some of them with B1+” is a realistic and appropriate target for a country like Mexico, these questions, among others, arise:

- 1 *Shouldn't having around 25% of schools leavers with A2+ level English as the target for ELT in basic public education lead to a different approach from having 100% with B1+ level English as the target?* My answer is most definitely yes, it definitely does call for a very different approach (or approaches).
- 2 *Who are the 25% that really need English?* Obviously, they include most school students who continue to higher education, and others who go into certain types of vocational training in upper secondary education. They can't be identified in public primary schools, but in lower secondary schools students begin to show the academic and technical abilities they'll carry into their adult lives, and in upper secondary school career ambitious begin to become clear. There's strong logic (considering all the above, including early-age language learning), for keeping ELT only in lower and upper secondary public schools, though in some places (US border, international vacation centres, major commercial-industrial cities) ELT in primary school may be a good investment and really benefit many students if ELT of satisfactory quality is affordable.
- 3 *How can we make sure those specific people do reach A2+ level in English (some with B1+ level) by the end of upper secondary (aged 17-18)?* Well, the best option (perhaps different ones in different places) isn't known until different options are actually tried out and evaluated. However, one thing is clear: the students must obviously receive good quality ELT, close to that offered in private schools with good ELT, or in commercial and university language centres, or the very best ELT currently offered in public schools – not the junk ELT or ELT in almost impossible conditions (pity the English teachers!) that most school students in Latin America get at present, with the results we know well.

Options for trying to make sure those who need English can actually get it

This is the next step for ELT managers, Step 2 of the six ELT management steps in the first article in this series: “Developing a plan for the ELT enterprise, including types and design of the EFL courses to be offered, as well as other services, like certification through proficiency tests”. In the case of ELT in public basic education, I've suggested that different options should be explored first. Here are some possibilities:

A Extend ELT down into public primary school, or even pre-primary.

[This is the option currently in progress in Mexico, with 'political' and other interruptions and modifications. It seems to be a costly general failure so far, because of lack of financial and human resources, and a lack of integration of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary ELT, among other things.]

B Work hard on improving the quality of ELT in lower and upper secondary schools (stopping **A** completely), e.g. eliminate any remaining unqualified English teachers (with some qualified teachers from primary schools probably available to replace them), split groups for English classes where they're over 30 students, encourage English teachers to adapt courses to local contexts (US border vs. international vacation centre vs. industrial city vs. rural area), make A2 the starting point of upper secondary ELT with students entering below that level put into an intensive remedial English

programme, pay bonuses to school staff other than English teachers (especially school principals) with certified B1+ English and involve them in English classes and extra-curricular activities in English.

- C** Shift ELT to a 3 year curricular + language centre model (Davies 2009). The 3 years of curricular (compulsory) English could be at the end of primary school and/or the beginning of lower secondary school. After those 3 years of curricular English for all public school students, English courses would be free for anyone under the age of 18, 19 or 20 in ministry of education language centres in schools after regular classes, and with ministry of education vouchers in university language and commercial language centres (where they might be able to study French, German, Chinese, etc., instead of English). That's what actually happens in most of Latin American now, except that the language centre classes aren't free: many students and parents give up on the English classes in public school, or want to go beyond it, and register in a university or commercial language centre. The cost (and hassle) for the ministry of education would probably be less than extending ELT to the beginning of primary up, and the results would be much better (evidence suggests that voluntary and motivated study of a language tends to produce much better results than compulsory study).
- D** De-centralise almost completely, letting local educational authorities and/or individual schools (i.e. the English teachers in a school) do whatever they want, just providing them with very general guidelines and options, and with an ELT support website. It couldn't be much worse than at present in general, and some local educational authorities and/or individual schools would almost certainly start standing out with much better than average results, examples for the rest.

All four of those options could be tried out in different places: **A** continuing where it's currently working best, **B**, **C** and **D** where a state, a city, a group of schools or individual school volunteers to run a project for a period of several years. Then results of **A**, **B**, **C** and **D** (and possibly **E**) should be compared and new decisions taken, perhaps dropping one or two of the options and continuing with 2 or 3, where they're wanted or considered best for the local context. Why bet everything on a single plan for the whole country? So far, most, if not all, such big bets have resulted in losses, many of them enormous.

Reference

Davies, P.J. 2009. 'Strategic management of ELT in public educational systems'. In *TESL-EJ*, vol.13, no.3. At <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume13/ej51/ej51a2/>

Part 3: ELT in higher education

In some countries English at B1+ level is taken for granted in students entering higher education. In Mexico and other Latin American countries, however, even prestigious private universities receive 10%, 15%, 20% or more of their new students with little or no English, and in other private universities and almost all public institutions of higher education (IHEs) from around 50% to over 90% of the new students enter with little or no English. That's in spite of up to 12 years of English classes at school.

Most IHEs in Mexico have responded to this situation by requiring undergraduates to take compulsory English courses, but generally only up to A2 level. Most students entering IHEs, often almost all, are placed at beginner level in these courses, and have to study all the general English they covered at school again, for the third or fourth time. In most IHEs this approach has worked very poorly, with many,

and often most, students graduating still with little English. Some reasons for this general failure are fairly obvious; for example, the groups in the compulsory English courses generally range from 40 students up to 60 or more (I won't name the specific university I know that has groups of 80 students). There are clearly better ways to manage ELT in higher education than that.

There are, of course, IHEs in Mexico that receive most of their students with substantial English, like the prestigious private universities mentioned in the first paragraph above, and even some public ones like the Colegio de México. There are also a few that do notably better than most at getting their students from beginner or low elementary level up to a certified intermediate level by the time they graduate. The focus of this article is on the majority of IHEs in Mexico and other Latin American countries, most of whose new students enter with little or no English.

Evaluation, and back to the drawing board

In the first article in this series, I presented a 6-step approach to ELT management, and I'll apply some of it now to ELT in Mexican and other Latin American IHEs. Since almost all already have ELT operations, the first thing to do is to evaluate that current ELT and its results, which is actually Step 6: *Evaluation of the ELT operation*.

My assessment of ELT in most Mexican IHEs, based on observation, information and comments from ELT staff, and published studies, is that most students enter with little or no English, and many, if not most, graduate still with little English, even after compulsory English courses. Some IHEs achieve better results, particularly in university language centres, where students can take classes voluntarily and up to higher levels, but my general assessment suggests that something is radically wrong with the compulsory ELT in most Mexican IHEs, and it calls for radical change, based on a return to Step 1.

Step 1: Researching and analysing the context of the ELT operation

The full specification of this step in Part 1 of this series of articles is: *Researching and analysing the context of the proposed ELT enterprise (with the target students at its heart) and the resources available, and establishing objectives*. In this case, an ELT operation (compulsory, or common core, English courses for undergraduates) is already running in most IHEs, but generally failing. A significant investment is being made in these courses, but most students graduate still with little English. The ELT operation needs to be radically changed, or replaced with something quite different and much more effective.

One factor that may contribute to the failure was mentioned above: large groups, sometimes with 50, 60 or more students. The IHEs appear to be making a gesture towards "the importance of English in today's world", but a largely empty gesture, with a largely wasted investment. Another factor might be the repetition of essentially the same general English syllabuses as in lower and upper secondary school (not very motivating for the students), and there must be more factors. An analysis of the context, with particular attention to the students, should suggest better ways to achieve what the IHEs would like, which is to have most, if not all, students graduate with a functional level in English (B1+, say, which is a good springboard for autonomous learning through actual use of English).

Here are some typical aspects of the ELT context in Latin American IHEs:

- A ELT in IHEs is preceded by 6 to 12 or more years of ELT in school education that leaves most students still at beginner level (in some cases, courses from pre-school to upper secondary school).
- B The impact of that failure on students entering an IHE may include a dislike of English as a subject of study, low expectations of ever learning English, and poor motivation for the IHE English courses.
- C IHE students are all among the segment of the general population of the country that's most likely to need English (especially for professional study, work, and continuous up-dating and development).
- D IHE students are grouped by areas of study such as health sciences, business studies, engineering, and hospitality and tourism.
- E IHE English courses have professionally trained and coordinated teachers (most public universities in Mexico have degrees in ELT and the teachers of their compulsory English courses are graduates).
- F Other ELT staff in IHEs have high levels of professional development, especially in universities, including MAs and PhDs in ELT or related areas.

I invite you to think about the above points in relation to your IHE and/or others that you know about, considering the possible implications for the ELT that should be offered to undergraduates in future.

Whatever those course are to be, they should take into account the resources available and the objectives of the courses. The resources start with E and F above, human resources. Is the current ELT staff adequate and adequately organized or does it need to be improved? If so, that may mean extra cost, as might other aspects of resources, like classroom space/time, materials and aids. The resources an IHE has and would like for ELT eventually comes down largely to cost: can the current budget for ELT be better deployed, and can it even be increased as an investment in notably better ELT results?

The objectives of the courses might be essentially the same as at present (though, at present, they're presumably not being achieved), e.g. to get all students to a certain level in English by the time they graduate, e.g. A2+ or B1+. However, they might also include objectives related to points A-D above: to motivate students after their generally bad school experiences of ELT, to provide students with the English they're most likely to need (for higher studies, professional work and continuous development).

All that takes us to the next step in ELT management, as presented in the first article in this series.

Step 2: Developing a plan for the ELT operation

It's impossible, of course, to develop a specific plan without a specific IHE context and some key decisions on objectives, resources and budget. However, considering points A-F above, the general approach, within the allotted budget, should try to:

- **Make beginner and elementary English courses notably different from those students had at school.** Students should not feel that they're virtually repeating what they studied (and failed to learn) at school, but that English is now more necessary or potentially useful for their professional studies and future lives, and that the IHE teachers are making the courses not only different but better for them.
- **From the start, incorporate a strong element of EAP in the courses, and where possible actual ESP.** This in itself (in contrast to EGP – 'English for no particular purpose') will make the courses different from school English courses, and better for the students, i.e. more appropriate for their professional studies and future working lives (Davies 2008).

- **Ensure reasonably good conditions for the English courses in terms of real class time, teaching-learning materials and aids, maximum group size, etc.** English courses with few real classroom hours, without modern materials and aids, and in very large groups generally achieve very poor results, and are a largely wasted investment. They convey to students the IHE's lack of real seriousness about the teaching and learning of English, with a negative impact on students' attitudes.

There are different ways in which English courses for undergraduate students can be planned and offered in an IHE, but they should all take the above points into account and relate to the objectives of teaching English and any requirement that students reach a certain level in English to graduate. The general objective is, presumably, to enable students and graduates to be the best professionals they can be in the modern world. Any minimum target level set within an IHE should be realistic (otherwise few students will graduate simply because they haven't reached the level of English required), and should vary from degree programme to degree programme, e.g. higher for Tourism and Hospitality, International Trade, International Relations, etc., and lower for Accountancy, Architecture, Social Work, etc. The level required for students in the latter category to graduate might be just A2 at first (as it is now in many IHEs in Mexico), but it can be raised if more and more students begin to enter higher education with better English than now (see Part 2 of this series of articles, Davies 2019).

Here are some of the ways in which English courses can be offered to undergraduates, taking into account the general considerations above:

- **Curricular English courses within a degree programme, e.g. Tourism and Hospitality, International Trade or International Relations.** Here, English is considered an essential component of training in the professional field. A great advantage is that the ELT can and should be partly ESP, which, apart from serving the students better than EGP, can be motivating and interesting for students still at or near beginner level, and also for those with a higher level of general English but unfamiliar with vocabulary and texts of the professional field. The target level for such degree-related English courses should be at least B1+, and B2+ if possible.
- **Common core English courses within a faculty or school, e.g. Business and Economics, Engineering or Health Sciences.** Here, English is considered useful for all students in the faculty or school but not so essential as to justify the cost of ESP for each separate degree programme. The ELT can and should be partly EAP, leaning towards the professional fields within the faculty or school. The target level for such English courses should be at least B1+, but budget limitations or IHE policy may set it at A2+ only.
- **Optional English courses in the IHE Language Centre.** This option is possible only where an IHE actually has a language centre, and the courses are likely to be EGP only where the general public is admitted as well as IHE students and staff. This option has several advantages:
 - placement of students by level (as opposed to Inglés I, II, etc., for all students in semester I, II, etc.)
 - probably better conditions and context (smaller groups, courses at genuine B1 and B2 levels, teachers working as a team, language centre atmosphere, etc.)
 - probably greater student motivation (voluntary study, and the points immediately above)
 This option needs to be combined with strict application of the requirement of a certified level of English for graduation, of course, with students deciding how to reach that level if they don't already have it (with this IHE language centre option probably their best option).

- **Common core English courses for all undergraduates in the IHE, irrespective of their degree programme.** The courses should be at least partly EAP.

The last option above may be the ‘cheapest and simplest’ one for many IHEs, but it’s unlikely to be the best one. In fact, many IHEs in Mexico currently have something like it, but spoilt by being EGP, not EAP, thus virtually repeating what students had at school, and not motivating or serving them well.

The different options above can be combined within an IHE, of course, e.g. with curricular ESP where English is an essential component of a degree program, and common core EAP where it isn’t. ESP can also be provided in a self-access centre or online to complement common core EAP in classroom courses (Amador et al 2018, Hernández 2019).

Next steps, and summing up

Steps 3, 4 and 5 in the first article in this series are: *Finding and organising the requirements and resources for implementing the plan*, *Promoting and launching the ELT enterprise*, and *On-going organisation and coordination of the ELT operation*. They’re all important in ELT in an IHE, including the promotion of the new or radically modified courses and complementary resources, and the orientation of students about them. Each step involves a host of details, as any of you who’ve worked on ELT in an IHE will know. For example, the last step (which is really an on-going stage) includes work that’s “partly routine and cyclical (periods/dates for promotion, timetabling, enrolment, course starts/tests/results, proficiency tests, teacher workshops, etc.), and partly reactional, trouble-shooting and developmental (dealing with teacher substitutions, students’ complaints, staff problems-firing-hiring, on-going teacher development, change of textbooks, etc.)”.

And that, after some years of the new ELT set-up, leads back to Step 6, *Evaluation of the ELT operation, which might lead [again] to modifications, or even to radical change*. Hopefully, it will in fact lead only to minor adjustments. However, even if the IHE ELT operation seems to be working well, the world around it is continually changing, and one day one of those changes should include a significant improvement in the results of school ELT. That particular outside change would call for a radical modification of ELT within IHEs. They, especially universities with ELT degree programmes, could – and, I believe, should – contribute to that outside change by promoting and sponsoring much more research into school ELT and experimentation with better options than at present. That could be enormously positive for school ELT, and for IHE ELT, shifting it up to where it should be, A2-B2 level, mostly EAP and ESP, instead of the A0-A2/B1 EGP that most IHEs offer at present.

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Part 4: Management of ELT centres

This is my main area of ELT management experience and expertise. For 20 years I was a branch director at the Instituto Anglo Mexicano de Cultura (now The Anglo, part of the Anglo Mexican Foundation), including being the founder director of one of its provincial branches; for 2 years I was the central director of studies there; for 6 months I was acting director general; for 2 years I was director of operations, setting up several 'new-style' branches to compete with the many commercial English institutes that arose over the 1980s; and I did consultancy work for several university language centres, through the British Council and free-lance, up to 2012. All that should make this article of at least some use to ELT centre management staff today still, or it might make it a bunch of old man's anecdotes, or a bit of both. I'll start with a bit of anecdotal history.

Why and how ELT centres started and spread in Latin America

There were private class teachers of English in Mexico and some small ELT schools or institutes before the Instituto Anglo Mexicano de Cultura was set up in 1943, run largely by The British Council at first, and then the Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales in 1947. And after that, more small ELT schools opened up, but 'the Anglo' and 'Relaciones Culturales' overwhelmingly dominated the Mexican ELT centre scene in Mexico City up to the 1980s, with as many as 60,000 or 70,000 students between them, plus branches or affiliated institutes in some major cities around the country.

Then as now, the private class teachers were in ELT to make a living, and the 'commercial' schools or institutes to make a profit. The Anglo and Relaciones Culturales, on the other hand, were in ELT as part of a 'diplomatic' and 'inter-cultural' mission, directly related to the Second World War in the case of the Anglo and The British Council (promoting pro-British sentiment in a region where there might be pro-German, and pro-Italian sentiment). For that mission, they had regular cultural and social events as well as English courses. However, they were – or became – largely self-funding, so the successful 'marketing' of English courses was almost as vital for their survival as for that of private class teachers and commercial institutes. Surviving, or prospering, in the ELT marketplace is fundamental to the management of most ELT centres (except, perhaps, in those with a captive market, as in some institutions of higher education).

In the last half of the 20th century, even as more and more teenagers, and then children, received English classes at school, the adult ELT market grew extremely fast. When I started my first ELT management job, as Director of the Sucursal Sur of the Anglo in 1967, the queue of people wanting to enrol in our courses stretched around the block for two or three weeks and most courses were full before they started. Those were the days! Well, perhaps not: an Anglo branch director's job in those days included teaching several courses, co-ordinating and developing teachers, often substituting absent teachers, timetabling, hiring-managing-firing staff (from teachers to cleaners), trouble-shooting with staff and students, assisting with enrolments (at the reception desk through to counting the takings at the end of the day, getting home at



People (adults only) queuing at Relaciones Culturales in its heyday, the 1970s

10pm or after), and budgeting. Advertising and promotion of courses and events was handled by the Head Office and Main Institute in Mexico City, but later, as a provincial branch director in Puebla from 1976, that was part of the job also, as well as getting the permits for it to open. Few would do that job today, and it would very likely be some kind of disaster, anyway.

Note that almost all English courses in ELT centres were for adults only until the 1980s, due, no doubt, to the increasing demand for proficiency in English in professional and skilled work and in higher professional studies, along with the general failure of school ELT. From the 1980s, the Mexican ELT centre scene – and market – began to change fast, probably as a consequence of increasing demand for English classes after regular school (for adults) and outside regular school (for teenagers and children, still with ELT generally failing in schools), the economic crisis of 1982, which shook up thinking about commercial enterprises of all kinds, and the success (and search for new markets) of commercial ELT schools and chains of schools in English-speaking countries. They now include the Instituto Anglo Americano, Berlitz, Harmon Hall, Interlingua, International House and Quick Learning, among others.

The arrival and growth of such commercial ELT centres hit the not-for-profit Anglo and Relaciones Culturales like an ice bucket challenge that wasn't going to stop unless they radically changed their management and organizational style and structure. The Anglo had already started courses for teenagers as well as adults, and they later started courses for children, and those became its new growth areas (not touched by many commercial ELT centres). But note that teenagers and children require new arrangements for security and care, among other considerations, which has its costs. Much more had to be changed if the old bi-cultural centres were to survive, let alone thrive. In fact, Relaciones Culturales closed down in 1993, mainly over a labour dispute, but also considering the Mexican ELT centre situation described above. The Anglo has survived very well, but is radically different now from what it was 50 years ago, or even 25, along with commercial ELT centres like those mentioned above, and the ELT (or language) centres that major universities and institutions of higher education have set up, mostly since the 1980s, many open to the general public, and with courses for teenagers and children. The Mexican ELT centre scene – and market – is rather crowded now and very competitive.

The changing styles or models of ELT centre

I'd guess that the factotum-director model of ELT centre described above is quite rare nowadays, though it probably still exists, especially in small centres with an owner-manager-teacher at the helm. Of course, a good ELT centre has really always been the product of team work and not mainly the 'heroics', acrobatics and perhaps hysterics of one person, and has also usually had some kind of shared linguistic-cultural-social life bonding many of the people, in different posts and jobs, that help make the centre run well. ELT centre teams are generally much more structured and compartmentalized now.

There's often a dedicated administrative side of the team (sometimes the dominant side now, especially in commercial language centres) and an ELT side. It's important that the administrative side should have a good understanding and appreciation of the ELT side, and that at least the top people on the ELT side should have a fair understanding of administration systems and issues too. A lack of understanding or actual misunderstanding can be highly prejudicial or fatal for an ELT centre. It helps enormously if the key people on the administrative side speak English well and continually consult and involve people on the ELT side in plans and key decisions. In fact, some of these can only be sensibly

made jointly between the administrative and the ELT sides, e.g. the types of course and other services to be launched as new ventures (such as courses for young children or a proficiency test) or, on the other hand, to be dropped or radically changed because of low uptake or other problems.

The administrative side of the team often has to report to a board of directors, or higher authorities in an institution of higher education, and get approval for new projects, changes of strategy and other key decisions, which may put constraints on the operation of the centre that purely ELT people don't like or even resent, calling for explanation and discussion with the ELT people. The administrative side also has to take care of things that ELT operations within regular schools don't: business (or enterprise) planning; acquiring, adapting and maintaining premises and facilities; getting permits and registrations; preparing budgets and managing finances; doing marketing and promotion; designing and developing enrolment and other customer-handling systems; and so on. All that is vital for the smooth running and success of the ELT centre, whether commercial, not-for-profit or a service provider within an institution of higher education or other community.

Within the environment created and maintained by the administrative side (a favourable one for ELT, it is to be hoped), and in collaboration with the administrative side, the ELT side has to do its best for the students and customers (who may include the parents of children and teenagers).

The English language teaching in ELT centres (or language centres)

Here are some of the basic questions and considerations for ELT courses and services in centres dedicated to the teaching of English (or English and other languages):

What courses and other services to offer?

Unless this is largely pre-determined (e.g. in a university language centre, most courses will be for undergraduate students, and in a large company's language centre, for staff), decisions on the courses to offer should initially be based on market research or assessment, which might lead to courses for adults only, for children and teenagers only, or for both, and perhaps for preparation courses for a specific set of proficiency tests. After a centre has been running for some years, initial decisions may be revised based on how the operation has been going and on requests from students and would-be students (e.g. by request, courses for children and teenagers might be added to the original ones for adults only, and more intermediate and advanced courses and fewer beginner courses might be offered as students progress upwards).

Some chains of ELT centre specialize in a limited range of 'products and services' (like fast-food chains and other businesses), but even they should be open to change and innovation as demanded by the market and as opportunity offers.

Most ELT centres have a very mixed student population, which usually calls for general purpose English courses (EGP), but some have a more defined population, which may allow (and actually demand) some kind of ESP (e.g. Business English in ELT centres in business areas of metropolitan cities, and English for Hospitality and Tourist Services in ELT centres in holiday resort areas).

What ELT approach, or approaches, to take?

Long gone are the days when the choice seemed to be among a few defined methods or approaches (Audio-Lingual or Structural-Situational or early CLT or even Natural Approach). But some ELT centres

still have a 'proprietary approach/method', perhaps embodied in textbooks produced in-house by a chain of ELT centres, or consisting of strict guidelines for the use of a series of textbooks selected from those available on the open market. Such approaches usually have a brief training course or programme for new teachers (even those with a degree in ELT and considerable experience), and regular supervision through class observations to ensure that teachers stick to "our approach".

Certainly, it's very important for all teachers in an ELT centre to take essentially the same approach in their ELT, and common textbooks, teachers' meetings and class observations (among teachers as well as by supervisors) are usually fundamental for that. However, I believe it's usually best when teachers add something of themselves to their ELT, and, very importantly, try to attend to the needs and wants of specific groups and of students within each group. Also, it's not rational or professional to be using the same approach with the same materials year after year and decade after decade: not only is ELT likely to have evolved significantly over a decade, but the market also.

The best ELT centres I've known have depended on their ELT coordination and teaching staff to maintain high quality ELT and to develop and modify it when appropriate, and have tried not only to *get* good ELT people but to *keep* them. ELT staff should be capable of moving with the times, as well as responding to their customers' needs and wants.

These needs and wants may be quite homogeneous (e.g. adults only, wanting/needing English for a variety of purposes, which means EGP methodology and materials) or they may be clearly differentiated (e.g. young children, teenagers, adults, perhaps some of the last wanting preparation courses for fairly academic or professional proficiency tests like TOEFL or IELTS). In that latter case, significantly different approaches and materials are required for the different types of student in different courses, and large language centres can benefit from dedicated coordinators, e.g. for children's courses, for teenagers' courses, for general adults' courses, for proficiency test courses. There may even be specific purposes courses for adults (e.g. English for Academic Purposes courses in a higher education language centre, and the courses in Business English and English for Hospitality and Tourist Services mentioned above). These may call for notably different approaches to ELT, e.g. much more reading of formal texts than usual for EAP, and more work on prepared spoken presentations of information in Business English.

How to create a favourable language learning environment in an ELT centre (and attract and hold customers)?

Most ELT is done in environments and in classrooms not set up specifically for ELT. Schools (with the exception of bilingual ones) usually treat English as just another subject, along with maths, geography, biology and the rest, and classes for all subjects (except laboratory and workshop ones) take place in the same classrooms and school environment. In many schools, one notable aspect of that environment is that English teachers are the only members of staff who speak English (sometimes not very well), and in almost all schools very few other members of staff do. In Latin America, most public schools (which serve around 90% of the population) have beginner-elementary English courses in lower secondary school (not to mention primary school), and again in upper secondary school, and yet again in higher education for students who continue to that level. Most school students never see, or become, intermediate or advanced level learners of English because nobody progresses beyond A2, and few get even that far. Some of them, or their parents, turn to ELT or language centres, where the environment is, or should be, the opposite.

English (perhaps along with other languages) is the **raison d'être**. The whole centre is, or should be, themed for the learning of English, with posters (some with substantial texts to read), notices and other things in English on the walls and doors. All the teachers are ELT (or other language) specialists, and other members of staff also speak English. Perhaps even more important, there are students at intermediate and advanced level, who speak English outside the classroom with teachers, and perhaps among themselves.

Some of that, especially the students at higher levels, may not exist in a brand new ELT centre, but it should be built over the years as students progress upwards in the centre: in year 3, 4 or 5, some of the students who entered as beginners in the first year or two should be in upper intermediate and advanced courses, and there may eventually be more of those courses than courses for beginners.

Almost all aspects of a good and developing ELT centre can be exploited to attract and hold customers. They should all contribute to its strongest element – its reputation, which can only be built on good ELT and results. Most people first visit or call an ELT centre because they've heard good things about it (as they say, the best marketing is done by satisfied customers). When they enter the centre, prospective customers should be favourably impressed (posters and notices in English, people speaking English, helpful and efficient staff). After some weeks of their first course there, and again and again after, they should feel that they're really learning English at last, or that they're progressing better than before. Then they may mention the centre positively to relatives, friends and colleagues, and a virtuous circle has begun to turn, or an existing one is kept turning.

That virtuous circle has to be oiled and maintained, of course. Any significant decline or blip in the quality of ELT, other ELT services, and customer attention services can affect its motion, and even reverse it into a vicious circle. And don't think everything can be controlled. What can be called 'fortune' can affect even the best ELT centre negatively – things like an economic recession, another and more 'aggressive' centre opening nearby, a shift of potential customers away from the area of the centre, and perhaps, one day, a miraculous improvement in public school ELT. Then you'll need all your ingenuity, pragmatism, and, perhaps, stoicism.