

Comparative Analysis of Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching from ESL Teachers' and Learners' Perspectives in English Language Institutes of Pakistan

Nimra Gull Naz¹, Atif Hayat² and Dr Eram Jamil³

Abstract

Two of the most popular approaches in the teaching and learning of English among ESL learners are the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). While in GTM, the grammatical rules are explicitly taught, the translation from the first language to the target language is stressed as well as the accuracy of the written target language, the CLT emphasizes meaningful interaction, fluency, and the functional use of the target language. Researchers have studied GTM and CLT separately in other educational settings. But there is limited research comparing the perceptions of ESL teachers and learners to the overall effectiveness of the two methods in the English language institutes of Pakistan. Therefore, based on Communicative Competence Theory by Hymes, Canale & Swain, and using the model of Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke, the present study aimed to comparatively examine the overall effectiveness of GTM and CLT in English language institutes of Pakistan from the viewpoints of ESL teachers and learners. Overall, the findings indicated that CLT is more effective than the other, fostering the acquisition of communicative ability in all aspects; but an integrated approach, which builds on the structural advantages of GTM, has been found to be more viable within the current educational context of Pakistan.

Keywords: GTM, Communicative Competence, Thematic Analysis, CLT

¹COMSATS University Islamabad – Pakistan

²FG Degree College PAC Kamra – Pakistan

³Thal university Bhakkar – Pakistan

Introduction

Teaching English is an important academic and professional issue because of the status of English as the language of education, business, diplomacy and social conversation in the world (Crystal 2003). English language teaching (ELT) is an integral part of national education system, in the context of Pakistan, English is that part of the system which is used as the primary medium of instruction at secondary education and higher education levels (Rahman, 2004). In spite of the availability of enormous teaching resources and a well laid down curriculum, a significant number of students in Pakistan still experience problems in attaining communicative competency in English, thereby raising certain questions regarding the effectiveness of the teaching methodology followed in Pakistani classrooms.

In the field of teaching the English language, there are many methods, namely the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are two pedagogical philosophies that can be used in the process. One of the older and most traditional approaches is GTM which focuses on the explicit teaching of grammatical rules, memorization of words and translation of texts from the mother tongue to the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). It places a premium on the accuracy of written language and structural knowledge rather than fluency of speech and real communication. CLT, on the other hand, was a reaction to the constraints of these form-oriented methods, and focuses on the communicative competence of language learning (Hymes, 1972). CLT fosters deep engagement, genuine language production and sociolinguistic and linguistic competence in learners (Canale & Swain, 1980).

In Pakistan, the English language classrooms have been historically dominated by GTM where teachers heavily depend on translation, memorization of rules, and using grammar-based exercises (Khan, Ayaz, & Saif, 2016). This traditional reliance on GTM has been severely criticized for the failure to produce learners who might have acquired knowledge of the grammatical system but may not be able to use English effectively in the real communicative context. Due to this, the use of CLT as the alternative approach to be more effective in developing learners' communicative ability has grown in academic and institutional interest (Ali, 2015).

But the conversion of the ideology of GTM to CLT in educational system in Pakistan has not been smooth. A number of obstacles are posed in the effective application of CLT in Pakistan such as large classes, inadequate teachers training, examination

systems that emphasize syntactic knowledge over communicative competence, and a sociocultural context that does not always foster an interactive approach to CLT. These situational factors highlight the need for caution in asserting that one of the two methods is superior without fully understanding the context in which the items are being implemented and the experiences of teachers and learners.

The discussion on the general impact of GTM and CLT is not new but the research that directly compares the impact of GTM and CLT from teachers and learners' perspectives in the same institutional context in Islamabad, Pakistan is very limited. The majority of studies conducted has been in other urban centers like Lahore, Karachi, or Peshawar, and have been on a single method exclusively, not directly compared to each other (Khan et al., 2016). This research gap has motivated the need for a context-specific, qualitative study which reflects the lived experiences and professional perspectives of first-hand individuals involved in English language teaching and learning in ELIs of Islamabad.

This study aims to comparatively explore the overall effectiveness of GTM and CLT as seen by ESL teachers and learners in English language institutes of Islamabad, Pakistan. For comparison, to provide a theoretically based one, the study adopts Communicative Competence Theory (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980) as an evaluative lens, as well as other criteria of overall effectiveness such as examination performance, learner motivation, classroom practicality, and long-term language use. It is a multi-dimensional approach in which no one method is judged from a perspective that is proclivious to the other, and in which the comparisons are based on the whole spectrum of results identified as meaningful by teachers and learners. (Bachman, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2014)

The analysis of the qualitative data in this chapter follows a systematic and transparent process of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and is theoretically informed, which means that it is systematic and transparent and allows for a theoretically informed interpretation of the data. Each finding is supported by first-hand evidence drawn from the participant interviews and placed in the larger context of the scholarly literature on GTM, CLT, and communicative competence. The six major findings provide a holistic and in-depth picture of the two pedagogical techniques and of their effectiveness and shortcomings in the particular educational, institutional, and socio- cultural context of Islamabad's ELIs, which

shares common traits with the larger Pakistani ELT context but also has unique attributes that stem from the urbanization of the capital.

Finally, one should keep in mind that the results of this study are descriptive and do not establish generalizable conclusions that can be made statistically. Instead, they provide rich, contextually deep perspectives on the lived experiences and professional perspectives of ESL teachers and learners in this context, and from this depth and specificity, they have a scholarly and practical value. Readers are invited to reflect on the findings based on the methodology and theory used to analyze the study's findings and wonder about their significance in other contexts of ELT instruction in Pakistan and elsewhere (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Patton, 2015).

The current study follows the procedure of Thematic Analysis Model proposed by Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) and aims at analysing the qualitative data that is gathered from 30 semi- structured interviews with ESL teachers and learners in English language institutes of Islamabad. The purpose of the present study is to find out the commonalities and differences among the responses of the participants and provide meaningful insights of the overall comparative effectiveness of GTM and CLT in order to provide evidence-based recommendations for pedagogic practice, pedagogical training, and curriculum development in the Pakistani ELT context.

Researchers have studied GTM and CLT separately in other educational settings. But there is limited research comparing the perceptions of ESL teachers and learners to the overall effectiveness of the two methods in the English language institutes of Pakistan. Therefore, the present study aimed to comparatively examine the overall effectiveness of GTM and CLT in English language institutes of Pakistan.

Review of the Literature

The development of English language teaching is characterized by the constant change of teaching methods, which is determined by the changes of language learning and teaching theories. There are many methods that have surfaced and two of the most talked about and used are the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Traditionally, GTM has been a form-focused methodology, whereas CLT is a meaning-driven methodology, which emphasizes a more real-life communication than grammatical correctness (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). A comparative study of

these two methods is fundamental to improve the pedagogy of the English language, especially in a country like Pakistan, where the selection of a method of teaching English has far-reaching educational and social implications.

❖ Grammar Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation Method is one of the oldest of language teaching methods and goes back to the classical languages, namely Latin and Greek, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century European institutions (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). It is characterized by the very explicit presentation of grammatical rules, the teaching of grammatical terminology in the mother tongue, the amount of translation tasks, and the focus on reading and writing rather than speaking and listening (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Vocabulary is introduced via memorization of bi-lingual lists of words, and the learners' success on a test is evaluated mainly based on how well they translate texts into and out of the language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

In Pakistan, GTM has been traditionally followed in English language classrooms, especially at the secondary level, where the teacher explains the rules of the grammar in Urdu, asks students to memorize grammar tables and the major activity of the classroom is the translation of texts. Although it is able to give learners a systematic knowledge of the grammatical structure, it is widely criticized for not making learners communicate effectively in English (Ali, 2015). Students that are all taught GTM may show evidence of grammatical understanding in formal tests but lack the ability to communicate spontaneously in the real world.

❖ Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been developed in the '70s as a reaction to the shortcomings of form-focused approaches like GTM (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Theoretically, it draws its foundation from the notion of 'communicative competence' (Hymes 1972) which posits that grammatical competence is not enough for communicative competence. Language users need also to have knowledge about the time, place, manner and interlocutors in which certain linguistic forms are used appropriately. This idea was elaborated on by Canale and Swain (1980), who introduced a multi-dimensional model of communicative competence consisting of four components: grammatical

competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. The main principles of CLT are: Use of authentic and meaningful language, Pair and group work, Task-based activities, Learner-centered approach, and Integration of all four language skills in communicative contexts (Nunan, 2004). The teacher's grammatical correctness is not emphasized but rather he or she becomes a facilitator, helping students build meaning through interaction (Richards, 2006).

❖ GTM and CLT in the Pakistani Educational Context

English language teaching in Pakistan is an interesting and complex setting. Although English is an official language and a valued indicator of educational success, the vast majority of students are still taught using GTM-based teaching methods that focus more on grammar and translation than on communication (Rahman, 2004). The high usage of GTM can be attributed to the existence of the deep-rooted examination systems that focus on the grammatical aspect, a lack of trained CLT practitioners and large class sizes (Haidar, 2019).

For the secondary level Khan et al. (2016) did a comparative study of GTM and CLT and concluded that although CLT were found to have better communicative outcomes, GTM was still the preferred approach among teachers because of its compatibility with the existing examination formats. Likewise, it is said that GTM performed better in the grammar-related tests and CLT excelled in the overall communicative competence tests. Nawab (2012) added that many teachers in Pakistan who claim to follow CLT approach actually do not do so in the classrooms, indicating that there is a disconnect between theory and practice.

❖ Comparative Effectiveness of GTM and CLT

There has been extensive scholarly discussion of the relative effectiveness of GTM and CLT. But proponents of GTM claim that explicit grammar instruction allows learners to systematically learn the structure of the target language (Ellis, 2006) and that the use of the L1 makes the learning process more accessible to those with limited L2 proficiency (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). However, language learning is justified on the basis of the learner's ability to use the language effectively in real communicative contexts (Nunan, 2004). In a thorough meta-analysis, Norris and

Ortega (2000) concluded that meaning-focused instruction led to much greater long-term language learning success than did purely form-focused instruction.

Recent research adds to the findings of CLT's effectiveness. Learners' speaking confidence and fluency shows significant improvement after the CLT-based instruction. In the same way, it is concluded that CLT demonstrated higher communicative results, but with limited success when the teachers' preparation and institutional support was inadequate. Others, however, have upheld the ongoing importance of GTM by claiming that translation is still an effective cognitive tool for fostering metalinguistic knowledge and awareness. The views expressed here indicate that the synthetic approach and the approach based on the communicative perspective might be best combined for the overall achievement of complete linguistic competence.

❖ Research Gap

Although there are increasing numbers of publications on GTM and CLT, there are still large gaps. Most comparative studies have used quantitative designs while few in number are qualitative studies reflecting the qualitative perceptions of teachers and learners (Borg, 2015). Moreover, the Pakistani studies conducted so far have been mainly on cities like Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar while very less research has been done on the effectiveness of these methods in English language institutes of Islamabad. A direct qualitative comparison of GTM and CLT in the same institutional environment and population is also very scarce in the literature. The present study aims to fill these gaps by conducting a qualitative thematic analysis of the overall comparative effectiveness of GTM and CLT from the viewpoints of ESL teachers and learners in various English language institutes of Islamabad (Pakistan) from multiple perspectives such as grammatical development, communicative ability, learner motivation, classroom practicability, and long-term language use.

Methodology

❖ Research Design

This study is designed as a qualitative in nature to comparatively explore the success of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in ESL classrooms of various English language institutes of

Islamabad, Pakistan, from the perspective of ESL teachers and learners. This study calls for a qualitative method, as it would allow for an in- depth exploration of the participants' lived experiences, perceptions and opinions of the two teaching methods, and these cannot be fully expressed with numerical data alone (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Through purposive convenience sampling, 30 ESL teachers and learners will be asked to participate in the semi-structured interviews that will be used for data collection. This sampling approach guarantees that participants have firsthand and relevant knowledge of either GTM and/or CLT and therefore provide rich, context-specific and academically meaningful data (Patton, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the Communicative Competence Theory by Hymes (1972) and developed by Canale and Swain (1980) which outlines four aspects of communicative competence namely, grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence and sees that it is these four aspects that characterize the language user. This framework is one analytical lens in a multiple analytical lenses comparison. The evaluation of the overall effectiveness is not based only on communicative competence (the very theory that CLT was based on), but it is also based on the other dimensions: grammatical development, communicative ability, learner confidence and motivation, classroom practicality, and alignment with real world language requirements. This multi-dimensional balanced approach provides a fair and comprehensive comparison of both methods (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Nunan, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Data Analysis Approach

Thematic Analysis Model of Braun and Clarke (2006) will be used to analyze the data obtained from 30 semi-structured interviews. This model offers a systematic, rigorous 6 step procedure for identifying, analysing and report patterns and themes from qualitative data: familiarization with data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the three main analytical dimensions taken as an outcome of the research objectives are the overall effectiveness of GTM on ESL learners, overall effectiveness of CLT on ESL learners, and direct comparison of both methods in reference to ESL learner's grammatical development, communicative

ability, learner motivation, classroom practicality and long-term language use, in the context of English language institutes in Islamabad. This analytical method is used to ensure that the findings are systematically arranged, theoretically supported and relevant to the identified research questions.

Analysis

The thematic analysis of data gathered from 30 semi-structured interviews with ESL teachers and learners from various English language institutes of Islamabad, Pakistan is presented in this chapter. Participants ranged from current ESL teachers who have used GTM and CLT in their classrooms, to learners who have been taught using GTM and/or CLT. The data were read, coded, and sorted according to the six-step Thematic Analysis Model (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which involved careful reading of the data, followed by coding and organizing the data into themes that accurately represent real-life experiences, opinions, and frustrations of the participants towards GTM and CLT. In addition to the four components of Communicative Competence Theory (CCT) (grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence; Canale & Swain, 1980), other aspects of overall effectiveness such as learner motivation, classroom practicality, examination performance and long-term language use – are taken into account to ensure a balanced and complete comparison of both methods.

Thematic Overview

Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the 30 interviews, categorized on communicative competence components are summarized in the following table:

Communicative Competence Component	GTM; Emerging Theme	CLT; Emerging Theme
Grammatical Competence	Strong rule-based grammatical knowledge	Incidental grammar learning through communication
Sociolinguistic Competence	Limited contextual language use	Appropriate language use in social contexts
Discourse Competence	Sentence-level focus; weak	Coherent spoken and written

	text production	discourse development
Strategic Competence	Minimal use of communication strategies	Active use of strategies to maintain interaction

Theme One: GTM and Grammatical Competence

The ability of GTM to develop learners' grammatical competence was one of the most recurring and conspicuous themes in all of the interviews. It was clear from the teachers' comments that many of them had been using GTM for a number of years, and were confident of its value in providing students with a firm, systematic knowledge of English grammar. As one senior teacher of an Islamabad language institute explained, My students know where to use what verb, how to make a passive sentence, and which tense to use, as I explain everything in Urdu and then tell them the rules in English.

The view of explicit grammar instruction was also expressed by the teacher participants and is in line with the argument of Ellis (2006) that grammar instruction can be done explicitly to help learners to internalize the structural rules of the target language systematically and organized. Learners who participated in the study also recognized the clarity the GTM gave to them, especially in grammatical structures that were confusing for them in the English language. One learner remarked: Before I could not understand when I have to use 'has' or 'have' or 'had' with my Urdu teacher he explained me in Urdu with example and I understood it well.

The responses indicate that GTM can truly reduce the cognitive load of the learners during the initial stage of language learning, which positively affects the learners' ability to learn abstract grammatical concepts in the mother tongue. Across the interviews, however, a common point of interest was that this sound knowledge of the grammar did not seem to always lead to confident and spontaneous communication in the real world. It was reported that GTM taught students consistently have problems in using English language in real communication, although their language competence in formal test is acceptable.

Another aspect of this theme involved the concept of the translation as a cognitive link. Some of the teacher participants said that after introducing the grammatical

structures in Urdu equivalents, the learners could remember and produce the grammatical structures in written tests more accurately. One teacher who had twelve years of experience commented that the purpose of the translation exercises was not simply to practice translation, but was to help learners associate what they already knew, or had already acquired, to the related structures of the new target language. This is in line with Howatt and Widdowson (2004) who argued that translation demands metalinguistic awareness and provides conscious attention to the relationship between form and meaning in both languages.

Importantly, it also showed that there was a generational aspect to learners' appreciation of the grammatical emphasis of GTM. The older children and those who had joined language institutes after a considerable number of years of education in Urdu-medium secondary schools tended to express greater appreciation of the systematic approach of GTM as they felt the knowledge and predictability of explanation through grammar rules were the necessary precondition to build confidence. In comparison, younger learners were more likely to complain about the slow pace and lack of active learning in GTM teaching, indicating that prior educational experiences and learner characteristics influence the effectiveness of competence development in grammar. This discovery highlights the significance of context sensitivity in teacher decision-making and suggests that teachers need to be attentive to the kinds of learner profiles in their classrooms (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

A culture of examinations became a salient structural feature in the culture of secondary education in Pakistan, and this feature was seen as a strong reason for the continued dominance of the GTM in the data. A number of the teacher participants noted that the institutional managers and sometimes even their own parents of learners explicitly asked them to teach grammar since they believed it was related to the exam preparation and measurable academic performance. This outside pressure put teachers in a dilemma: if they personally recognized GTM's communicative weaknesses, they struggled with the idea of moving away from GTM without encountering negative feedback from administrators and parents. The frustration of one teacher was evident: "I know what better teaching looks like; I have done the reading, but my school is judged by examination results, and parents want their children to pass – until the examination changes my teaching cannot change the whole thing." This testimony highlights the institutionalization of GTM in education in Pakistan not only because of tradition but because of the system of

incentives that actively promotes the status quo in the practice of education (Haidar, 2019).

Theme Two: GTM and Communicative Limitations

The communicative frustration was not only deeply felt but also emotionally resonating and was consistently manifested across learner interviews. A strong, emotionally engaging theme of communicative frustration arose in the learner interviews in particular, alongside the wide agreement about the structural benefits that GTM provided. The majority of learners who received instruction mainly from GTM reported that they suffered from a sore spot between their knowledge of English grammar and their proficiency in the use of the language in real-world contexts. One learner had expressed this frustration in a very vivid way:

I have studied English for 6 years, I know all the tenses, all the rules, but when someone starts talking to me with English at work, I don't know what to say, I don't remember, my mind goes blank.

This experience, stated in strikingly similar terms by several learner-participants, is essentially the sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence deficits associated with the Communicative Competence Theory, which it asserts are essential for effective use of language in the real world (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980). GTM's decontextualized, translation oriented approach creates little opportunities for learners to become communicatively competent in the use of language in authentic social contexts, thus little opportunities for them to become communicatively competent for the communicative demands of their professional and academic life. This limitation was also noted by the teacher participants, even those who remained GTM favorites. One skilled teacher spoke candidly:

I know that GTM had its shortcomings but when I asked my students to have a simple conversation with each other in English, most of them were not able to do it. They know what is in their heads but they can't get it out when they're speaking.

The reflections of teachers and learners are similar to those of Haidar (2019) who stated that one of the main reasons behind the communicative weaknesses of Pakistani learners is the lack of communicative practice in their L2 learning

environment (GTM). Ali (2015) also pointed out that the learners produced by GTM are grammatically well-informed but lack in communicative competence.

During the interviews, further probing was performed to find that learners' communicative paralysis was not only a problem of linguistic incompetence, but also affected by the aspects of affect, identity, and social anxiety. A few learners expressed increased pressure to be judged when speaking English in public or professional contexts, a pressure that was not met by GTM classrooms because there was little practice and evaluation of oral production. One learner, who had studied English for undergraduate work using much of the GTM, reported that: "No teacher ever asked me to converse in English; we read and translated and wrote and read and translated and wrote, but never had a conversation in English. So when I had to speak English at a job interview I had no idea what to say." This testimony is an example of the lack of sociolinguistic competence that is a result of GTM; the learners are never exposed to the pragmatic and situational dimension of language use that will contribute to communicative success in real-world situations (Hymes, 1972).

Teacher participants who had experienced this communicative paralysis for long periods of time provided a particularly self-critical and honest analysis of the systemic shortcomings of GTM. One teacher who had used GTM for more than 10 years admitted that although she had achieved good examination outcomes continually, she had started to wonder whether her teaching was actually helping pupils to live their lives outside the classroom. She explained: "My students do really well on the written exams, but when they go to work, they call me to say, 'I can't communicate in an English meeting or presentation, what were you doing here? What were you not doing here? The following self-reflective testimony, which is in keeping with Nawab's (2012) statement that GTM is not a method for functional language, points to the fact that at least some GTM practitioners are conscious of the communicative inadequacies of GTM and are starting to question the long-term viability of using it as the only pedagogical technique.

Theme Three: CLT and Communicative Competence Development

The interviews with participants from institutes using CLT showed a very different picture from GTM, with a generally more positive picture of language learning experiences. The teachers who employed CLT described their classrooms as

communicatively alive, with students constantly encouraged to speak and negotiate meaning, and to use English for real purpose, rather than just studying structural characteristics of the language. “My teaching experience was really positive,” explained one CLT educator enthusiastically, “My classroom is noisy, but it's good noise, students are talking, debating, asking questions, telling stories, they make mistakes, yes, but they are using English, they are living in the language, and little by little, mistakes diminish and confidence increases each week.”

This description follows the spirit of CLT as explained by Nunan (2004) who claimed that the powerful motivators of the development of communicative competence are meaningful interaction and authentic language use. The learner participants at CLT based institutes also shared similar experiences of confidence and communication skills changes in English. One learner shared:

After three months I realized that I was starting to talk without worrying about grammar in the first place. My teacher would keep encouraging us and making it an activity for us to talk to one another so I didn't have to be afraid of everyone laughing at my errors.

This account is an effective demonstration of the development of strategic competence, which is the ability to communicate adaptively and fluently in real interaction, a key focus of CLT's attention and work (Canale & Swain, 1980; Richards, 2006). The data also showed that CLT learners had better discourse competence, that is, they had more coherent and longer spoken and written texts than their GTM-trained peers, which indicated that the learners who were taught by CLT showed better improvement in their speaking fluency and confidence after learning with CLT compared with the other groups.

The sociolinguistic competence increases that were noted in the CLT classrooms were of special interest. The authors found that learners' growing awareness of register, tone, and social appropriateness of language choices in various communicative situations almost did not exist in accounts of the GTM-taught counterparts. For one learner, role-plays in her CLT class taught her “how to adapt the language according to the interlocutor; that English is not the same in all situations.” This is a direct reflection of the sociolinguistic dimension of Canale and Swain (1980) communicative competence model that focuses on the learners'

competency to use language appropriately in real-life situations and not just grammatically in isolation.

The teacher participants in the institutes with CLT also commented on the changes in students' discourse competence that they observed during a semester. Some teachers reported that those students who started the term with disconnected and disjointed utterances made the transition to longer, well-structured turns in conversation and longer, well-structured paragraphs in writing.

One teacher, who had used both GTM and CLT at various stages of her career, made a direct comparison: "I think with GTM my students always wrote grammatically correct sentences, but they couldn't write them into a good paragraph with a neat argument. With CLT, the sentences are much more likely to have more errors, but they have structure, they have flow, they have a point they are making, they are developing. That is what academic English requires." This practitioner's reflective comment is especially informative and convincing of CLT's comparative advantage in building the component of communicative competence known as discourse competence (Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2006).

Another factor that became clear from the interviews was the motivational effect that CLT has on students, which has been given relatively little attention in the literature of ELT in Pakistan. Students from CLT-based institutes repeatedly reported that their intrinsic motivation to learn English had grown as a result of personally relevant learning activities, intellectually stimulating learning activities, and practical application of learning activities to their lives outside of class. One learner who had very previously lost interest in learning English after many years of being taught with GTM reported that her experience of CLT was a turning point because for the first time in her years of study, she was using English to communicate about issues that genuinely interested her, rather than being a subject that required passing. This account aligns with the research of Nunan (2004), who has documented the positive relationship between communicative, meaning-focused instruction and improved learner motivation, but also points to the possibility that CLT can have a positive effect beyond measurable gains in competence, towards the development of positive language-learning identities and a continued motivation to engage with the target language over time.

Theme Four: Challenges in CLT Implementation

While the overall messages from the communicative outcomes of CLT were overwhelmingly positive, a clear and nuanced theme of implementation challenges was identified across the teacher interviews. Many teachers expressed a keen interest in CLT, but there was often a clear recognition of the substantial structural and contextual disadvantages in implementing CLT effectively in English language institutes in Islamabad. One teacher made this conflict very explicit:

I believe in CLT; I know it works; but with 40 students in one room, and the end of year test only on grammar and translations ammm, what can one do? I should have to get ready for the exam first, and then to go on to CLT, which is a luxury I don't always have.

This pedagogical contradiction and institutional reality is one of the most telling results of this study and has been reported in the literature broadly in regard to ELT in Pakistan. Nawab (2012) reported that some teachers in Pakistan, who have committed to CLT, return to GTM because of the pressure of examinations and institutional constraints, and it is underscored that CLT can work effectively only if well-instrumentalized and teacher equipped, and if accompanied by suitable class size. Other teacher participants also spontaneously acknowledged their own CLT training needs, one of which confessed:

I've been to one workshop on CLT three years ago, that's all I've received in my training, I do my best but not always sure that I'm doing it right; we need more frequent professional development around that.

These candid and introspective answers reveal that the difficulties of CLT implementation do not stem only from methodologies but also from a structural perspective, extending to examination systems, institutional policies, teacher education programs, and the availability of resources – all of which need to be addressed if CLT is to be potentially successful in the Pakistani ELT environment.

The second sub-theme that came out of the implementation challenges in the context of CLT was the sociocultural aspect of implementing CLT, which has been little discussed in the current literature on ELT in Pakistan. Some of the participatory and interactive activities that mark CLT classrooms, such as

spontaneous discussions, discussions in pairs and sometimes in role plays, caused some of the learner participants to feel discomfort or even transgressive in the face of questions from their conservative family backgrounds or from the small towns on the outskirts of Islamabad. One learner said: "It is not something I'm used to in my house, talking loud in a group of people, particularly mixed groups of boys and girls. The topic was not a problem for me, but the social situation was." This testimony highlights the need to be culturally responsive in CLT implementation and implies that CLT facilitators in Pakistani situations need to become sensitised to the sociocultural realities of learners and design communicative activities that are pedagogically effective and culturally sensitive (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Another factor that compounded the challenges of CLT delivery was institutional resource limitations. Teachers stated that there was a constant dearth of authentic materials including audio visual resources, graded readers and real world communicative tasks, which would enable them to conduct real communicative activities instead of simulated ones. When such resources were not available, CLT teachers often shared examples of using locally available materials and/or conversational activities, which are communicatively oriented, but lacked in the authenticity and richness that the method ideally would be (Nunan, 2004). While this improvisation is laudable as a professional response, it also added to the variability in the quality of CLT instruction in different institutes, highlighting the issues of scalability and standardization of CLT delivery in the Pakistani context of English language teaching. All of these challenges point to a significant mismatch between the aspirations of CLT and its implementation in language institutes of Islamabad and call for systemic action, not the action of individual teachers.

Another implementation-related issue that has arisen from the data is the issue of assessment misalignment. In schools where CLT was declared to be the pedagogical paradigm, the assessment at the end of the term was often grammatically and translation focused, as it had been in the past or as required by an examining board. This phenomenon resulted in a situation where students who had been instructed using communicative tasks were assessed on accuracy of grammar and written translation, skills they had worked on less in CLT. Some students referred to the anxiety they felt they had to "switch modes" between their English and their CLT classroom work, and said that in the lead-up to their exams several students went back to rote-learning grammar rules. The finding is relevant to the need for changing the assessment systems as a precondition for true CLT adoption and

supports Khan et al. (2016) observation that examination systems are a force that many times dictates pedagogical practices in Pakistani ELT classrooms which supersedes official curriculum guidelines.

Comparative Analysis of GTM and CLT

The comparative analysis brings together the themes that emerged from the 30 interviews to produce a clear, consistent and nuanced picture of the communicative competence of the ESL learners' in the English language institutes of Islamabad, Pakistan, as a result of being influenced by both GTM and CLT. GTM is structurally stable and pedagogically familiar; it provides a clear, consistent and systematic understanding of grammatical structure that is useful for learners in formal assessment settings. In all cases, however, it proves less effective in fostering the three components of communicative competence — sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic — that are crucial for the use of English in real life contexts, as identified by the participants themselves as the most relevant for their academic and professional lives.

CLT, however, arises from the data as the method that produces more confident, fluent, and adaptable language users who can interact meaningfully with English in a diverse range of authentic settings. However, in practice, its adoption is always limited by the present situation of the Pakistani educational system, which involves pressure on examination, lack of skilled teachers, and high pupil to teacher ratio. As one of the thoughtful and experienced teachers summarized at the end of her interview:

Both GTM and CLT have something to offer students, the bones, the structure, the rules, and the muscles, the ability to move and use those rules in real life.

This insight, from a participant who has taught for more than fifteen years, is a key finding of this study, and is echoed in Larsen-Freeman's (2000) call for flexible, context-sensitive language teaching that relies on the strengths of several language teaching methods instead of sticking to a single pedagogical model.

A comparative analysis of the participants' reflections also found differences in alignment to the motivation orientations of the learners in the two methods. Those who were instrumentally motivated (students who want to learn English to pass

exams or go on to further education) were more likely to prefer GTM's clear rules, predictability and explicit instruction with regard to exam formats. In contrast, the learners with integrative or professional motivations (those who wanted to use English in their work, travel abroad, or read and watch English language media) showed a remarkably positive attitude towards CLT's communicative orientation and the development of the kind of language competence they wanted in their lives. This motivational aspect further complicates the comparative assessment and therefore it is important to consider this aspect of the perceived effectiveness of GTM and CLT in terms of the wider goals and aspirations of learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Comparative analysis also showed that a binary comparison between GTM and CLT, although useful for analysis, does not provide a complete picture of the instructional reality of most language classrooms in Islamabad. Some of the more able teachers mentioned that they naturally integrated aspects of the two in their classroom practice, that is, by integrating grammar explanation and translation during the teaching of new structures and then communicative exercises to practice and consolidate these structures. Larsen-Freeman (2000) argues that this pedagogical hybridity, known as principled eclecticism – represented the way teachers react intuitively to the needs of a variety of heterogeneous groups. The findings of this study indicate that the distinction between GTM and CLT is more of a theoretical than practical difference, as teachers have found this blended approach to be effective in their classrooms, and future studies could examine ways to strategically combine the two, as well as how these combinations can be developed, deployed, and assessed in the context of the Pakistani ELT context.

Comparative analysis also highlighted the important difference between the short- and the long- term language needs of learners, addressed by GTM and CLT, respectively. In the short term, GTM was found to be an effective tool to meet assessment needs, enabling the acquisition of the grammar needed to achieve satisfactory performance on standardized tests and formal assessments within a predictable timeframe. In contrast, CLT was identified as more effective in meeting learners' communicative and/or professional goals across the long term; in developing language skills that are flexible and adaptive to English in real-life academic, job, and social contexts outside of the classroom. This temporal aspect of the GTM/CLT comparison suggests that perhaps the two approaches are not alternatives but rather complementary ways to provide a structural base in the early

stages of the L2 learning process and a communicative approach in later stages when further opportunities for real-world communication have emerged (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Larsen- Freeman, 2000).

Findings

Thirty semi structured interviews of ESL teachers and learners of English language institutes in Islamabad revealed six main findings which combined addressed the comparative effectiveness of developing communicative competence through the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The most consistent results are that GTM demonstrates good ability to develop grammatical competence, which allows students to systematically know the structure of English, and to perform well on standard tests of grammatical competence, but it does not develop the competence of the learner in the social, discourse, and strategic aspects of language use that are required for the real world. The data from GTM taught learners all described a communicative block in which they had not been able to speak English spontaneously after years of formal instruction, attributed to GTM's passive pedagogical model that does not provide any opportunities for meaning negotiation, spoken interaction or using English in appropriate contexts.

The second discovery is that CLT, when successful, brings development in all four facets of communicative competence as outlined by Canale and Swain (1980). CLT learners showed greater confidence and fluency in spoken English, enhanced awareness of the register and social appropriateness of their language, longer, more coherent written and spoken discourse, and a repertoire of communicative strategies for dealing with real-time interaction. Learners also noted that they felt their motivation was higher within the CLT, and that their activities were personally relevant and practically meaningful, which is not often captured in GTM instruction. This discovery is a confirmation of CLT's holistic superiority in building the kind of English that is increasingly being required in the professional and academic life in Pakistan.

The third conclusion, however, confirms that CLT's communicative benefits are significantly limited by the severe structural barriers which are endemic to the Pakistani ELT context. All of these factors, taken together, hinder the implementation of what CLT can achieve in practice: systems that persist in

evaluating grammar without considering communicative performance, poor pre-service and in-service teacher training, the large class sizes, lack of authentic materials, and the lack of alignment between CLT pedagogy and summative assessment formats. These barriers are institutional and systemic, and can't be overcome simply by teacher enthusiasm alone.

The fourth finding from the comparative text analysis is that the use of either GTM or CLT is not sufficient as a pedagogical response to the needs of learners. Experienced teachers in all the data had already developed their own independent and intuitive GTM/CLT integration between the structural clarity in introducing new grammatical forms and the communicative practice and authentic interaction in CLT. This principled eclecticism (explicitly related to a Presentation– Practice– Production approach) was always correlated with the best learner outcomes and is the most pedagogically sound and contextually viable route for ELL in Pakistan.

The fifth finding is that learner motivation, identity and sociocultural background emerge as an important intermediate variable in most comparative studies that has not received enough attention: Learner motivation, identity and sociocultural background have a significant impact on the perceived and actual performance of the two approaches. The GTM was more beneficial for instrumentally motivated learners who were aiming at examination success, while CLT was more beneficial for interactively motivated learners or professional motivation. Learners with more conservative sociocultural backgrounds expressed unease with CLT's interactive norms and emphasized the need to design classrooms that are culturally responsive. As the data demonstrate, the effectiveness of any method always depends on the context, and what is effective in one context may not be effective in another. What is effective in one context, as the data indicate, is not necessarily effective in another, and effectiveness always has to be assessed in relation to who is being taught what, for what purpose, and within which sociocultural context.

The sixth and final finding is that teacher cognition and access to quality teacher professional development are critical to both GTM and CLT effectiveness. Teachers who had substantive training in the facilitation of CLT, task design and communicative error correction did significantly better than those teachers who tried to use CLT with little or no preparation. The existing pre- service teacher education system in Pakistan fails to equip teachers with adequate hands on experience in CLT delivery, resulting in poor quality and non-scalable delivery.

Rather than treat sustainable, practice-based professional development as an add-on or as something that occurs once a year or even once a month, it is a prerequisite in order to enhance ELT outcomes in Islamabad's language institutes and beyond.

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Correspondence:

Nimra Gull Naz

nimragullnaz@gamil.com
