



Research Analysis of Teaching Methodology Employed in Pakistani Public Sector Schools

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Abstract

The paper examines the role of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in English classrooms in Pakistani Public Sector Schools, by analyzing the aims and objectives of the English Secondary Stage books 1 and 2, as allocated by the Sindh Textbook Board, and examining whether students can fulfill these aims and reach the language objectives as mentioned in the syllabus. The research study that has been conducted consisted of a sample group comprising of a total of 33 students. Out of these, 15 students belonged to the Matric level (Grade X) while the remaining 18 were from Grade IX, and they all belonged to a Welfare Organization known as The Justuju School. To measure the students' comprehension skills, they were given a text to read, followed by a set of questions that included both open-ended and multiple-choice questions. In addition to this, two English textbooks were analyzed as part of the study to determine whether the objectives of the curriculum were being successfully fulfilled or not. The study aimed at examining the effectiveness of the curriculum and identifying any areas that require improvement to enhance the students' overall learning experience and comprehension skills.

Keywords: Matriculation, GTM Method, Teaching Methods, Objectives.



Introduction

In Pakistan, English is spoken and used as a co-official language with Urdu in the domains of media, research, judiciary, commerce, and more specifically, education (Manan, Dumanig, & David, 2017). English is privileged to be taught as a second language in Pakistan, not as a foreign language. Furthermore, English is used as a medium of teaching in elite institutions, with Urdu as a medium for teaching in a minority of government schools.

Education testing systems in Pakistan are of two types; Matriculation or 'Matric' which is carried out by the Board of Secondary Education, and O-levels, as supervised by Cambridge University. This paper focuses on the former testing system. The matriculation system gives precedence to local languages, such as Sindhi under the Sindh Education Board, while developing English as a second language to allow the students to communicate effectively. Students at the matric level can choose from different avenues such as Arts, Commerce, and Science. The students are provided with a platform to build a strong base of knowledge that can be further developed after. The certificate provided at the completion of the exams is officially recognized, which is essential for students who seek higher education or employment. The Matriculation system seems to limit the students to topics that are more often than not repeated in the exams and encourage students to rote-learn, rather than understand the text and produce their interpretations and ideas (Mukhtar, Sahito, & Siddiqui 2021). This paper aims to further analyze such shortcomings, by examining the curriculum and syllabus set by the Matriculation system, and inspecting if students are able to meet the language learning objectives mentioned in the textbooks.

This paper also takes the teaching methods employed in English classrooms in Pakistani schools into consideration and investigates whether these methods are successful in creating a student body that is able to communicate fluently in English and is capable of meeting the objectives of English Language Learning as documented in the Matric English textbooks.

Literature Review

Although English is the co-official language of Pakistan and is taught as a compulsory subject in every school, many students still struggle with different aspects of language use such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, pronunciation, and so on. This can be due to several reasons, such as the teaching methods employed by the instructor. According to a study carried out to



survey challenges faced by students in district Kohat, the findings demonstrated that matric level students not being confident in their English language skills is linked to the fact that there is a lack of focus on improving speaking and reading skills, which further leads to the students feeling demotivated to learn English (Gul & Ali, 2022).

A study on the role of teachers and other language instructors highlights how some students are reluctant to participate in English-speaking activities in classrooms, and subsequently, their interest in learning the language wanes. The study discusses how this is due to factors such as lack of proper guidance, the influence of the mother tongue, old teaching methods, and so on (Younas, Noor, & Khalid, 2020).

The results of a study exploring the barriers faced by students of intermediate level in the Bahawalpur district of Pakistan demonstrate how students, even after completing their education, experience a lack of confidence when communicating in English. Even though these students achieved good marks in their English tests carried out in school, they are not able to develop proper communication and language proficiency skills (Lodhi & Akash, 2019).

An analysis of self-esteem as a factor that limits English language proficiency also provides a helpful insight into understanding why students are not able to improve their language skills despite studying English as a compulsory subject. The study provides an insight into how students can improve greatly if auditory materials are used in class, such as watching videos or movies as these can help in improving pronunciation and vocabulary. The study also encourages teachers to engage the students in conversations with fellow students to improve their self-esteem when it comes to speaking English (Haider & Sharjeel, 2020).

Teachers play an essential role in determining students' futures. A study on the correlation between teachers' behaviors and students' achievements presented the conclusion that students' academic and language proficiency objectives can be fulfilled easily if the teacher creates a positive environment in class, improves their method of instruction, and provides structured and consistent lessons (Bibi & Afzal, 2021).

To improve the process of English learning in classrooms, it has been proven that interactive learning methods, such as role-playing and discussion by students are crucial to reduce the level of communication and comprehension failures in classrooms. Students should be engaged in



different ways in an English class, as improvement of English skills can only occur if the student is involved. (Rybchynska, A. 2023).

A study exploring the weaknesses of the GTM teaching method, the most widely used method in English classrooms throughout Pakistan, concluded that the DM (Direct Method) teaching method was more suitable for teaching foreign languages as it involves communicating in the target language, rather than the native language, which improves fluency and communication skills in the target language. On the other hand, even though most Pakistani teachers prefer the GTM method since students are more motivated when learning in their mother tongue, the target language is not focused on as much, as it involves the translation of the native language into the target language (Abbas & Asghar, 2022).

Teacher-centered classrooms, as pointed out by a study exploring the English language learning-teaching process at the intermediate level, do not give students any opportunities to practice English by themselves. Most of the talking is done by the teacher, with the students only being engaged with writing and reading in their textbooks. Students are not able to participate in classroom activities, as they were afraid of making mistakes. This study shows the shortcomings of teacher-centered classrooms, as such methodologies are unable to create an engaging and interactive environment for the students, (Khan & Khan, 2020).

A study exploring teachers' perceptions of the Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT) concluded that the education system in Pakistan needs to implement new and developed methodologies, along with the necessary materials, to be able to witness improvement in language learning classrooms. Furthermore, students showed more interest in the lesson as they were more involved and encouraged to be creative (Shahzad & Sibtain, 2019).

Another paper highlighted the importance of interactive learning methods in learning English at school. This examination of interactive methods showed that the use of engaging activities such as role-playing, games, discussions, and so on was necessary to improve communication skills (Rybchynska, 2023).

There is a myriad of reasons why students are, at times, not able to meet the given objectives or goals when it comes to English classrooms. Keeping the mentioned studies in mind, it is important to evaluate the different situations and reasons that lead to such shortcomings to overcome them



by providing better tools and lesson plans and improving teaching methodologies, so that students can develop their English language skills and compete on an international level.

GTM Teaching Method

Grammar Translation Method is a language teaching method that is commonly used in Public Sector Schools in Pakistan. This method emphasizes the teaching of grammar and literature through the translation of the text from the targeted language to the native language to help the students understand the text better. As indicated by a study carried out to determine the effectiveness of the GTM method in teaching English Language at the Intermediate level, it was concluded that students were easily able to understand the concepts, and were comfortable in communicating with their teachers and peers in both target and native languages. This was especially true for students who came from underprivileged backgrounds (Khan & Manzoor, 2016).

While this teaching method has a few advantages, such as its emphasis on vocabulary and grammatical rules, development of analytical skills, cultural exposure, translation skills, and so on, it also has its fair share of criticisms. One such critique is that this language teaching method causes the student to become dependent on the teacher in terms of reading and understanding a text in English. In a Pakistani setting, the students will depend on the teacher to translate the text into Urdu, for example, to comprehend the text. This creates a hindrance in the improvement of the students' speaking skills, even if their vocabulary improves. Because the emphasis is placed on translating English into Urdu for easier understanding, students are not able to develop the skills of thinking in English, as the emphasis is put on Urdu instead, and therefore, students are more preoccupied with translating, rather than acquiring proper English reading and writing skills (Gupta, 2023). Another study underlined that the GTM method does not emphasize on pronunciation and also limits interactions between other students. Another important thing to note is that the GTM method puts the teacher in an authoritative role, as they will correct the students' mistakes directly. This method may demotivate students to participate in class, as their confidence in the ability to speak in class may be affected (Nisha, 2024).

Stated Objectives of the Textbooks

The learning objectives outlined in the Secondary Stage English textbook (for Grades IX and X) for the Comprehension texts are as follows:



- ⇒ Use pre-reading strategies to predict the content of the text from topic/picture, title/headings, keywords and visuals, etc. by using prior knowledge, asking questions, and using contextual clues
- ⇒ Skim texts to
 - Have a general idea of the text
 - Infer themes/ main ideas
- ⇒ Read silently to find the main idea and supporting details and to interact with the text
- ⇒ Make simple inferences using the context of the text and prior knowledge
- ⇒ Deduce meanings of difficult words from context
- ⇒ Organize information using various organizational patterns: compare and contrast, and cause and effect
- ⇒ Apply critical thinking to answer short questions, and MCQs, and find out the meanings of the given words.

Source: Class X English Book Notes (Sindh Textbook) Karachi Board.

Research Question

Does the GTM teaching method allow students to develop adequate English language skills?

Research Objectives

The paper aims to examine the teaching method of GTM in the Public Sector Schools of Pakistan and survey whether this method is achieving the English Language learning objectives, as mentioned in the Matric textbooks.

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach was the most appropriate method for this research. 18 Students from Grade IX, as well as 15 students from Grade X, were interviewed and given a short test to examine their comprehension skills. The comprehension text 'Health Issues Caused by Mosquitos' was allocated to Grade X, and the text 'Safety Measures That Can Save Your Life' was given to Grade X. The students were given forty minutes (duration of one class period) to read the text and complete the post-reading exercises, which included questions and a few MCQs.

Research Findings

The findings revealed that the majority of the students from both Grades requested more time to complete the answers, even though the questions were very basic and required answers of only two to three lines. In grade X, 4 out of 15 students (27%) were not able to answer the word-



meanings exercise (Ex. 2 & 3, pg. 167), while 6 out of 15 students (40%) were not able to answer the questions given without help from the teacher. It is important to note that 9 out of 15 students (60%) requested the teacher to read the questions out loud and translate them into Urdu, after which they wrote their answers.

In Grade IX, 11 out of 18 students (61%) requested the teacher to explain words such as ‘antibodies’, ‘stagnant’, ‘nausea’, and others. 12 out of 18 students (67%) were not able to answer the questions and asked the teacher to translate the questions into Urdu before attempting them. There were more MCQs in this text, and 11 out of 18 (61%) students were able to answer them without help, while 6 students needed assistance from the teacher. Furthermore, both grades requested the teacher to read the text out loud for them, and also discuss it in Urdu.

Analysis of findings

Following the findings, it is determined that the English language skills of these students of Grades IX and X studying under the Matriculation system were badly affected by the poor teaching methodology. As a result, the majority of the students failed to comprehend the test paper and needed assistance from the teacher at every turn. It adds further proof to the idea that the employed method (GTM) hinders in comprehension and written aspects of learning English for these students, making them dependent on the teacher more often (Bibi & Afzal, 2021). This methodology also halted their verbal communication, as often they asked the teacher to translate English words into Urdu. Even words such as ‘transmitted’, ‘transfusion’, and ‘immune’, were incomprehensible for these students.

Discussion and Conclusion

Keeping the findings in mind, it can be suggested that to develop students’ English comprehension skills, the teaching methodology must be up to the required standard. As the findings reflect the limitations of the GTM method as discussed in numerous studies, the teachers should employ interactive approaches through student-centered classroom models, to make them self-directed learners, as interactive methods promote proficiency in English, emphasize the importance of classroom interactions and encourage the students to participate actively in class (Tasheva, N. 2024). Interactive teaching methods are essential in English learning classrooms as they optimize the learning process, and increase motivation and



efficiency in students in terms of English language communication skills. The students are more confident in their speaking skills and are able to overcome the barrier between studying the language and practically applying it in their day-to-day lives (Lytnyova, 2021).

As highlighted by a study on the impact of student-centered instruction on EFL learners' achievements, EFL students showed improvement in student-centered classrooms, as this type of learning improved students' participation in classes, and made learning English a more engaging and collaborative task (Kassem, 2019). Similarly, another study emphasized that student-centered classes encourage collective learning, and enhance reflective and critical thinking skills (Serin, 2018).

One example of an interactive teaching method is the Collaborative Learning Technique, which has been shown to enhance English language proficiency, as it promotes interactions with fellow students and group learning, increasing interactions and engagement in class. A study examining the effects of collaborative learning emphasized that this method is a more interesting method for teaching and learning English as compared to other, more traditional methods such as GTM, and that teachers should consider implementing CL techniques in English classrooms to improve students' English reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills (Khalil & Hussain, 2021).

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