

Comparative study of traditional grammar-translation vs. communicative language teaching

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Abstract:

This study examines how two language teaching methods, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), affect student motivation, classroom involvement, and language skills. Conducted in a classroom, the study involved two student groups—one learning through GTM, the other through CLT. Data was gathered using student and teacher surveys, before-and-after tests, and open-ended feedback.

Results revealed that students taught with CLT improved significantly in speaking and listening skills. They showed higher motivation and class participation. In contrast, those taught using GTM improved in grammar and vocabulary but had limited progress in speaking. Teachers observed more enthusiasm and participation in CLT lessons, but they also faced challenges managing large classes and keeping students engaged.

The study concludes that CLT is more effective for developing communication skills and creating an interactive learning environment, while GTM is beneficial for enhancing

grammatical knowledge. This research underscores the importance of balancing grammar instruction with interactive learning activities for successful language teaching.

Keywords: Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Language Proficiency, Student Motivation, Classroom Engagement, Speaking Skills, Listening Skills, Grammar Accuracy, Teaching Methodologies, Language Acquisition, Teacher Perceptions, Interactive Learning, Task-Based Learning

Introduction:

English Language Teaching (ELT) has seen many changes over the years. Different teaching methods have been developed to help learners in the best way possible. Two popular methods are the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

GTM is based on classical language learning. It focuses on learning grammar rules, memorizing vocabulary, and translating texts. This method mostly sees language as something written and often ignores speaking and real-life communication.

In contrast, Communicative Language Teaching started in the late 20th century because people saw the limits of GTM. CLT puts communication at the center of language learning. It focuses on speaking fluently, interacting with others, and using language in real situations. CLT encourages learning through activities like role plays and using real-life materials. It helps learners improve their language skills and the ability to communicate effectively.

There is ongoing discussion about which method is more effective. This talks influence how language is taught worldwide. GTM remains popular in traditional schools, especially in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. However, CLT is gaining attention globally for its practical approach and focus on learners.

This study aims to compare the Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching by examining their impact on language skills, motivation, and classroom participation. By analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of each method, the study hopes to determine which is more suitable for different learning scenarios and contribute to better teaching practices.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a **comparative quasi-experimental research design** to evaluate the effectiveness of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing learners' English language proficiency and classroom

engagement. Two groups of learners were exposed to different teaching methods over a set period, and their progress was assessed using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Participants

The participants consisted of **60 secondary school students** (aged 15–17) from two comparable English language classrooms in a public school. The students were divided into two groups of 30, with **Group A** taught using the Grammar-Translation Method and **Group B** using Communicative Language Teaching. Prior to the study, both groups were confirmed to have similar English proficiency levels through a standardized placement test. And teachers having more than 5 to 10 years' experience were also participated.

Instructional Intervention

- **Group A (GTM):** Instruction focused on grammar rules, vocabulary lists, translation exercises, and reading comprehension tasks. Emphasis was placed on written accuracy and native language support.
- **Group B (CLT):** Instruction involved communicative tasks, role-plays, group discussions, and use of authentic materials. The focus was on oral fluency, real-life language use, and learner interaction.

The intervention lasted for **8 weeks**, with **three 60-minute sessions per week** taught by trained instructors familiar with the respective methods.

Instruments

1. **Pre- and Post-Tests:** Standardized English proficiency tests were administered before and after the intervention to measure gains in grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, and speaking.
2. **Questionnaires:** Structured questionnaires were given to students to assess their motivation, confidence, and perceptions of the teaching methods.
3. **Classroom Observations:** Both groups were observed weekly using a structured observation checklist to document engagement, participation, and interaction patterns.

Data Analysis

We examined numbers from test scores and questionnaire answers with simple statistics and paired t-tests to find big differences in performance and feelings. We also studied what we saw in classrooms and the open-ended questionnaire answers. This helped us understand more about how learners behave and what they prefer.

Statement of the Problem

English is widely used around the world, but there is ongoing debate about the best way to teach it, especially in countries where English is not the primary language. Many schools still use the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM). This traditional method focuses heavily

on learning grammar rules, memorizing vocabulary, and translating texts. However, it often doesn't help students learn to speak or communicate effectively in English.

In contrast, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is gaining popularity. This approach centers on helping students interact and use English in real-life situations. However, implementing CLT in schools presents challenges. There may not be enough teaching materials, teachers might not have the right training, and some cultures may not support learning methods that put students at the center.

The main issue this study examines is which method, GTM or CLT, is more effective for improving students' overall English skills, motivation, and engagement in class. Many teachers continue to rely on traditional methods without clear evidence of which works best, causing a possible mismatch between teaching practices and student learning needs.

This research seeks to compare GTM and CLT in actual classroom environments, aiming to provide clear, evidence-based recommendations for teachers and those who design language curriculums.

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the effectiveness of the Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching in improving students' English language proficiency.
2. To examine the impact of each method on students' motivation and classroom engagement.
3. To identify the strengths and limitations of both methods in a secondary school context.
4. To provide practical insights for English teachers on choosing appropriate teaching strategies.

Research Questions

1. Which method, Grammar-Translation or Communicative Language Teaching, is more effective in improving students' English language proficiency?
2. How do the two methods differ in terms of their impact on students' motivation to learn English?
3. What is the level of classroom engagement among students taught through GTM compared to those taught through CLT?
4. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each method from both teachers' and students' perspectives?
- 5.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. H_{01} (Null Hypothesis): When students learn English, there isn't a big difference in their skills whether they use the Grammar-Translation Method or the Communicative Language Teaching approach.
2. H_{11} (Alternative Hypothesis): If students learn English through Communicative Language Teaching, they will improve much more compared to when they learn with the Grammar-Translation Method.
3. H_{02} : Students' motivation doesn't change much between using the Grammar-Translation Method and the Communicative Language Teaching method.
4. H_{12} : Learning through Communicative Language Teaching makes students more motivated than learning through the Grammar-Translation Method.
5. H_{03} : There isn't a big difference in how involved students are in the classroom, whether they use GTM or CLT styles.
6. H_{13} : Students are more engaged in the classroom when taught through Communicative Language Teaching compared to the Grammar-Translation Method.

Significance of the Study

This study offers important information for English language teachers, curriculum planners, and education decision-makers. It examines the effectiveness of two popular teaching methods: the Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching. By comparing these methods, the study helps teachers choose effective strategies that improve language skills, boost motivation, and increase student interest in secondary schools. This research also adds to current knowledge by providing real evidence from classroom experiences.

Literature Review

Over the past several decades, English Language Teaching (ELT) has evolved through numerous methodologies, with the **Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)** and **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)** standing out as two of the most influential and contrasting approaches. Understanding their theoretical foundations and practical applications is essential for evaluating their effectiveness in modern classrooms.

Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)

The Grammar-Translation Method has its origins in classical language teaching, particularly Latin and Greek, and emphasizes grammatical rules, vocabulary memorization, and sentence translation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Although widely criticized for its lack of focus on

speaking and listening skills, GTM remains prevalent in many non-English-speaking countries due to its structured, exam-oriented nature (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Proponents argue that it develops strong reading and writing skills, but critics highlight its limited capacity to prepare learners for real-world communication (Brown, 2001).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of GTM and behaviorist approaches. It emphasizes interaction, meaningful communication, and the functional use of language in social contexts (Littlewood, 2004). According to Richards (2006), CLT prioritizes fluency over accuracy and encourages learner autonomy, collaboration, and the use of authentic materials. Numerous studies have found that CLT increases learner motivation and improves speaking and listening proficiency (Savignon, 2002; Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Comparative Studies

Comparative research suggests that while GTM may be effective in improving grammatical accuracy and test performance, CLT is more successful in developing communicative competence and learner confidence (Arabai, 2014; Rahman, 2012). For instance, a study by Gorsuch (2000) found that learners exposed to CLT showed greater engagement and language retention compared to those taught using GTM. However, CLT's implementation can be challenging in contexts with large class sizes, limited teacher training, or strong exam-oriented education systems (Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Gaps in the Literature

There are lots of ideas about GTM and CLT, but not enough practical studies from actual classrooms. We especially need more information on how these methods compare in different regions or high schools. This study aims to fill that gap by looking at how GTM and CLT affect students' skills, motivation, and interactions in a real school setting.

Data Analysis

The data collected from both **student questionnaires** and **teacher questionnaires** were analyzed using **descriptive statistics**, **comparative analysis**, and **thematic analysis** to examine the effectiveness of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The analysis focused on assessing improvements in language proficiency, student motivation, engagement, and classroom dynamics, as well as understanding teacher perspectives on the methods.

1. Quantitative Data Analysis:

Likert Scale Responses Student Motivation and Engagement:

The responses from the student questionnaires were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** to calculate the **mean**, **median**, and **standard deviation** for each Likert-scale item. This was

done to evaluate changes in students' motivation and engagement after being exposed to either GTM or CLT.

- **Pre-Intervention Scores:** A baseline survey was conducted before the intervention. Responses indicated that students in the **GTM group** (Group A) rated their motivation and engagement moderately (average rating of 3). Many expressed interest in learning grammar but noted difficulty in speaking English confidently. Conversely, students in the **CLT group** (Group B) reported higher initial motivation and interest in language interaction, with a mean score of 4 for statements about speaking and listening activities.
- **Post-Intervention Scores:** After the intervention period, the post-survey revealed a notable increase in motivation for the **CLT group**. The mean scores for questions related to motivation and participation in classroom activities were significantly higher (mean score = 4.5). In contrast, the **GTM group** showed slight improvements in grammatical accuracy (mean score = 4) but a lower increase in engagement (mean score = 3.5).

Teacher

Responses:

Teacher responses to the Likert-scale items were also analyzed for **patterns** in perceptions about the effectiveness of each method. Descriptive statistics indicated that teachers felt **CLT** was more engaging, with an average rating of **4.3** for statements about student interaction and speaking improvement. On the other hand, teachers rated GTM highly for **grammar accuracy** (mean score = 4.5), but noted its limitations in fostering communicative competence and oral skills.

2. Comparative Analysis of Student Proficiency Scores

Pre- and Post-Test Scores:
To evaluate language proficiency gains, **pre-tests** and **post-tests** were administered to both groups. These tests assessed **grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening and speaking** skills.

- **GTM Group (Group A):** Results showed a **significant increase** in grammar and vocabulary proficiency, with average post-test scores improving by 15% from the baseline. However, improvements in **speaking and listening** were minimal, with a 3-5% increase in those areas.
- **CLT Group (Group B):** The CLT group showed more **balanced improvements** across all skills, particularly in **speaking and listening** (a 20% improvement). Grammar and vocabulary scores also improved, though slightly less than the GTM group (a 10-12% increase). These findings suggest that **CLT** was more effective in enhancing overall language proficiency.

3. Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

The qualitative data collected from the **open-ended questions** of both the student and teacher questionnaires were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. The key themes identified included:

- **Student Preferences:**

CLT Group: Students reported that they felt more **confident** and **motivated** to use English in real-life contexts. Many appreciated activities such as **role plays**, **group discussions**, and **problem-solving tasks**. They noted that these activities made learning more **interactive** and **fun**, fostering a positive attitude towards language learning.

GTM Group: Students expressed appreciation for **structured grammar lessons** and **vocabulary exercises**. However, many mentioned feeling **frustrated** with the lack of speaking practice and the **limited use of language in real-world situations**.

Teacher Observations:

Teachers using **GTM** noted that while students showed improvement in **grammar and written skills**, they were often hesitant to engage in spoken English. One teacher commented, "While grammar accuracy improved, many students still struggle to apply language in conversation."

Teachers using **CLT** highlighted the increased **engagement** and **confidence** in students' spoken English. However, they also pointed out that **classroom management** could be challenging due to the dynamic nature of CLT activities, especially with larger classes.

4. Statistical Comparisons: Paired t-tests

A **paired t-test** was used to compare pre- and post-test results for both groups. The results indicated the following:

- For the **GTM group**, the improvement in **grammar and vocabulary** scores was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), but the increase in **speaking and listening** skills was not.
- For the **CLT group**, all language skills (grammar, speaking, listening, and reading) showed **statistically significant improvements** ($p < 0.01$).

These findings suggest that **CLT** was more effective in improving a wider range of language skills compared to **GTM**.

Conclusion of Data Analysis

The study's data shows that using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) makes students more motivated and involved. It also helps improve their speaking and listening skills better than the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM). Even though GTM is useful for learning grammar correctly, it doesn't really help with communication skills needed for real-life

situations. This study emphasizes how crucial CLT is for developing well-rounded language abilities, especially in settings where the main goal is to communicate and interact effectively with others in the new language.

Results and Discussion

1. Results

The study looked at information gathered from questionnaires filled out by students and teachers, along with test scores from before and after the study. The findings highlight important insights about the effectiveness of two teaching methods: the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The research aimed to see how well these methods help students improve their English skills, boost their motivation, and stay engaged during class activities.

Student Motivation and Engagement

- **Pre-Intervention:** Initial responses indicated that students taught with the **GTM** were moderately engaged, with a strong focus on grammar and translation exercises. Their motivation to learn English was centered primarily around **passing exams** rather than developing communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).
- **Post-Intervention:** After the intervention, the students taught through **CLT** exhibited a notable increase in **motivation** and **classroom engagement**. Responses indicated that students found CLT activities such as **role plays, discussions, and task-based learning** more enjoyable and beneficial for their language development (Savignon, 2002). For example, one student commented, "I enjoy the speaking activities, and it helps me feel more confident in using English outside the classroom."

In contrast, students who were taught using **GTM** showed improved **grammar knowledge** but expressed less interest in learning English for communicative purposes. This finding aligns with previous research, which suggests that GTM may be effective for improving grammatical accuracy but does not foster engagement in **real-world communication** (Brown, 2001).

Language Proficiency Scores

- **GTM Group:** The **GTM group** showed significant improvement in **grammar** and **vocabulary** as indicated by the pre- and post-test scores. The average increase in grammar and vocabulary proficiency was 15%. However, improvements in **speaking** and **listening** skills were minimal (3–5% increase). These results support the view that GTM is more focused on **reading and writing skills** rather than **oral communication** (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).
- **CLT Group:** The **CLT group** demonstrated improvements in all areas, particularly in **speaking** and **listening** skills. The average increase in speaking and listening

proficiency was 20%, with grammar and vocabulary improvements at 10–12%. This is consistent with studies that show CLT's emphasis on **fluency** and **functional communication** over **grammatical accuracy** (Celce-Murcia, 2001). The higher improvement in **oral proficiency** is likely due to the **interaction-based nature** of CLT, which encourages students to practice language in authentic contexts.

Teacher Perceptions

Teachers reported that CLT was more **student-centered** and resulted in **higher levels of engagement** and **participation**. Teachers using CLT noted that students were more **motivated** to speak and interact in English. However, teachers also mentioned that managing **classroom activities** in CLT could be challenging, particularly in large classes. One teacher remarked, "CLT is engaging, but sometimes it's hard to get all students involved in group tasks."

In contrast, teachers using **GTM** found it easier to control the classroom and ensure that students adhered to **lesson structures**. However, they noted that students were **less communicative** and often struggled with speaking and using the language in meaningful ways. As one teacher commented, "While grammar accuracy improved, students still hesitate when it comes to speaking in English."

2. Discussion

The findings from this study support previous research indicating that **CLT** is generally more effective than **GTM** for fostering **speaking and listening skills**, **classroom engagement**, and **motivation** to use English in real-life situations. According to **Savignon (2002)**, CLT's focus on **interactive tasks** and **authentic language use** significantly enhances learners' ability to communicate fluently and confidently in English.

Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) has long been critiqued for its **focus on form over function** and its limited ability to develop **speaking and listening skills**. While it remains useful for **teaching grammar** and **vocabulary**, it fails to offer students the opportunity to **engage in meaningful communication** (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This study's results are consistent with **Larsen-Freeman and Anderson's (2011)** findings, which emphasized that while GTM can build accuracy in **written** and **passive** language skills, it is less effective in fostering **active language use**.

On the other hand, **CLT** aligns with the **communicative competence** model, which **Hymes (1972)** proposed as a key component of language learning. By promoting **interactive activities** and focusing on **meaningful communication**, CLT leads to higher motivation and engagement, which in turn leads to improved **fluency** and **oral proficiency**. The **CLT group** in this study showed significant improvement not only in speaking and listening skills but also in overall language proficiency, indicating that CLT creates a more balanced approach to language acquisition that includes all four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

However, the implementation of **CLT** is not without challenges. Teachers in this study noted difficulties in **classroom management**, particularly with large classes. These challenges are well-documented in the literature, where **Kirkpatrick (2012)** discusses the practical issues teachers face in **non-native contexts**, such as large class sizes and limited resources, which can hinder the successful implementation of CLT.

Despite these challenges, the **CLT group** was more successful in fostering **language use in authentic contexts**, which is critical for learners aiming to use English in real-world situations. As **Littlewood (2004)** argues, the key advantage of CLT lies in its ability to prepare learners to use English in **everyday communication** rather than just for academic purposes.

Conclusion

The comparative study of **Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)** and **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)** revealed significant differences in their effectiveness in promoting **student motivation, engagement, and language proficiency**.

The findings from both **student and teacher questionnaires**, along with **language proficiency test scores**, demonstrated that while **GTM** remains beneficial for improving **grammar and vocabulary**, it falls short in developing **speaking and listening** skills. This supports previous research that highlights GTM's focus on **accuracy** over **fluency** (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Students taught using GTM showed improvement in **written** skills but were less confident and engaged in spoken English, which aligns with its more traditional approach to language learning.

In contrast, **CLT** was more effective in fostering **overall language proficiency**, particularly in **speaking and listening** skills. The use of **interactive tasks**, such as **role-plays, group discussions, and task-based activities**, significantly boosted students' **confidence and engagement** in language use. The results from the CLT group demonstrated substantial improvements across all language skills, consistent with the principles of **communicative competence** (Hymes, 1972). Students expressed higher levels of motivation to use English in real-world contexts, which is a critical objective of language learning.

However, despite its effectiveness, **CLT** does come with practical challenges. Teachers in this study reported difficulties in **classroom management** and engaging all students, particularly in large classes. These challenges are consistent with concerns raised in the literature, where **Kirkpatrick (2012)** emphasizes that classroom dynamics, resources, and teacher training can affect the successful implementation of communicative approaches.

Key Conclusions:

1. **CLT is more effective in enhancing speaking and listening skills:** Students in the **CLT group** demonstrated greater fluency and confidence in using English in real-world contexts compared to the **GTM group**.

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2. **GTM remains effective for building grammatical accuracy:** While GTM led to improvements in **grammar** and **vocabulary**, its focus on rote learning and translation did not foster **active communication**.
 3. **Student motivation and engagement were higher in the CLT group:** The interactive and communicative nature of CLT activities significantly increased **student participation, motivation, and enjoyment** of learning English.
 4. **Classroom management in CLT requires careful consideration:** Teachers noted challenges in implementing CLT effectively, particularly in large classrooms. Adequate resources, teacher training, and support are crucial for the success of communicative teaching methods.

Implications for Language Teaching

This study underscores the importance of adopting a more **balanced approach** to language teaching that incorporates both **grammar instruction** (for accuracy) and **communicative tasks** (for fluency). Teachers may consider blending the strengths of both **GTM** and **CLT** to cater to the diverse needs of learners. For instance, grammar lessons can be integrated into **communicative activities**, allowing students to practice language in both structured and **real-world contexts**.

Furthermore, the study suggests that language programs should emphasize the development of **speaking and listening skills**, as these are often the most challenging areas for students, particularly in non-native settings. **CLT** offers a promising framework for achieving this goal, but it requires careful planning, smaller group sizes, and adequate classroom management strategies. This study stresses the need for a balanced approach in language teaching by combining grammar instruction for accuracy with communicative activities for fluency. Teachers might benefit from blending the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to address learners' varied needs. For instance, integrating grammar lessons into communicative tasks allows students to practice language both in structured exercises and real-world situations.

The study also advises language programs to focus on speaking and listening skills, as these can be tough for students, especially where the language isn't native. CLT is a helpful way to achieve this, but it requires careful planning, smaller class sizes, and strong classroom management.

Recommendations for Future Research

- **Mixed-Methods Exploration:** Future studies should look into mixing the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Combining their strengths could lead to better language teaching methods.

- Long-Term Impact Studies: It's important to study how CLT impacts language skills over a long period. This can help understand its effects on learners' development.

- Improving Teacher Training: More research is needed on how teachers are trained to use CLT. This is especially important for large or diverse classrooms to make sure educators have the right skills.

In conclusion, even though the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is helpful for certain language areas, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is seen as more effective for improving overall language skills, like speaking and listening. This study supports a more interactive, student-focused approach to language teaching, which matches current trends in language learning research.

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