

# University Teachers' and Students' Beliefs about Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching in Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan

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## Abstract

Selection of an appropriate method for learning and teaching second language is significantly important. For this purpose, various types of methods and approaches are suggested and employed. The present study intended to investigate the beliefs of teachers and students about Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Through purposive sampling eight female teachers and students of university were selected. The study was qualitative. Interview protocol and observation were used for data collection. NVivo (Version 10) was used to perform the content analysis. The participants showed a positive inclination towards the features of CLT to be used in English language classrooms. On the basis of the results, the study suggests adopting CLT in English language classrooms to improve learners' communicative skills. For future research, directions are also suggested.

**Keywords:** communicative language teaching, English language classroom, grammar translation method, qualitative research

## 1. Introduction

With the concept of global language, people of various languages have started communicating in English; therefore, it has become the global language (Aslam, Nadeem, Hussain, & Khan, 2010). English language has become one of the global languages; and because of this, learning English has become the need of time. According to Zeeshan (2016a), to be proficient in English is the need of students not only to get good grades but to access executive jobs as well in Pakistan.

To learn a second or foreign language, many techniques have been introduced from time to time. According to Aslam et al. (2010), in the public schools of Pakistan, teachers seem to be unaware of the modern techniques; therefore they do not adopt them and prefer to practice GTM in their classes. The learners are compelled to follow the rules for achieving accuracy, which could hinder successful communication (Aslam et al., 2010).

In the context of Quetta, Balochistan, there has been only one survey study conducted by Zeeshan (2013, 2016a) which measured the attitudes of participants about CLT and GTM. In depth, teachers' views regarding the CLT and GTM are yet to be explored. Hence, the present study primarily aimed to investigate their views. In addition, their classroom practices were also observed to know whether their beliefs match with what they practice in the classroom. Moreover, Zeeshan (2013, 2016a) conducted the survey of government secondary school teachers and students about GTM and CLT. On the other hand, the sample of this study consists of university teachers and students.

## 2. Literature Review

This section is divided into three parts; first part is about GTM, second part is about CLT, and the third part is about GTM and CLT as comparative study.

### 2.1 Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

Hos & Kekec (2014) conducted a qualitative research. The purpose was to know the beliefs of teachers regarding grammar teaching, method of teaching grammar practiced by the teachers in grammar class, and the mismatch between perceptions and practices of teachers in grammar class. The instruments for data collection were

open-ended questionnaires, classroom observation, field notes, and audio-recordings. Through convenience sampling 60 Turkish instructors were chosen, who taught EFL. Hos & Kecec (2014) found that all of the participants stated that the proficiency exams included grammar questions which made students consider that learning grammar would not only help them pass exams, but they could become proficient in target language as well. Some teachers told that their students were not motivated to learn grammar and seemed more focused in developing the communicative skills as it could make them practical.

Similarly, Kelly & Bruen (2015) conducted a qualitative research. The purpose of the study was to know the attitudes of language teachers regarding the usefulness of Translation in Language Teaching (TILT). It was a case study of one Irish Higher Education Institution. The participants were 12 language lecturers. Kelly & Bruen (2015) concluded that the practitioners regarded the use of translation as a useful teaching and learning tool. Moreover, the lecturers seemed supporting the use of TILT by expressing positive attitudes toward its use.

### *2.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)*

Ahmad & Rao (2013) conducted a mixed method research in Pakistan. The first part of the study was about investigating the comparative usefulness of GTM and CLT in teaching English at the intermediate level. The second part of the study was about investigating the perceptions of teachers regarding CLT. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the implementation of CLT in teaching English in Pakistani schools and colleges where GTM had been in use for long which led to the creation of incompetent users of English language in Pakistan. The sample, for the first part of the study, was consisted of 40 students of grade 12 who were further equally divided into two groups; control and experimental. For the second part of the study, the sample consisted of 150 English language teachers. The instruments used for data collection were pre-test, post-test, questionnaire, and interviews. Through the results of experiment, Ahmad & Rao (2013) concluded that communicative approach is better than traditional method in teaching English at higher level in Pakistan. Ahmad & Rao (2013) further inferred that with the provision of suitable conditions, Pakistani learners could improve their communicative skills as CLT has shown increasing motivation in learners. The results of the survey study also showed the positive response towards the practice of CLT as the respondent teachers showed willingness to incorporate communicative activities in their classrooms. Ahmad & Rao (2013) concluded that the teachers of the study seemed enthusiastic towards the application of CLT in their classrooms and they seemed hopeful that the difficulties and problems associated with the implementation of CLT in Pakistan could be overcome.

Similarly, Raissi, Nor, Aziz, Zainal, & Saleh (2013) conducted a qualitative research to compare the ideas of students and teachers regarding CLT implementation in Malaysian secondary schools. According to the ministry of education of Malaysia, English is to be taught through CLT in all of the Malaysian secondary schools. Thirty teachers and 30 students were chosen as the sample of the study. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Raissi et al. (2013) concluded that other techniques of language teaching like translation, grammar teaching, and immediate feedback to the students' errors were less effective than CLT. Moreover, CLT could be more applicable in the Malaysian secondary schools.

### *2.3 Comparative Studies of GTM and CLT*

Zohrabi, Torabi, & Baybourdiani (2012) conducted a quantitative research to find out the possibility to integrate student-centered learning with teacher-centered learning among the EFL learners of Iran. The participants of the study were 60 male students of intermediate level. Zohrabi et al. (2012) concluded that teacher-centered process was supported for the development of grammar learning in Iranian EFL learners. They further found that practically Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) is more acceptable and applicable in Iranian English language teaching system.

Similarly, Zeeshan (2013) conducted a survey research to know the attitudes of government schools teachers regarding CLT and GT in Quetta, Pakistan. The sample was consisted of 13 teachers. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Zeeshan (2013) concluded that the teachers showed positive inclination towards CLT than GT.

Likewise, Zeeshan (2016a) conducted the survey research to know the attitudes of government schools students regarding CLT and GT in Quetta, Pakistan. The sample was consisted of 204 students (102 girls and 102 boys). The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Zeeshan (2016a) concluded that students were more inclined towards CLT than GT. Zeeshan (2016a) suggested that a new method could be introduced having features from both CLT and GT.

## **3. Research Questions**

- What are the views of teachers regarding GTM?

- What are the views of teachers regarding CLT?
- What are the views of students about GTM?
- What are the views of students about CLT?
- Whether the participants' beliefs match with their teaching practice?

#### **4. Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to investigate the views of university teachers and students about GTM and CLT. Moreover, to observe whether the teacher-participants' views match with their teaching practice.

#### **5. Methodology**

##### *5.1 Participants*

The female teachers and students of university level were selected as a sample. The selection of participants was through purposive sampling. Eight participants took part in this study. All of the participants were teachers, but four of them were students of MPhil as well. All the participants were teaching English in different institutes; two at primary school, two at college and the rest of the four were teaching at university in Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan.

##### *5.2 Sampling Procedure*

The researchers visited two universities to approach the participants. Permission of the chairperson of English department of each university was sought through a permission letter. The participants were given consent forms. They were requested to sign the consent forms if willing to participate in the study. The participants were assured that their identities would not be revealed throughout the study.

Each interview was taken separately to avoid any disturbance. The interviews were recorded in recording. The interviews were taken in English. Participants' classroom practices were also observed through an observational checklist. All of the data collection process took eight working days. No one, except the researchers, was given access to the collected data.

##### *5.3 Instrument*

An interview protocol (Zeeshan, 2016b) was adopted to know the beliefs of teachers and students about GTM and CLT. Few changes were made in the instrument according to the demands of present study. The interview protocol had two sections; first section aimed to seek the background information of the participants and second section intended to probe their views regarding GTM and CLT. For pilot testing, two individuals sharing the same traits as of the sample were chosen. The classroom practices of the participants were also observed. A checklist was developed for observation.

##### *5.4 Data Analysis*

The interview protocol had two introductory and three probing questions, which were about participants' demographic information and their beliefs regarding the affectability of GTM and CLT in learning English as L2. To confirm the beliefs of the participants, their classroom practices were observed through an observational checklist. For the purpose of transcribing interviews and creating categories, NVivo (Version 10) was used. For the validity of data, member checking was done. According to Creswell (2012), member checking is the process in which findings are taken back to the participants of the study for the confirmation of the accuracy.

#### **6. Results and Discussion**

The background information of the participants is provided in Table 1. All of the participants were teaching English at different educational institutes whereas four of them were the students of university as well. They received their early education either from government or from private school. The participants learnt English language through various sources such as, English language institutes, English medium school or through personal efforts. The teaching was either teacher-centered or student-centered, from where the participants studied.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Participants	Schooling	Source of Learning English	ELC (In School)	ELC (In Language Center)
ST1	Government School	English Medium School	Teacher-centered	Student-centered
ST2	Private School	English Medium School	Teacher-centered	Student-centered
ST3	Government School	From Teaching	Teacher-centered	(Not Attended)
ST4	Government School	Personal Effort	Teacher-centered	(Not Attended)
T5	Government School	English Medium School	Student-centered	(Not Attended)
T6	Semi-Government	Language Center	Teacher-centered	Student-centered
T7	Government School	Language Center	Teacher-centered	Student-centered
T8	Private School	English Medium School	Student-centered	(Not Attended)

Note. ELC=English Language Classroom, ST=Student-Teacher Participant, T=Teacher Participant

*Question 1: Please tell me what should be the goals of English language teachers at English language classroom in Quetta, Balochistan? Whether it should aim to improve learners' communicative ability or teaching grammar rules and vocabulary? Please provide the reasons for your choice.*

In response of the first probing question, participants gave different replies. According to four participants (ST4, T6, T7 and T8) the communicative ability development should be the goal of the English language teacher. Three participants (ST2, ST3 and T5) were of the opinion that both (communicative ability development and grammar rules acquisition) should be emphasized equally. On the other hand, only one participant (ST1) wanted all four skills to be emphasized by language teachers.

The participants gave different reasons for their preferences. Participant ST1, who wanted all four skills to be emphasized, said:

The goals of English language teachers must be that ... their students must know how to write, how to read and how to talk, means communicate. All should be focused, because they are like four wheels, we cannot stay away from anyone of them, and they must go together. (ST1)

Participant ST2, who favored speaking and writing skills, said:

If you want to go abroad for your studies, they will definitely ask you for English language, they will check your proficiency. (ST2)

Participant ST2 is, indirectly, favoring CLT to be practiced by the teacher.

Participant ST3 favored that both, speaking and writing skills should be emphasized equally but writing skills should be emphasized more than speaking skills. A conflict was traced in the statement of participant ST3. Previously, the participant ST3 said that both skills, speaking and writing, should be emphasized equally. On the other hand, while telling about the reason for selection; participant ST3 was of the opinion that writing skills should be emphasized more. It reflects in her comment:

I as a teacher would advise the teachers that they should first of all give attention to writing skill of the students. (ST3)

Participant ST4, who was a government school teacher, said:

I would like to suggest that communicative ability should be improved but in our system we cannot focus on that only, as we do not have education policy and we are following the federal education policy in Balochistan. So, there is no education policy and we have to follow the instructions of the heads. (ST4)

So, it is found that the teacher (participant ST4) wanted to teach through CLT but is compelled by the authorities to teach through traditional method which is GTM.

Participant T5 was of the opinion that all of the four skills should be taught to the students because it depends on the learning capability of the students that how much they understand and which one they think might help them in practical life. Participant T5 wanted students to be set free to pick according to their own choice.

According to the participants T6, T7 and T8, listening and speaking skills should be given preference. It is found that these three participants (participants T6, T7 and T8) were in favor of CLT but there was also a conflict in the statements of T8 who first said that listening and speaking should be given preference but later said:

All four should be emphasized equally, because you know that speaking depends on the listening you cannot write if you don't read, all four are inter-linked. (T8)

The responses of all the participants about the goals of an English language teacher were in favor of CLT, but

three participants wanted to switch to GTM if required.

*Question 2: Please tell me what should be the role of teachers in teaching and learning English at the school? Whether it should be facilitative or authoritative role?*

In response of second probing question, seven participants (ST1, ST2, ST4, T5, T6, T7, and T8) were in favor of facilitative role of the teacher. One participant (ST3) wanted a kind of role-switching as she said:

I think that both of the roles teachers should adopt in the class because if they are facilitators in the class so, I don't think that the students will learn a lot from the teacher and if the teacher is having only an authoritative role so in this way also the students they will not learn a lot. So, both of the roles we (teachers) should adopt in the class. (ST3)

The responses of the participants showed that seven out of eight participants fully supported the facilitative role of teacher which is the feature of CLT. On the other hand, the response of one participant (ST3) does not directly fall into CLT. The Participant ST3 suggested that a teacher should adopt the combination of both roles (facilitative and authoritative) in the English language classroom.

*Question 3: Please tell me how English language test should be designed? Should it be integrated test or should it be discrete test? Please provide reasons for your opinion.*

In response of third probing question, five participants: ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4 and T8 were in favor of integrated test. On the other hand, three participants: T5, T6 and T7 were of the opinion that features from both tests should be included in the language test.

While favoring the integrated test items participant ST1 said:

I feel the teacher will come closer to their students, they will know more and more about the mental approach of their students and also their understanding level of that specific topic. (ST1)

ST4 takes the point further and said:

It should be integrated so students may add or may give something from their side. It would enhance their creative ability and we would come to know that on what level they are standing at the moment, what he or she thinks, their imagination, we would come to know about their skills. (ST4)

Three participants: T5, T6 and T7 were of the opinion that items from both tests should be included in the language test. While sharing the views about mixture of both testing, participant T7 said:

I think that it should be the mixture of both because you cannot all the time go for one thing, and prefer one thing altogether. So I feel like that it should be the mixture, but what should be the percentage of Discrete and Integrated that depends upon actually what you are testing and which skill you are testing. (T7)

Five participants wanted that the test should be designed by following the features of CLT whereas the other three demanded mixed items from both methods, CLT and GTM. All the participants' teaching practices were observed. The reason for class observation was to compare the responses with the teaching practice of the participants. Through observing the classroom practice of participant ST1, it was found that ST1 followed CLT while teaching; but when students seemed inconvenient, translation method was used by ST1. Her teaching style was facilitative. Through the interview of ST1, it was found that she wanted a mixed method or only CLT to be practiced and her classroom practice confirmed her beliefs.

After observing the classroom practice of participants ST2, ST4 and T8 same things were traced. All of them played a facilitative role while teaching. They mostly used L1 as their students were facing difficulty to understand English. Same thing was reported by them in their interviews that they wanted to teach in L2 but students made them teach through L1.

Classroom practice of participant ST3 was observed and it was found that she herself tried to teach in L2, but the students' inability compelled her to teach in L1 and same thing she had reported in her interview. Her teaching style was facilitative. She said in interview that grammar and writing skills should be focused, but through her classroom practice it was found that she gave equal importance to all of the four skills. Through her teaching style and interview it was found that she wanted features from GTM and CLT, both.

Classroom practices of participants T5, T6 and T7 were observed and same things were traced. All of them reported in their interview that teachers should follow CLT; through observation it was confirmed that all of these three participants taught through CLT.

Overall results of the interviews and observation were in favor of the features of CLT, but at some places the participants taught through GTM; as according to the participants, it was the demand of that time. The results of

present study are consistent with the results of some past studies. For instance, Wang (2009) conducted a survey research. The purpose was to know the perceptions and beliefs of students and teachers about the role of explicit grammar study and error correction of GTM, and also to investigate their perceptions about CLT-based language learning classes in Taiwan context. The researcher concluded that grammar teaching should be incorporated in course, but learner's oral ability should not depend on accuracy.

Similarly, Haque (2011) conducted a qualitative research to know the perspectives of teachers and students regarding CLT. Haque (2011) pointed out the following problems: the domination of GTM, lack of well trained teachers, and inability of teachers to catch the attention of their students in practicing CLT in Bangladesh.

Likewise, Zeeshan (2013, 2016a) conducted a survey research to know the attitudes of government schools teachers and students regarding CLT and GT in Quetta, Pakistan. The results showed that students and teachers, both were more satisfied with CLT than GT. According to results of the study, some students demanded for the provision of access to high quality English language instructions in the school. In the light of the results, Zeeshan (2013, 2016a) said that as far as their attitudes for GT were concerned, the students gave less favorable or neutral response.

### 7. Implications

The results of the present study suggest that all the participants favored and practiced those features, which are of CLT. The teachers as well as the students showed more interest in teaching/learning through CLT as it aims to build the communicative ability and fulfills the demands and expectations of teachers and students both. The participants expressed that achievement of communicative competence is the goal of learner in which CLT could be helpful as compare to GTM (Zeeshan, 2013, 2016a).

Therefore, it might be possible that for teaching English as a foreign language, CLT could be considered as a substitute of traditional ways of teaching English. Moreover, a new method could be introduced having features from both CLT and GT in English language classrooms in Quetta, Balochistan (Zeeshan, 2013, 2016a). It is further recommended that the policy makers could incorporate such items in the examination, which could check the communicative ability of the learners.

### 8. Future Directions

The participants of the study were only the female students and teachers. For future studies male participants could be included to probe their beliefs regarding the affectability of GTM and CLT in Quetta context. The student participants of this study were of university level which does not represent the students of other levels, such as school-going students, college level students, and students from the rural area of the province. Furthermore the students and the teachers were only from two universities, for future studies the participants from different universities could be taken. The participants of this study were not observed more than once. In future, it could bring more reliable results if the practices of participants are observed at least for a week.

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