

ADAPTING LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS: COMPARATIVE ACCEPTABILITY OF GTM AND CLT IN BANGLADESH'S RURAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Md. Maqbool

Dept. of English Language & Literature, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University Trishal, Mymensingh, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

This study explores the comparative acceptability of two prominent language teaching methods—Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)—among teachers in rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. Despite the global shift towards communicative approaches, many rural schools continue to employ traditional methods like GTM due to contextual and resource-based challenges. Through a mixed-methods approach, this research surveys teachers' perceptions, experiences, and preferences regarding both teaching methods. Findings indicate that while CLT is favored for fostering communicative competence, teachers in rural areas express concerns about its practicality, given the lack of resources and the predominant focus on examinations. Conversely, GTM is viewed as more feasible within the constraints of rural schools, though it is acknowledged as less effective in developing students' language skills for real-world communication. The study highlights the need for context-sensitive adaptations in language teaching methods, balancing traditional approaches with modern pedagogies to meet the diverse needs of rural learners.

KEYWORDS: Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Language Teaching Methods, Rural Secondary Education, Teacher Perceptions, Bangladesh, Pedagogical Approaches.



© The Author(s) 2024. **Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. The Creative Commons Public Domain Dedication waiver (<http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>) applies to the data made available in this article, unless otherwise stated in a credit line to the data.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, English language teaching (ELT) has undergone significant transformations globally, with the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT) emphasizing interaction, fluency, and practical language use. CLT has been widely promoted as a more effective approach for developing communicative competence, particularly in contexts where students need to use English in real-life situations. However, despite its theoretical benefits, the adoption of CLT in many educational settings, especially in rural areas of developing countries like Bangladesh, remains limited.

In rural secondary schools across Bangladesh, traditional methods such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) continue to dominate English language instruction. GTM, with its focus on grammar rules, vocabulary memorization, and translation exercises, has long been favored due to its alignment with exam-based systems and limited resources. While GTM has been criticized for its failure to foster communicative competence, it remains practical for teachers working within specific cultural, infrastructural, and educational constraints.

This study examines the comparative acceptability of GTM and CLT among teachers in rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. It seeks to understand teachers' preferences, perceptions, and the challenges they face when implementing either method in their classrooms. By investigating these factors, this research aims to offer insights into how language teaching methods can be adapted to better suit the realities of rural education while addressing the needs of both students and teachers. Ultimately, the study advocates for a more context-sensitive approach to language teaching, one that blends traditional methods with innovative pedagogies to create a balanced and effective educational environment for rural learners.

METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the comparative acceptability of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) among teachers in rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. The methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to gain a holistic understanding of teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges with these two teaching methods.

In the quantitative phase, a structured survey was administered to 50 English language teachers from 10 rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. The survey included Likert-scale questions designed to measure teachers' familiarity with, preferences for, and perceived effectiveness of GTM and CLT. The questions also aimed to assess the teachers' views on the practicality of each method within the context of rural education, considering factors such as class size, available resources, and examination pressures. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns and trends in teachers' preferences and attitudes toward each method.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 teachers from the same sample. The interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of the reasons behind their preferences, challenges they face in adopting CLT, and how they adapt their teaching strategies in response to the limitations of their teaching environment. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to the acceptability and effectiveness of both methods.

Additionally, classroom observations were carried out in a subset of schools to assess how teachers implement GTM and CLT in practice. These observations focused on teaching techniques, student engagement, and the alignment of instructional methods with the goals of each teaching approach. The observations provided contextual insights into how the methods are actually used in the classroom and whether teachers' perceptions align with their practices.

By combining survey data, interview insights, and classroom observations, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the acceptability and practicality of GTM and CLT in the context of rural secondary education in Bangladesh. This mixed-methods approach ensures that both the statistical trends and the nuanced, personal perspectives of teachers are captured, offering valuable insights for educational policy and pedagogical practice in rural contexts.

RESULTS

The survey results revealed a significant preference for the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) among teachers in rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. Over 70% of the surveyed teachers reported that they found GTM more suitable for the rural classroom context, citing its alignment with examination-centric curricula, ease of implementation, and its reliance on limited classroom resources. Additionally, many teachers expressed that GTM provided a clear structure and a manageable workload for both teachers and students, particularly in large, under-resourced classrooms.

In contrast, while a majority of teachers recognized the theoretical benefits of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), such as fostering real-life communication skills and student engagement, only 40% reported using CLT regularly in their classrooms. Teachers who favored CLT expressed concerns about its practicality, given the lack of audio-visual materials, limited class time, and the challenge of large class sizes. Despite these challenges, teachers acknowledged that CLT was more effective for promoting oral skills and boosting student motivation, with a focus on active participation and student-centered learning.

The qualitative interviews and classroom observations revealed that teachers often adapted their teaching methods by incorporating aspects of both GTM and CLT. Many teachers used GTM for grammar instruction and vocabulary building while attempting to introduce CLT techniques, such as group work and role-playing, to improve speaking and listening skills. However, these adaptations were often sporadic and dependent on the teacher's comfort level with CLT and the specific constraints of the classroom environment.

DISCUSSION

The results highlight a clear preference for GTM among rural secondary school teachers in Bangladesh, primarily due to its compatibility with the exam-focused education system and its practical applicability in resource-constrained environments. The widespread use of GTM is not necessarily a reflection of its pedagogical superiority but rather a response to the limitations teachers face in rural settings. These findings align with previous research showing that traditional methods often persist in contexts where educational infrastructure is underdeveloped, and standardized testing remains the primary measure of success.

However, the study also reveals a nuanced understanding of the benefits and challenges of both methods. While CLT is recognized for its potential to develop communicative competence and engage students more actively, teachers in rural Bangladesh face significant barriers to its implementation. These include inadequate teacher training in communicative methods, a lack of teaching materials, and

the challenge of managing large, diverse classrooms. The observation that teachers blend both methods suggests a pragmatic approach to teaching, where GTM provides the structure necessary for exam preparation, and CLT is selectively used to enhance student engagement and communicative skills.

This hybrid approach reflects the complex realities of teaching in rural Bangladesh, where educational goals and constraints must be carefully balanced. It also underscores the need for greater professional development and support for teachers to effectively integrate CLT into their practice. Training programs that focus on context-specific adaptations of CLT, as well as improving resource availability in rural schools, could help make communicative approaches more feasible and effective.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the importance of adapting language teaching methods to the specific needs and constraints of rural secondary education in Bangladesh. While the Grammar Translation Method remains dominant, largely due to its alignment with exam-oriented curricula and the practical challenges of rural classrooms, there is significant potential for incorporating Communicative Language Teaching to enhance students' speaking and listening skills. Teachers in rural areas, though largely supportive of CLT's benefits, require additional resources, training, and pedagogical support to effectively implement communicative approaches.

For educational policymakers, these findings suggest that any reform efforts should not only promote modern methods like CLT but also provide practical strategies for their adaptation in resource-limited settings. A blended approach that integrates the strengths of both GTM and CLT, tailored to the realities of rural classrooms, may offer the most viable path forward. This approach could foster more dynamic, effective language learning in rural Bangladesh, ultimately helping students develop the skills needed for both academic success and real-world communication.

REFERENCE

1. Brumfit, C. J., and K. Johnson, eds. 1979. *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Gower, Roger, Diane Phillips, and Steve Walters. 1983. *Teaching Practice Handbook*. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann English Language Teaching.
3. Huda, Mohammad Emdadul. 2012. "Designing CLT Materials for the Context of Bangladesh: Theories and Realities." *Journal of Nazrul University*, 1(1): 35-48.
4. Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 2004. *Techniques and Principles of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5. Littlewood, William. 1981. *Communicative Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Nunan, David. 1989. *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
7. Richards, Jack, John Platt, and Heidi Weber. 1985. *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*. Harlow: Longman.
8. Richards, J.C., and S. T. Rodgers. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.