

Comparative Study of Grammar-Translation Method vs Communicative Language Teaching in Indian Classrooms

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Abstract

This study explores the comparative analysis of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in English language classrooms across selected schools in Haryana. As English education in India continues to evolve, the tension between traditional and modern teaching methods remains a topic of both academic and practical interest. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to English language teachers and secondary-level students in 15 schools. The findings reveal that while CLT is generally preferred for developing speaking and listening skills due to its interactive, student-centred approach, GTM is still widely used and valued for its focus on grammar, translation, and exam preparation. Teachers and students alike acknowledged the benefits and limitations of both methods. The study concludes that a hybrid, context-sensitive approach—one that incorporates the strengths of both GTM and CLT—may be the most effective way forward for English language teaching in India. This research contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for adaptable teaching practices tailored to the specific needs of diverse educational environments.

Keywords— Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English Language Teaching (ELT), Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), Indian Classrooms, Language Pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

English language education in India has long been shaped by its colonial legacy, diverse linguistic landscape, and evolving educational priorities. In a country where English continues to serve as a bridge language across regions, communities, and socioeconomic classes, the method of teaching English plays a vital role in determining student success and engagement. Traditionally, many Indian classrooms have relied heavily on the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which emphasises the memorisation of grammar rules and direct translation between English and regional languages. This method, although effective for understanding written texts and performing well in examinations, often falls short in helping students develop fluency in real-life communication. In contrast,

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has emerged as a modern alternative that focuses on developing learners' ability to use English in practical, everyday contexts. This method encourages interaction, group work, and meaningful conversation, aiming to build confidence and competence in spoken English. However, implementing CLT in Indian classrooms poses several challenges, too. This study seeks to explore the comparison of GTM and CLT in Indian school settings by examining their impact on students' language skills, engagement levels, and overall learning outcomes. By analysing both teacher and student perspectives, the research aims to understand not only which method is more effective, but also which is more suitable for the diverse and dynamic context of Indian education.

English occupies a unique position in India—not just as a subject in the curriculum, but as a language of aspiration, mobility, and opportunity. From competitive exams to corporate interviews, proficiency in English is often seen as a gateway to social and economic advancement. As a result, English education is no longer limited to urban elite schools; it has become a national priority, even in rural and semi-urban areas. Despite this growing demand, the quality of English language teaching across schools remains inconsistent, largely due to disparities in teaching methods, teacher training, and classroom resources.

One of the most visible divides in English pedagogy lies in the methods adopted by teachers. The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), one of the oldest and most widely used approaches in India, relies heavily on rote learning, textbook-driven instruction, and translation exercises. It often prioritises written language over spoken fluency and may limit opportunities for student interaction. Although GTM aligns well with traditional classroom structures and exam-focused learning, critics argue that it does little to improve real-world language use.

On the other hand, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) offers a more learner-centred alternative. Rooted in the idea that language is best learned through use, CLT promotes interaction, dialogue, and task-based activities that reflect authentic communication. In theory, CLT supports the development of all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—within meaningful contexts. However, its practical implementation in India is uneven. Factors such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of instructional materials, rigid syllabi, and insufficient teacher training often hinder the full adoption of communicative techniques.

In recent years, policymakers and educators have called for a shift toward more interactive and functional approaches to English teaching. Yet, the transition is not without its challenges. Many schools, particularly in rural and low-income areas, continue to rely on GTM due to familiarity and structural limitations. This raises important questions: Is CLT more effective in improving language competence, or is GTM still more practical and relevant in the Indian classroom setting? Can these methods be combined for better results? And how do students and teachers perceive the strengths and limitations of each approach?

This research aims to investigate these questions by conducting a comparative study of the Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative Language

Teaching in Indian school classrooms. By examining classroom practices, learning outcomes, and stakeholder perceptions, the study seeks to provide insights into which approach—or combination of approaches—is best suited for the Indian educational context. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to a more effective, inclusive, and context-sensitive model of English language education in India.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

English Language Teaching (ELT) continues to evolve, shaped by ongoing discussions around the most effective methods of instruction. Among the most widely debated approaches are the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). GTM, with its strong emphasis on grammar rules, sentence translation, and reading comprehension, has long been a staple in many traditional classrooms. In contrast, CLT prioritizes the ability to use language in practical, everyday situations, focusing on fluency, interaction, and real communication. Scholars like Richards and Rodgers (1914) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (1911) have extensively compared these approaches, highlighting how GTM is more form-focused, while CLT encourages natural language use and student engagement.

In India, where English holds a unique role as both an academic subject and a tool for upward mobility, these methods have had differing levels of success. One of the earliest efforts to introduce a communicative approach in Indian classrooms was by Prabhu (1987), whose Communicational Teaching Project demonstrated that students learn more effectively when engaged in tasks that carry real meaning. Expanding on this idea, Kumaravadivelu (1996) challenged the rigid application of Western teaching models in Indian contexts, advocating instead for a more flexible, teacher-driven strategy known as post-method pedagogy. He argued that teachers should draw from multiple methods and adapt their practices to suit their students' specific linguistic and social needs. Similarly, Sridhar (1994) emphasized the need to tailor language teaching to India's multilingual realities, cautioning against applying a universal solution to a complex and diverse educational environment.

Recent studies from within India present mixed findings on the comparison of GTM and CLT. For instance, Saranraj and Meenakshi (2016) reported that CLT helped improve spoken English among college students, boosting their fluency and confidence. However, Rao

(1519) maintained that GTM still serves a vital purpose, particularly in helping students understand grammar and prepare for exams, which remain a major focus in many Indian schools. Likewise, research by Ali and Pathan (1517) found that many Indian teachers still prefer GTM, citing reasons such as larger class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient training in communicative techniques.

Several researchers have pointed out that while CLT may be ideal in theory, its application in Indian classrooms is often constrained by ground realities. Choudhury (1511) observed that crowded classrooms, limited teacher support, and curriculum demands often prevent meaningful implementation of CLT. Agnihotri (1509) added that the diversity of languages spoken by students in a single class can further complicate communicative teaching. These issues suggest that relying exclusively on either method may not be feasible or effective across all educational settings.

In light of these insights, it becomes clear that both GTM and CLT have their own merits and limitations within the Indian context. While CLT promotes communicative competence and student interaction, GTM aligns better with exam-focused curricula and classroom constraints. A blended approach that combines the strengths of both methods—adapting to context while keeping students' needs in focus—may offer a more balanced and practical path forward for English language teaching in India.

The ongoing conversation in English Language Teaching (ELT) centers on the contrast between traditional and contemporary teaching methods, particularly in countries like India, which are known for their linguistic diversity. One of the most debated dichotomies is between the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). GTM, which has been a mainstay in many classrooms, including in India, emphasizes grammar rules, translation, and the written aspects of language learning. However, in recent years, CLT has gained significant traction due to its focus on enhancing students' ability to use language practically and interactively. This shift comes as a response to GTM's limitations in fostering functional language skills—especially speaking and listening—skills essential in today's interconnected world.

Richards and Rodgers (1514) define GTM as a method that takes a structural approach to language learning. This method prioritizes accuracy over fluency, often through translation and memorization of grammatical structures. In contrast, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (1511) describe CLT as a more interactive, real-world-

focused approach, where students learn by using language in practical, communicative scenarios. The focus shifts from just mastering the rules to becoming confident in using English for everyday communication.

In India, this debate between GTM and CLT is especially pertinent due to the country's complex linguistic landscape. As Prabhu (1987) pointed out, the introduction of communicative teaching, notably through his Communicational Teaching Project, showed that students often perform better when they are involved in language activities that mirror real-life communication. However, despite these promising outcomes, GTM continues to dominate, especially in traditional school environments and settings where exams are the primary mode of assessment. This adherence to GTM reflects the larger trend in Indian education systems, which have long placed an emphasis on standardized exams and grammar-based assessment.

Further complicating the picture, Kumaravadivelu (1506) argues that methods like CLT need to be adapted to fit the specific educational realities of countries like India. He contends that instead of strictly following Western pedagogical frameworks, Indian teachers should be empowered to blend various teaching methods to suit their classrooms. This perspective acknowledges the resource constraints, multilingual nature, and overcrowded classrooms that often prevent the successful implementation of methods like CLT. A more flexible, post-method approach, where teachers modify techniques based on their students' needs, may be the key to bridging this gap.

However, while the theory behind CLT seems sound, its practical implementation in Indian classrooms is met with mixed success. Studies indicate varying results when it comes to the method's comparison. For instance, Saranraj and Meenakshi (1516) found that CLT led to significant improvements in students' speaking abilities, particularly in Indian college classrooms. Their study emphasized that task-based activities, role-playing, and group discussions can greatly improve students' confidence and speaking fluency. Nonetheless, the positive results of such studies are not universally applicable. In rural areas or schools with limited resources, the shift to CLT can be more challenging. Teachers' resistance to this method—often due to a lack of proper training or familiarity with communicative techniques—remains an obstacle.

The exam-centric nature of India's education system also plays a significant role in hindering the adoption of CLT. Rao (1519) suggests that GTM continues to hold

value in helping students master grammar and prepare for exams, particularly in a competitive environment where high-stakes tests dominate. Many teachers in India feel that GTM provides a clear framework for meeting examination requirements. This creates a dilemma for educators who wish to integrate more communicative techniques but feel constrained by the pressure to ensure high exam scores.

Moreover, the multilingual makeup of Indian classrooms further complicates the implementation of CLT. As Choudhury (1511) notes, students often speak a wide variety of local languages, making teaching English as a second language more challenging. The large class sizes, poor infrastructure, and lack of specialized training further undermine CLT's potential to succeed in many schools. Agnihotri (1509) argues that teachers often struggle to create authentic communicative situations in classrooms, where students' language levels and exposure to English vary widely.

Given these challenges, scholars such as Sridhar (1994) argue that teaching methods in India must be adaptable. The country's diverse linguistic and socioeconomic disparities necessitate an approach that is not rigidly aligned with a single method but rather combines elements of both GTM and CLT based on the context. Sridhar believes that a flexible methodology that considers the local realities—such as the variety of student backgrounds, available resources, and the sociocultural dynamics—could be more effective in improving students' English proficiency.

In conclusion, the literature surrounding English language teaching in India reflects the complexities inherent in balancing the strengths of traditional methods like GTM and modern techniques like CLT. While GTM is still valuable for its focus on grammatical accuracy and exam preparation, CLT promises to foster functional language skills needed for real-world communication. The ongoing challenge lies in contextualizing these methods for Indian classrooms, where students' needs and the educational environment often present unique hurdles. Therefore, adopting a hybrid model, where teachers can draw from both methods, may offer a more context-sensitive solution to English language teaching in India.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research compares two prominent English language teaching methods: the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the Indian educational context, specifically

focusing on schools in Haryana. The primary aim is to explore the perceptions and experiences of both teachers and students with these methods, to understand better how each method influences language learning outcomes. The data will be collected through questionnaires completed by both groups and will then be analysed to uncover patterns that reveal insights into the practical benefits and limitations of GTM and CLT in a modern classroom setting.

Research Design

The research adopted a descriptive research design. This quantitative research design will facilitate analysis of the perceptions of both teachers and students regarding the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Sample Population

The research will involve two distinct groups from 15 schools in Haryana:

1. Teachers: English language teachers from public and private schools in Haryana who have experience teaching using either GTM, CLT, or a hybrid of both methods.
2. Students: Secondary and higher-secondary students from the same schools who have been taught English using both GTM and CLT.

Sampling Technique

The study utilised a stratified random sampling technique to ensure that the sample is representative of the diverse educational settings in Delhi. The selection will cover both government and private schools, with careful attention to including urban and semi-urban areas. This diversity will ensure that the findings reflect the varied educational contexts found in Haryana, considering factors such as available resources, student demographics, and different teaching practices across school types. In the first step researcher chose Haryana as the state, then Faridabad district was chosen randomly. Faridabad has a total of 3 blocks, five schools were chosen from each block, consisting of both private and government schools, making a total of 15 schools.

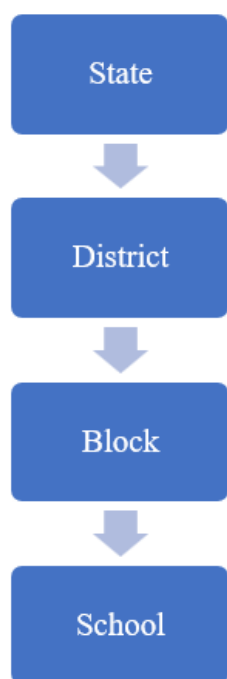


Fig.1 Stratified Random Sampling for this study

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using questionnaires that have been tailored for both teachers and students, designed to gather detailed information about their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward GTM and CLT.

1. **Teacher Questionnaire:** The questionnaire for teachers will include a mix of Likert-scale questions aimed at gauging their attitudes toward both methods, as well as their perceptions of the advantages and challenges of each approach. The questionnaire for teachers was designed to gather insights on teaching practices, method preferences, and challenges with implementing GTM and CLT in Indian classrooms. Demographic data, including teaching experience (years), school type (government/private) and class levels taught, was collected. Teaching practices on Likert scale format were collected using the frequency of grammar instruction in mother tongue, rote memorisation of rules and vocabulary, translation activities, pair/group speaking activities, role plays and real-life communication scenarios and encouraging spontaneous English use. Also, perceptions and challenges of using GTM and CLT were collected using an agreement scale to gather teachers' views on GTM's effectiveness for exam prep, CLT's role in improving spoken English, barriers to implementing

CLT (e.g., class size, resources), student comfort with GTM vs CLT and need for more CLT training.

2. **Student Questionnaire:** The student questionnaire will focus on gathering feedback about their experiences with both methods, specifically in terms of their engagement, confidence, and language proficiency. The questionnaire will ask students to compare their learning outcomes in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, based on their exposure to GTM and CLT. The questionnaire was designed to understand students' experiences, perceptions, and preferences between the grammar-translation method (GTM) and communicative language teaching (CLT). Demographic data, including class level, school type (government/private) and medium of instruction (English/regional) were gathered. The learning experience scale made on Likert scale format was prepared that focuses on how frequently students experience grammar explained in the mother tongue, translation exercises (English ↔ local language), emphasis on reading/writing vs speaking/listening, participation in group activities and role plays, encouragement to speak English despite errors and confidence in using English in class. Also, their perception and preference were gathered in the comparative format in which students indicate which method helps them understand grammar better, builds confidence in using English, prepares them better for exams, makes learning more interesting and improves real-life communication skills.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using both descriptive statistics:

1. **Quantitative Data:** The Likert-scale responses from both the teacher and student questionnaires will be analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. This will allow for a clear comparison of the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the strengths and weaknesses of GTM and CLT. Comparative analyses will be conducted to highlight significant differences in the perceptions of each group, providing insights into how each method is experienced from both perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards will be strictly followed to ensure that the rights and confidentiality of participants are protected. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring that they are fully aware of the

research purpose, their role in the study, and how their data will be used. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research process, with personal identities kept anonymous, and data will be used solely for academic purposes. Participants will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

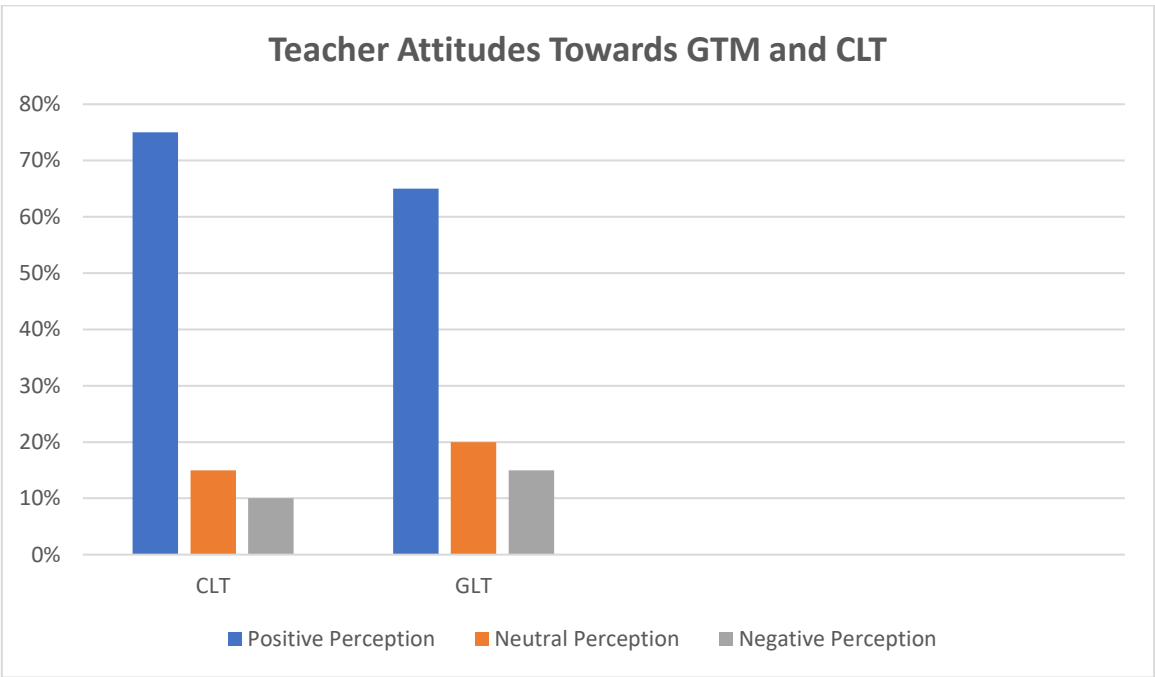
IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study collected responses from teachers and students in 15 schools in Haryana regarding their experiences with the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The data was analysed quantitatively.

Teacher Perceptions of GTM and CLT

Table 1: Teacher Attitudes Towards GTM and CLT

Method	Positive Perception (%)	Neutral Perception (%)	Negative Perception (%)
Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)	65%	15%	15%
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	75%	15%	10%



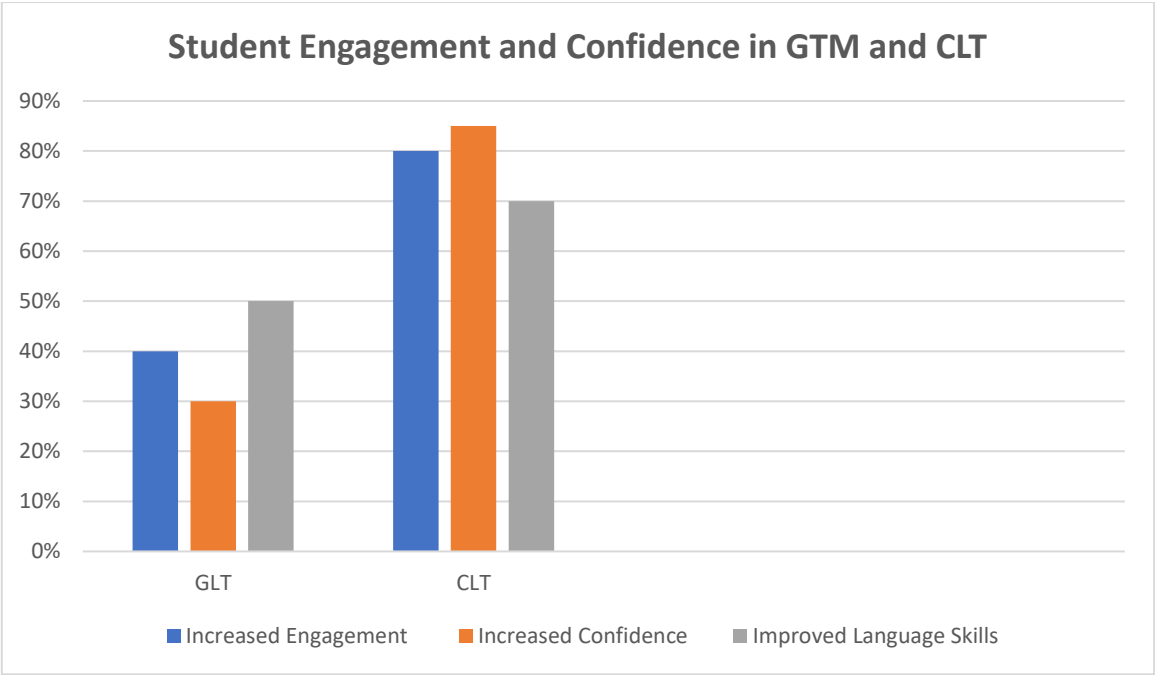
Analysis:

- GTM was viewed positively by 65% of teachers, particularly for its role in grammar accuracy and exam preparation. However, 15% of teachers had a negative perception, mostly due to its lack of focus on speaking and listening skills.
- CLT was highly favored, with 75% of teachers appreciating its focus on communication and real-life language use. However, 15% of teachers remained neutral, possibly due to challenges in implementing CLT in their classrooms.

a) Student Perceptions of GTM and CLT

Table 2: Student Engagement and Confidence in GTM and CLT

Method	Increased Engagement (%)	Increased Confidence (%)	Improved Language Skills (%)
Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)	40%	30%	50%
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	80%	85%	70%



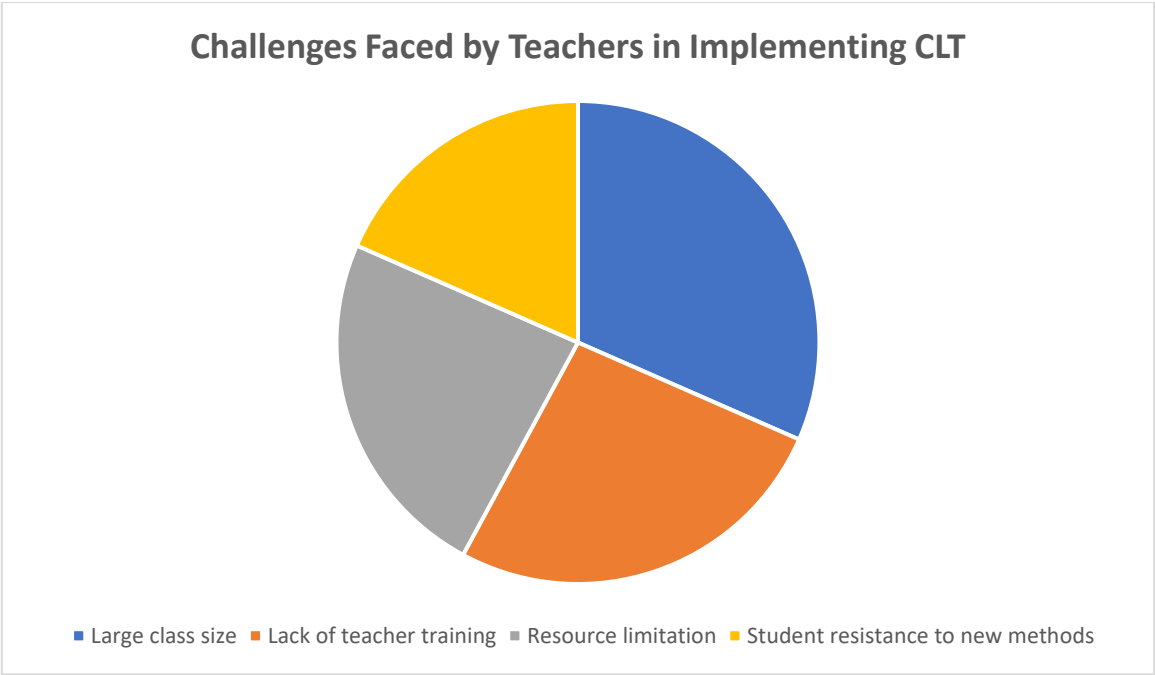
Analysis:

- CLT was reported to significantly increase student engagement (80%) and confidence (85%). Students felt more involved in speaking and listening activities, reflecting CLT's focus on real-world communication.
- In comparison, GTM had a much lower impact on engagement (40%) and confidence (30%), though it was still valued for helping students with grammar and reading comprehension.

b) Challenges in Implementing CLT

Table 3: Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing CLT

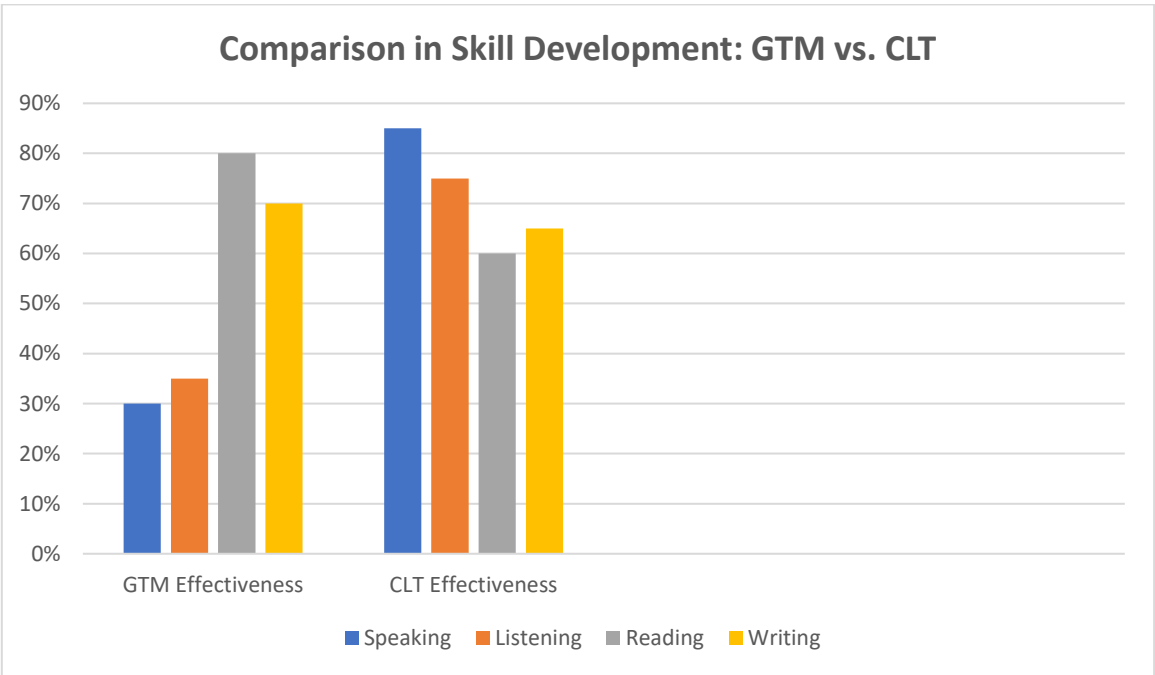
Challenge	Percentage (%)
Large class sizes	60%
Lack of teacher training	50%
Resource limitations (e.g., materials)	45%
Student resistance to new methods	35%



Analysis:

- Teachers identified large class sizes (60%) as the primary challenge when trying to implement CLT, making it difficult to organize interactive activities.
- Lack of teacher training (50%) was another significant barrier, with many teachers feeling inadequately trained in CLT techniques.
- Resource limitations (45%) such as insufficient audio-visual materials or interactive tools further hindered the effective application of CLT.

c) Comparison in Language Skill Development



Analysis:

- CLT was found to be far more effective for developing speaking (85%) and listening (75%) skills, aligning with its focus on interactive learning and real-life communication.
- GTM, however, was more effective for reading (80%) and writing (70%), as it emphasizes grammar rules and vocabulary through structured exercises.

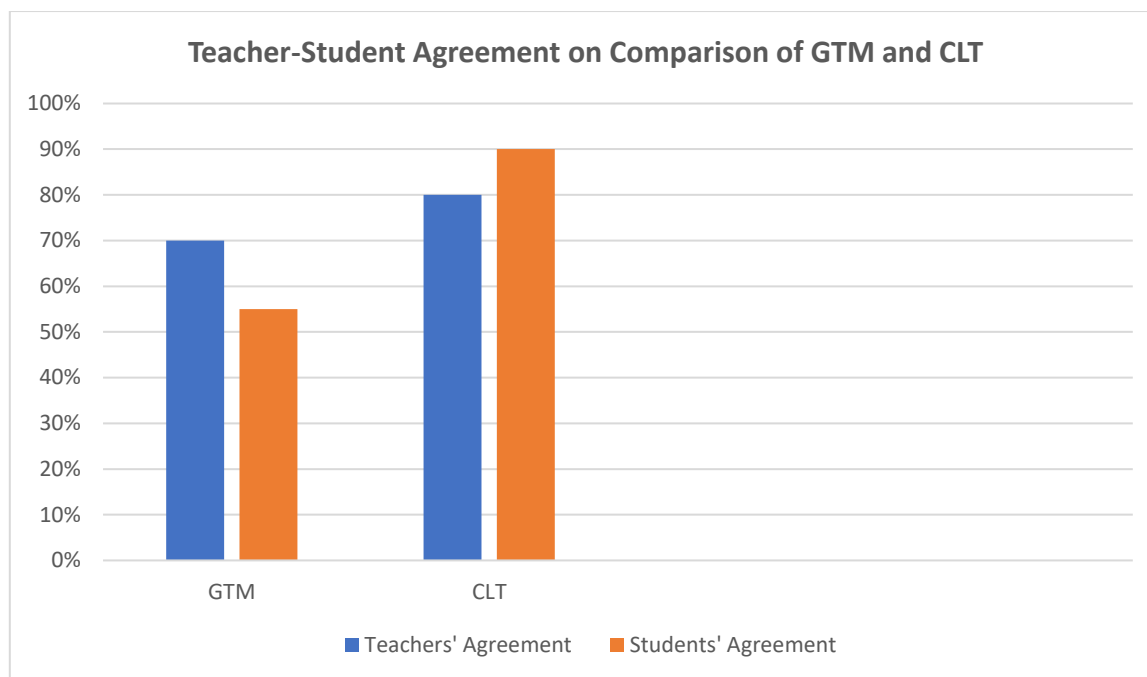
d) Teacher-Student Agreement on Comparison

Figure 1: Comparison in Skill Development: GTM vs. CLT
Here's a graphic comparison of the perceived comparison of both methods in developing speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

Skill	GTM Comparison (%)	CLT Comparison (%)
Speaking	30%	85%
Listening	35%	75%
Reading	80%	60%
Writing	70%	65%

Figure 2: Teacher-Student Agreement on Comparison of GTM and CLT

Method	Teachers' Agreement (%)	Students' Agreement (%)
Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)	70%	55%
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	80%	90%



Analysis:

- Both teachers and students largely agree on the comparison of CLT (80% teachers, 90% students). However, teachers also appreciate the structured approach of GTM (70% agreement), particularly for grammar and exam preparation.
- The lower student agreement for GTM (55%) suggests that, despite its usefulness for grammar, it does not fully meet students' needs in terms of engagement and communication skills.

The findings from the study clearly indicate that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is more effective in engaging students and improving their speaking and listening skills. However, Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) still holds value for its focus on grammar and reading comprehension, particularly in exam-oriented settings.

Teachers generally agree with the efficacy of CLT but face practical challenges, including large class sizes, lack of training, and resource limitations. Students, on the other hand, overwhelmingly favor CLT, especially for its focus on interactive and real-life communication.

In conclusion, a hybrid approach that combines the strengths of both methods may be the most effective way forward in the diverse educational context of Haryana. This would involve integrating CLT for communicative skills and GTM for grammar and

foundational knowledge, allowing teachers to address the diverse needs of their students.

V. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore and compare the comparison of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) within the context of English language education in selected schools across Haryana. By gathering insights from both teachers and students through structured questionnaires, the research offers a comprehensive view of how these two pedagogical approaches are perceived and implemented in Indian classrooms.

The findings indicate a clear preference for CLT among students, particularly due to its emphasis on interaction, speaking, and listening skills—areas that are often neglected in GTM. Students reported higher levels of engagement, confidence, and fluency when exposed to communicative methods, highlighting CLT's relevance in preparing learners for real-life language use. On the other hand, teachers acknowledged the value of GTM, especially in helping students grasp grammar rules, build vocabulary, and succeed in examinations. GTM continues to serve as a reliable approach in traditional academic settings, especially where resources are limited or where classes are large and exam preparation remains the primary focus.

However, the study also uncovered practical challenges in implementing CLT, including lack of teacher training,

insufficient resources, and classroom management difficulties in large groups. These factors often limit the extent to which communicative techniques can be fully integrated into everyday teaching.

In conclusion, the study underscores that while CLT offers significant advantages in developing functional language proficiency, GTM retains its relevance in achieving academic success. A balanced, context-sensitive approach that draws on the strengths of both methods appears to be the most effective strategy for English language teaching in India. Moving forward, policy-makers and educators should consider investing in teacher development, resource enhancement, and flexible curricula that allow for a blended pedagogical approach tailored to the diverse needs of Indian learners.

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