

Shifting Paradigms in English Language Teaching: A Study of the Transition from Grammar-Translation to Communicative Approaches in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT: This comparative study focused on the shift from the Grammar-Translation Method to Communicative approaches in teaching English at the secondary level in Pakistan. It explored teachers' traditional and communicative practices, the transformation of teacher and learner roles, the challenges faced in implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and possible solutions. A mixed-methods research design was employed. The target population comprised secondary-level English teachers of both sexes throughout Pakistan, while the accessible population included teachers from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Quantitative data were collected through a survey using a multistage stratified sampling technique, and qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 20 purposively selected teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, group-comparison tests, correlation, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed through Thematic Analysis. The findings demonstrated that the Grammar-Translation Method has continued due to grammar-based tests, large classes, lengthy syllabuses, limited resources, and teacher-centred traditions. Although teachers showed positive attitudes toward communicative teaching, they used role play, information gap activities, authentic listening, group discussion, and students' controlled communication only at a moderate level.

KEYWORDS: Grammar-Translation Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Mixed-methods Research, Secondary-level Teachers, Communicative Competence, English Language Teaching, Pakistan

Introduction

The evolution of English language teaching in Pakistan has gone through various phases that have been affected by the country's history of colonization, educational policies, social structures, and changing needs of educational and professional fields. The English language was introduced as a significant medium of instruction and administration during the time of British rule, and the English language remained important after Independence in 1947. It maintained its presence in Government, Law, Higher Education, Business, Science, Technology, and International Communication (Alakrash, 2021). This resulted in English proficiency being linked to educational attainment, career progression, and socio-economic status. Over the past few decades, however, English was mainly taught using the Grammar-Translation Method. This traditional technique focused on the memorization of grammatical rules,

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translation of passages from English to Urdu or regional languages, learning vocabulary lists, reading texts in the books, and writing tasks. The teachers basically had an authoritarian role, and the students were expected to listen, take notes, memorize rules, and copy out answers to questions given in exams (Moharana, 2021).

The technique was found to be convenient to use for a large class and to provide a method for the teacher to explain more complex structures in English in a familiar language. It was also comparable to the examination systems that evaluated grammar, translation, comprehension, and memorized composition. However, it was observed that pupils who were educated primarily in this way had acquired knowledge of English but lacked confidence and competence in using it. Many learners had a good ability to identify grammatical structures or translate written material, but had problems with spontaneous speech, understanding natural speech, expressing opinions, and using English in real situations. This constraint led to a re-thinking of the goals and approaches of English language teaching in Pakistan (Istiantika et al., 2023).

Emergence of Communicative Approaches in English Language Education

The advent of Communicative Language Teaching brought a great shift in the concept of language and in learning language. The Grammar-Translation Method is oriented towards learning and using grammar and translating; a communicative approach sees language as a way to communicate ideas, build relationships, share information, and carry out social and academic activities (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, 2022). According to this approach, the main purpose of teaching the English language is to develop communicative competence. In addition to grammar, communicative competence also involves the ability to produce coherent discourse, select socially appropriate expressions, interpret meaning based on context, and use appropriate strategies when there is difficulty with communication (Qasserras, 2023).

Communicative classrooms allow students to be active in pair work, group discussions, role plays, presentations, interviews, information gap activities, collaborative projects, and problem-solving. The teacher's role is not just that of a lecturer, but that of a facilitator, organizer of activities, language model, and feedback provider. The principles are gradually being introduced in the national English curriculum in Pakistan with an emphasis on listening, speaking, reading, writing, oral interaction, creativity, critical thinking, and functional language (Ramadhani et al., 2024).

Modern textbooks and teacher-training programs have also attempted to introduce student-centered learning and integrated language activities. This development has been complemented by advances in digital technology, which have allowed access to English videos, podcasts, online courses, mobile apps, digital dictionaries, and communication apps (Muhammad et al., 2023). Communicative objectives, however, do not automatically mean that they are taught. Many schools still rely on translation and grammatical explanation in class, as well as on textbooks and memorized responses to questions for the exam. Hence, communicative teaching is still not in the desired form in all schools and areas of Pakistan (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

Need for a Contextually Appropriate Pedagogical Transition

It is important to realize that a shift from Grammar-Translation to Communicative Methodologies should be seen based on the specific realities of the Pakistani education system. The institutional resources, class size, qualifications of teachers, prior levels of learners' English proficiency, medium of instruction, geographical location, and socioeconomic background differ greatly among English classrooms (Nageen et al., 2025). Some elite private schools might have opportunities for broad exposure to spoken English and digital resources, while most public and rural

schools have overcrowded classrooms, poor-quality teaching materials, and under-trained teachers as well as limited technology (Rousse-Malpat et al., 2022).

Students are also from different language backgrounds and are able to speak Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki, Balochi, Hindko, Brahui, Kashmiri, or any other language at home. The full and instant use of a common communicative approach is challenging under these circumstances (Çiftci & Özcan, 2021). Moreover, the attitude of teaching to tests that test for written accuracy, textbook reproductions, and memory still influences grammar instruction in the classroom due to the importance of preparing students for such exams. The change, therefore, should not be interpreted as the abandonment of any teaching of grammar or the ban on the use of translation for teaching (Nggawu & Thao, 2023).

Providing explicit grammar teaching will help the learner become more accurate, and using familiar languages, with careful control, will aid comprehension and minimize anxiety. A key requirement is to link grammar and language in meaningful ways. A contextually appropriate model should include a short, scripted explanation and select translation with dialogue practice, collaborative learning, purposeful writing, listening, and authentic communication. This requires a coordinated reform of teacher education, curriculum design, textbooks, assessment, leadership of schools, and the provision of resources. The present study is thus significant as it looks into the transformation of the teaching paradigm, factors that hinder communicative teaching, and a balanced approach that is appropriate for Pakistan's multilingual and educational environment (Hutauruk et al., 2024).

Rationale of the Study

This study is carried out because English language teaching in Pakistan is gradually moving towards communicative approaches from the traditional Grammar-Translation Method. Even with curriculum changes, grammar rules, translation, memorization, and exam preparation remain popular and dominant practices in many classrooms. Consequently, students could be accurate in their writing, but lack confidence in their oral abilities when communicating in academic, social, and professional settings. Therefore, factors related to the pedagogical, institutional, and assessment processes that influence this transition need to be explored. The study further investigates the possibility of integrating grammar instruction and communicative activities in the light of Pakistan's multilingual and resource-constrained educational situation. The results of this study could assist in the formulation of a balanced and effective language teaching practice by policymakers, in the formulation of curriculum by curriculum developers, teacher education by teacher educators, and English teachers in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

While the focus on communication, creativity, functional language, and integrated skills in educational policies in Pakistan is becoming the norm, the instruction of English in the classrooms is still predominantly grammar-oriented and examination-oriented. Students often resort to rote learning of grammatical rules, translations, essays, letters, and textbook answers rather than mastering the ability to use English in real contexts. Although teachers may perceive the benefits of communicative teaching, they often have to deal with too many students, insufficient training, small budgets, fixed lesson plans, and written accuracy-based evaluations. This leads to a gap between curriculum goals and classroom activities, which lowers the effectiveness of English language learning. Therefore, an examination of the nature of the transition from Grammar-Translation to the communicative approach and finding a model that is appropriate to the context of Pakistan for balancing grammar and communication is needed.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- 1.Examine the historical influence of the Grammar-Translation Method on English language teaching in Pakistan.
- 2.Analyze the emergence and significance of communicative approaches in Pakistani English curricula.
- 3.Identify the major changes associated with the movement from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction.
- 4.Investigate the barriers affecting the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching.
- 5.Propose context-sensitive strategies for strengthening communicative English teaching in Pakistan.

Research Questions

- 1.How has the Grammar-Translation Method influenced English language teaching practices in Pakistan?
- 2.What curriculum and pedagogical developments have supported the introduction of communicative approaches?
- 3.What challenges restrict the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching in Pakistani classrooms?
- 4.How can grammar instruction and communicative practice be integrated within Pakistan's educational context?
- 5.What reforms are required to make English teaching more communicative and effective?

Significance of the Study

This study is important as it helps in explaining the shift in the practices of English language teaching from the Grammar-Translation Method to communicative approaches in Pakistan. It can make English teachers aware of the way communicative activities can enhance the students' communicative competence and language ability in speaking, listening, interacting, and language ability in general. The results can inform curriculum planning when creating textbooks and activities that incorporate accurate grammar and language for meaningful use. The study might also help policymakers and examination boards to link assessment with communicative goals of a curriculum. The findings can be leveraged in teacher-training institutions to design practical training courses for learner-centered and context-sensitive teaching. Lastly, it offers a basis for further researchers to study the English teaching methods at various levels of education and other parts of Pakistan.

Literature Review

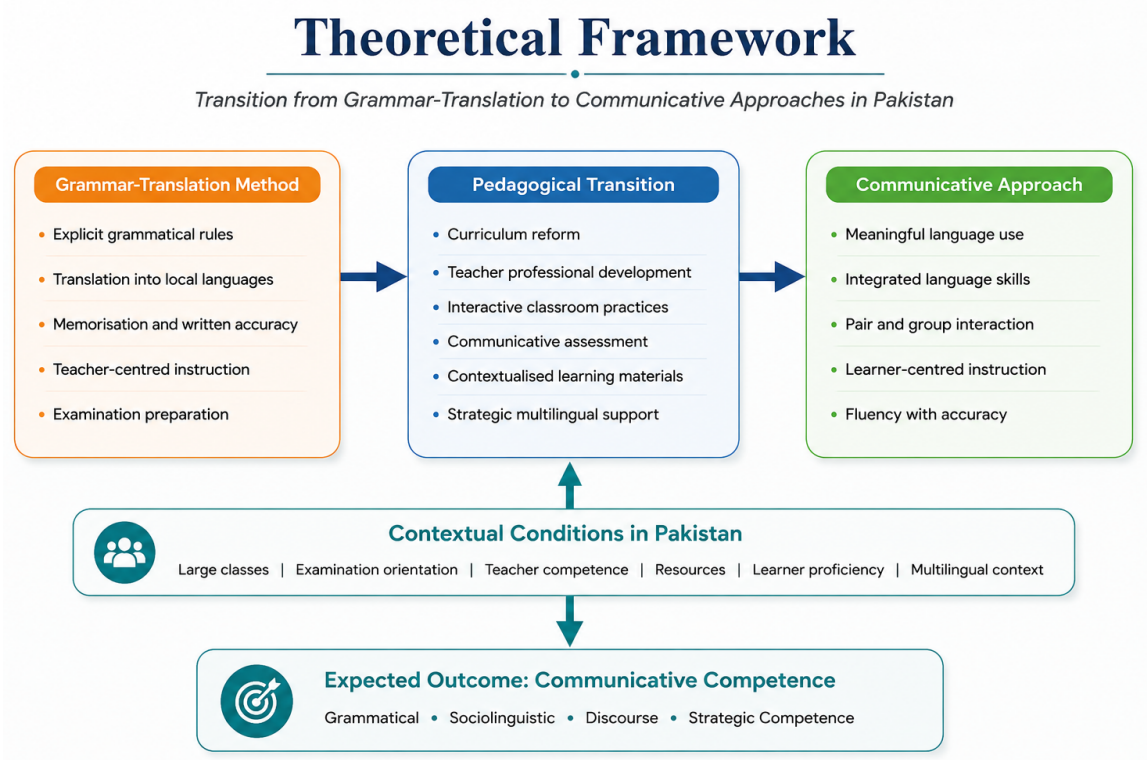
Comparative Analysis of Teaching Approaches

The major characteristics of GTM and communicative approaches were analyzed using comparative analysis. The following items were included in the comparison: the objectives of teaching, language in class, the roles of teachers and students, treatment of grammar, translation as a teaching aid, activities in the classroom, error correction, learning materials to be used, and assessment procedures. This analysis aided in determining the pros and cons of each approach. It was also from this that a context-sensitive approach was suggested, which integrated explicit grammatical support with meaningful communicative practice (Ilmudinulloh et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

The theory of communicative competence and the principle of Communicative Language Teaching were used as guides for the study. Communicative competence accounts for the fact that language competence involves the use of language in a communicative way, which means that the ability to use the language successfully involves grammar, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic skills (Salam & Luksfianto, 2024). The concepts were applied to see if teaching focuses on formal grammatical knowledge or whether it helps to equip the learners to communicate at the appropriate level at the right moment. The study also took into account post-method pedagogy that stresses the adaptation of pedagogy to local needs rather than the application of a single method in any context without taking into account the local needs (Liu & Deris, 2023).

Figure 1



Research Methodology

Research Approach

This study was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative component was used to measure the use of the Grammar-Translation Method and the communicative teaching approaches by the secondary level English teachers and to find out the factors that affect the pedagogical transition (Nasreen et al., 2024). The qualitative component of the study focused on a more in-depth analysis of difficulties, classroom practices, and teachers' experiences and perceptions. The combination of the two approaches yielded a more overall picture of English language teaching practices than would either approach alone (Losi & Nasution, 2022).

Research Design

The convergent parallel mixed methods design was used. A structured questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data. Both forms of data were collected during approximately the same phase of the study and analyzed separately. The results were then compared and merged in the interpretation. The conclusions were reinforced by some level of consensus, and differences between the quantitative and qualitative results were discussed to gain insight into the variations among teachers' experiences and institutional contexts (Hien, 2021).

Research Paradigm

The study employed a pragmatist research approach. Pragmatism does allow researchers to choose methods based on the nature of the research problem; it does not restrict the study to one philosophical perspective. It was fitting as the shift from GTM to CLT has a measurable size and a contextual and experiential component. The quantitative part of this study looked for general patterns, while the qualitative part uncovered the reasons for the specific teaching practices and implementation challenges (Han, 2022).

Population of the Study

The target population comprised all male-female English language teachers of secondary school level all over Pakistan. This population comprised English teachers working in public and private secondary schools of Punjab, K-P-K, Sindh, Balochistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The English teachers of Grade 9 and 10 were regarded as the target population. Due to geographical, financial, and time constraints, the population that was accessible was secondary-school English teachers in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sample Size

The quantitative sample for a questionnaire survey consisted of 400 secondary school English teachers. It was deemed appropriate for descriptive analysis, group comparisons, correlation, and regression analysis to use this sample size. A total of 200 teachers from Punjab and 200 teachers from KP were selected considering the provincial representation of the teachers. Male and female teachers were included, as well as public and private schools, according to availability and proportionality within the selected school districts. Twenty teachers were chosen from the quantitative teachers for the qualitative phase. Ten teachers from Punjab and ten from KPKHA were selected. The sample for the qualitative study consisted of male and female teachers, teachers from public and private schools, and teachers from urban and rural areas. Interviews were conducted until enough themes were gathered and until information started to be repeated.

Sampling Technique

A multistage stratified sampling technique was used for the quantitative phase. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were purposively selected as the provinces in Pakistan in the first stage. In the second stage, representative districts were chosen within each province in the various geographical divisions. In the third stage, schools were classified into sectors (public and private schools) and into location (urban and rural areas). The fourth stage involved sampling of male and female secondary school English teachers from the participating schools with the use of proportionate sampling and the simple random sampling method, respectively (Saleem et al., 2023).

Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative interviews. The teachers were chosen based on their teaching experience, gender, province, school sector, and willingness to give detailed information. The aim of the selection was to get different views of traditional and communicative English teaching practices.

Distribution of the Quantitative Sample

Table 1

Distribution of Secondary-Level English Teachers

Province	Male teachers	Female teachers	Total
Punjab	100	100	200
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	100	100	200
Total	200	200	400

The proposed distribution provides equal representation to Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to male and female teachers. However, if official population lists show substantial differences in gender distribution, proportionate allocation may be applied instead. The final sample distribution should be reported according to the questionnaires actually returned and accepted for analysis.

Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide (Gloriez & Listyani, 2022). The questionnaire generated quantitative information about teachers' reported classroom practices, perceptions, and implementation barriers. The interview guide produced qualitative information concerning teachers' experiences of the methodological transition, reasons for using particular teaching techniques, and recommendations for improving communicative English instruction.

Quantitative Research Instrument

The questionnaire had two main sections. Demographic and professional data were gathered in Section A, such as gender, province, age, academic qualification, professional qualification, teaching experience, school sector, school location, class size, and participation in ELT training. Section B included statements that were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree). They covered GTM-related issues regarding translation, grammatical explanations, memorization, teacher-centered teaching, and exam preparation. CLT items were directed towards pair work, group discussion, role play, learner participation, integrated skills, and functional language use (Eng & Peidong, 2021). Barriers, assessment practices, teacher training, and institutional support were explored in other sections.

Qualitative Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect detailed qualitative data from 20 selected teachers. The guide contained open-ended questions but allowed the researcher to ask additional probing questions when clarification was needed (Hall, 2023). The interviews explored teachers' understanding of GTM and CLT, reasons for selecting particular methods, experiences of communicative classroom activities, student responses, examination pressures, professional training, institutional support, and recommendations.

Data-Collection Procedure

Formal consent from the education authorities and participating schools was acquired. Teachers were given information about the purpose of the study, how it is voluntary, confidentiality requirements, and the amount of time it would take. The questionnaire was distributed either in person or via an online questionnaire link, depending on the location and accessibility of the participants. An improvement in the response rate was made with follow-up communication. Following preliminary questionnaire administration, 20 teachers were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were done in person or via an online communication platform. The interviews were to be about 30-45 minutes in length. With participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Those who did not consent to be recorded were recorded in depth with written notes.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS. Incomplete and improperly completed questionnaires were examined before analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were applied according to the research questions. Normality, homogeneity of variance, multicollinearity, and other relevant statistical assumptions were examined before applying inferential tests (East, 2025). Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level. Effect sizes were also reported where appropriate to explain the practical importance of group differences and relationships.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in analyzing qualitative interview data. The researcher transcribed and read the interviews several times to get an idea of their experiences. Initial codes were attributed to meanings from the meaningful

statements, and codes were clustered under each of these categories. These categories were then expanded to the more general themes. The areas of analysis that were expected were continued use of translation, perceptions of grammar instruction, communicative classroom use, student anxiety, examination pressure, class size, teacher training, resource limitations, and support for hybrid teaching. Themes were checked against original transcripts for accuracy of the participants’views. Some quotations from the participants might be used in the findings without revealing names or institutional identities, provided these are short.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to male and female English teachers working at the secondary level. Although the target population conceptually included teachers from throughout Pakistan, the accessible population and actual sample were restricted to Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study focused on the transition from GTM to communicative approaches and did not comprehensively evaluate every English-language teaching method. Quantitative data were primarily based on teachers’ self-reported practices, while qualitative evidence was obtained from a smaller purposively selected interview sample.

Methodological Limitations

Restricting data collection to Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa limits the national generalizability of the findings. Teachers from Sindh, Balochistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir may experience different linguistic, institutional, and resource conditions. Self-reported questionnaire responses may also differ from teachers’ actual classroom behaviour. Although interviews provide deeper explanations, the qualitative sample cannot represent every secondary teacher. Future research should include all administrative regions and incorporate direct classroom observations to verify reported teaching practices.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Respondents (N = 400)

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	200	50.0
	Female	200	50.0
Province	Punjab	200	50.0
	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	200	50.0
School sector	Public	260	65.0
	Private	140	35.0
School location	Urban	220	55.0
	Rural	180	45.0
Academic qualification	Bachelor’s degree	72	18.0
	Master’s degree	244	61.0
	MPhil or above	84	21.0
Teaching experience	Less than 5 years	88	22.0
	5–10 years	132	33.0
	11–15 years	104	26.0
	More than 15 years	76	19.0
Professional ELT training	Received training	236	59.0
	No formal training	164	41.0

Table 1 shows equal representation of male and female teachers and equal participation from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Most respondents worked in public schools, while 35% represented the private sector. More than half of the participants taught in urban schools, although rural teachers were also adequately represented. Most respondents possessed a master's degree and had more than five years of teaching experience. However, 41% had not received formal English-language teaching training, indicating a considerable professional-development gap.

Objective 1

To Examine the Influence of the Grammar-Translation Method

Table 2

Teachers' Reported Use of Grammar-Translation Practices

Grammar-Translation practice	Mean	SD	Level
Explicit explanation of grammatical rules	4.21	0.71	High
Preparation for grammar-based examinations	4.14	0.76	High
Translation of difficult passages into Urdu or a local language	4.07	0.80	High
Memorisation of textbook answers	3.89	0.84	High
Teacher-centred explanation of lessons	3.82	0.86	High
Written grammar and sentence-transformation exercises	3.78	0.82	High
Memorisation of vocabulary with local-language meanings	3.66	0.90	Moderate
Limited use of spontaneous speaking activities	3.58	0.94	Moderate
Overall GTM score	3.89	0.67	High

Table 2 indicates a high overall use of GTM among secondary-level English teachers. Explicit explanation of grammatical rules received the highest mean, followed by examination preparation and translation of difficult passages. Memorisation, teacher-centred explanation, and written grammar exercises were also frequently reported. These findings demonstrate that GTM remains deeply embedded in secondary-school English teaching because it supports grammatical accuracy, textbook coverage, and preparation for conventional examinations.

Objective 2

To Analyse the Emergence and Use of Communicative Approaches

Table 3

Teachers' Use and Perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative teaching dimension	Mean	SD	Level
CLT improves learners' confidence	4.18	0.69	High
CLT develops practical speaking ability	4.13	0.72	High
Question-and-answer interaction	3.94	0.78	High
Pair work	3.72	0.86	High
Integration of four language skills	3.67	0.82	Moderate
Group discussion	3.61	0.91	Moderate
Oral presentations	3.54	0.95	Moderate
Role-play and simulation	3.29	1.02	Moderate
Information-gap activities	3.08	1.01	Moderate
Authentic listening activities	2.94	1.07	Moderate
Overall CLT score	3.61	0.64	Moderate

Table 3 shows that teachers possessed highly positive perceptions of CLT, particularly regarding its contribution to confidence and speaking ability. However, their overall classroom use of communicative activities was moderate. Question-and-answer interaction and pair work were used more frequently than role-play, information-gap activities, and authentic listening exercises. The findings indicate that teachers accept communicative principles but experience difficulties in translating these principles into regular classroom practice.

Objective 3

To Identify Changes in Teacher and Learner Roles

Table 4

Changes Associated with the Transition Toward Learner-Centred Teaching

Indicator of pedagogical change	Mean	SD	Level
Teachers encourage students to ask questions	4.05	0.73	High
Teachers provide constructive feedback	3.96	0.77	High
Students participate actively in classroom activities	3.78	0.82	High
Teachers perform the role of facilitator	3.73	0.86	High
Students work collaboratively with classmates	3.62	0.89	Moderate
Students express original ideas in English	3.48	0.92	Moderate
Students independently select learning strategies	3.21	0.96	Moderate
Students assess their own language progress	3.04	1.01	Moderate
Overall role-transition score	3.61	0.65	Moderate

Table 4 reveals a moderate movement from teacher-centred toward learner-centred instruction. Teachers frequently encouraged questions and provided constructive feedback, while students demonstrated relatively high classroom participation. However, learner autonomy remained less developed, particularly in self-assessment and independent strategy selection. The results suggest that classroom roles are changing gradually, but teachers continue to control many important aspects of the teaching and learning process.

Objective 4

To Investigate Barriers to CLT Implementation

Table 5

Major Barriers Affecting Communicative Language Teaching

Implementation barrier	Mean	SD	Level
Examinations emphasise grammar and written reproduction	4.36	0.66	High
Large class size	4.29	0.72	High
Extensive syllabus and limited instructional time	4.18	0.75	High
Students' fear of making mistakes	4.08	0.80	High
Students' uneven English proficiency	4.02	0.78	High
Insufficient practical teacher training	3.96	0.84	High
Limited audio and digital resources	3.87	0.91	High
Fixed classroom seating	3.74	0.92	High
Limited institutional support	3.68	0.89	High
Parents' preference for examination-oriented teaching	3.43	0.97	Moderate
Overall barrier score	3.96	0.61	High

Table 5 identifies examination orientation as the strongest barrier to communicative teaching, followed by large classes and limited instructional time. Students’ fear of mistakes and uneven proficiency also restricted their participation in interactive activities. Teacher training, resources, classroom arrangements, and institutional support were additional concerns. The high overall mean confirms that the transition toward CLT is constrained by interconnected assessment, institutional, teacher-related, and learner-related factors.

Objective 5

To Propose Strategies for Strengthening Communicative Teaching

Table 6
Teachers’ Views Regarding Strategies for Improving CLT Implementation

Proposed strategy	Mean	SD	Level
Align examinations with communicative curriculum objectives	4.55	0.59	High
Provide continuous practical training for teachers	4.49	0.61	High
Integrate grammar with meaningful communication	4.44	0.64	High
Include speaking and listening in assessment	4.39	0.67	High
Provide suitable teaching and digital resources	4.31	0.70	High
Develop locally relevant communicative activities	4.25	0.72	High
Reduce class size where practically possible	4.19	0.76	High
Use Urdu and regional languages strategically	4.11	0.78	High
Introduce CLT gradually according to learner proficiency	4.08	0.74	High
Increase academic supervision and school support	4.02	0.81	High
Overall strategy score	4.28	0.54	High

Table 6 demonstrates strong teacher support for coordinated communicative reform. Alignment between examinations and curriculum objectives received the highest priority, followed by practical professional development and the integration of grammar with communication. Teachers also supported speaking and listening assessment, better resources, locally relevant activities, and strategic use of familiar languages. These findings confirm that teachers favour a balanced hybrid model rather than the complete removal of grammar instruction and translation.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Table 7
Themes Emerging from Semi-Structured Teacher Interviews (n = 20)

Major theme	Participants mentioning the theme	Representative interpretation
Continued dependence on GTM	18	Translation and grammar explanation remain convenient for examinations and large classes.
Positive perceptions of CLT	17	Teachers believe CLT improves confidence, fluency and learner participation.
Examination pressure	19	Teachers prioritise grammar and written content because these determine examination results.
Large classes and limited time	16	Interactive activities are difficult to organise, monitor and complete
Learner anxiety and low proficiency	15	Students hesitate to communicate because of limited vocabulary and fear of mistakes.

Major theme	Participants mentioning the theme	Representative interpretation
Inadequate professional training	14	Teachers need demonstrations, mentoring and classroom-based practice
Limited resources	13	Lack of audio material, technology and flexible seating restricts interactive teaching.
Preference for a hybrid approach	18	Teachers support combining grammar and selective translation with communicative activities.
Need for assessment reform	19	Speaking, listening and functional writing should be included in examinations.
Institutional support	14	School leadership, resources and academic supervision influence teachers' methodology.

Table 7 presents the major themes emerging from the qualitative interviews. The interview data supported the quantitative results by showing that teachers valued CLT but remained dependent on traditional practices because of examination demands and classroom constraints. Assessment pressure was the most widely discussed issue. Most teachers preferred a hybrid approach in which grammar and translation provide initial support, followed by pair work, role-play, discussion, presentation, and other communicative activities. The themes also demonstrate the importance of professional development, resources, and institutional leadership.

Findings

The results show a slow and incomplete shift from the Grammar-Translation Method to communicative approaches in English language teaching at the secondary level in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Overall, the quantitative findings indicated that English teachers in secondary-level schools used GTM to a very great extent. The most widely mentioned and traditional practice was the explanation of grammatical rules, followed by the preparation for exams, translation of hard passages into Urdu or regional language, memorization of answers from textbooks, and teacher-centered explanation. These results show that traditional teaching is still affecting teaching in the classroom, as it is easy to complete the syllabus, easy to control the scale of a class, and suitable for students to take a written examination.

The teachers showed positive attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching. The majority of participants felt that CLT could enhance students' self-confidence, confidence in speaking English, involvement in class, and English usage. However, the use of communicative activities was still moderate. The amount of Q&A interaction and pair work was higher than role-play, information-gap tasks, authentic listening tasks, group discussions, and student-led presentations. The gap between perception and practice indicates that teachers appreciate the importance of using a communicative pedagogical approach in teaching but fail to use it all the time in the classes and institutions due to the existing situation.

The study also determined that the roles of teachers and learners were at a moderate level of change. An increasing number of teachers promoted students to ask questions, take part in class activities, and work together with other classmates. Some teachers saw that they were not the only ones that provide knowledge, but they were also facilitators. But the autonomy of learners was relatively low. There were not many opportunities for students to choose their learning strategies, evaluate their own learning, or communicate freely. Teachers remained in charge of lesson content, interaction in the classroom, error correction, and assessment.

There were a number of obstacles to implementing CLT. The most critical hurdles were grammar-dominated examinations, large classes, a heavy syllabus, limited instructional time, students' uneven proficiency, fear of making

mistakes, a lack of adequate training for teachers in teaching English in practice, and a lack of academic resources. The lack of institutional support and fixed seating also hindered pair and group activities. The qualitative interviews verified that the teachers often resorted to translation and grammatical explanation as a solution for their time pressures and difficulties in dealing with students.

The findings from the mixed methods also supported the ideas of a hybrid approach that was context-based. Teachers did not prefer the absolute elimination of grammar or support of local language. They suggested teaching English grammar explicitly and using selective translation along with discussions, role-plays, presentations, purposeful writing and real communication. There was also strong support for examination reform, ongoing teacher training, the incorporation of listening and speaking into assessments, locally relevant teaching materials and institutional support. In general, the transition is clear, though there is a need for coordinated change at curriculum, teaching, assessment, professional development and school administration levels for meaningful communicative reform.

Discussion

The results reveal the complexity of the shift from GTM to communicative methods in Pakistan, which is influenced by institutional, pedagogical, linguistic, and assessment conditions. The fact that grammar explanation and translation remain predominant reinforces the earlier arguments that the implementation of educational reforms is not a one-sided process that can be done solely through the curriculum documents. Examination structure, instructional time, class size, student proficiency, school resources and expectations for student performance all have an impact on teachers' practices (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021).

This is because the use of GTM was very high, indicating its practicality in Pakistan's secondary schools. It helps teachers to convey abstract rules; it helps students to understand difficult words and phrases; it helps teachers to translate prescribed passages and to prepare students for written exams (Simion, 2022). The use of Urdu and regional languages also aids in comprehension in the classroom for students who may have limited English skills in multilingual classrooms. If students rely on these strategies too much, though, they will not be exposed to much English, and they will not have opportunities to speak spontaneously. Students may be able to identify a grammatical structure but not have enough competence to put it to use in actual situations (Chen, 2022).

Resistance to methodological change is not the main issue as the teacher's positive perceptions of CLT suggest. Participants agreed that pair work, discussion, role play, presentation, and meaningful tasks could contribute to the development of fluency, confidence, and participation of the learners (Williyan et al., 2023). The study findings are similar to those in other studies showing that teachers tend to embrace the communicative principles in teaching while being challenged in their practical implementation (Liu & Deris, 2023; Saleem et al., 2023). The moderate use of CLT reported suggests a gap between the professional vision and classroom possibilities (Bashir & Hussain, 2025).

The results of the teachers' and learners' roles showed that the roles of teachers and learners were changing and that the significance of the findings was consistent with communicative theories of language learning. The concept of CLT requires teachers to take a facilitative, activity-organizing role, while learners take an active role in creating and negotiating meaning (Wardoyo et al., 2025). Teachers reported that questioning and participation increased, but there was limited learner autonomy. The pattern may be due to past teacher-centered learning experiences, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and rote memorization of responses. Students need to be gradually prepared to enter into open-ended communication (Aurangzeb et al., 2022).

Assessment was seen as being the greatest obstacle. With exams focusing on isolated grammar, textbook knowledge, and memorized writing, it is understandable that teachers will focus on these. This negative washback hampers the implementation of the objectives of the curriculum on speaking, listening, creativity, and functional language use (Shahid et al., 2022). Assessment tasks, which involve practical skills in receiving, giving, and reproducing information and ideas in various settings, such as interviews, presentations, listening comprehension, writing of original texts, and contextualized grammar, are necessary in communicative reform (Andres-Kimkiman, 2025).

The results seem to agree with a hybrid method rather than a sharp methodological distinction. With regard to accuracy, grammar can help, and with respect to comprehension, strategic translation can be used to scaffold. It is only when these practices start to replace actual communication that they become problematic. A balanced lesson might start with contested input, move into a quick, concise grammar explanation, and then some controlled practice, ending with communicative use. This method caters to the multilingual and examination system of Pakistan and aims at achieving communicative competence. But it requires good teacher preparation, relevant didactical materials, adequate evaluation, and institutional support (Al Nahar et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The study findings suggest that English language instruction in the secondary stage in the provinces of Punjab and KPK is slowly moving away from a traditional Grammar-Translation orientation towards a communicative and learner-centered approach. But this transition is still incomplete and partial. Explicit grammar teaching, translation, memorization, written exercises, and explanation in the textbook are still heavily used by teachers. These practices continue to have an impact because they do match traditional assessments, the size of classrooms, the time available for learning, and students' demand for language assistance.

Meanwhile, teachers in secondary English schools understand the significance of communicative teaching in education. They think that participating in meaningful interaction can enhance students' speaking ability, confidence, classroom participation, and proficiency in using English in academic and social contexts. However, communicative activities are not consistently used. Simple questioning and pair work are more frequently used than role play, Information Gap activities, authentic listening, collaborative projects and independent presentations. As a result, the main structures of the policy and teacher beliefs have changed toward communication faster than the daily practice in the classroom.

The study also finds that the barriers to CLT are not necessarily teacher-based. The grammar-dominated exams, the massive syllabus, the high student numbers, the uneven level of students, the lack of resources, fixed seating, poor teacher development, and inadequate administrative support are all factors that hinder methodological changes. The success of communicative curricula by teachers cannot be achieved if assessment systems and institutional conditions keep reinforcing traditional curricula.

The other key finding is that there is no need to view GTM and CLT as mutually exclusive. To make grammar and translation totally eliminated in Pakistan's multilingual secondary-school setting is unrealistic and pedagogically inappropriate. It is possible to achieve accuracy through explicit grammar teaching and promotion of comprehension through selective use of Urdu and regional languages. Both should be the scaffolding of communication and not the end goal of learning, however. Pupils should be given frequent opportunities to practise grammatical and lexical knowledge in listening, talking, reading, writing, working and problem solving.

Therefore, the direction of the context-sensitive hybrid model is the most appropriate one. This approach should incorporate contextualized language input, teach for short periods, cover the forms, guide practice, promote meaningful interaction, provide supportive feedback, and assess in practice. Implementation of sustainability needs to be aligned with the goals of the curriculum, classroom implementation, teacher training, teaching materials, institutional resources, and examinations.

Lastly, due to the limited geographical scope of the study, the results cannot be easily generalized to other areas of the country other than Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The targeted population was the secondary level English teachers across Pakistan; however, other provinces/Administrative Divisions may experience varying situations. Teachers from Sindh, Balochistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir shall be included in future studies. Classroom observations and student-performance indicators should also be added to confirm the reported practices by teachers and to assess the impact of hybrid teaching.

Recommendations

Reforming Teacher Education and Professional Development

Teacher education must offer continuous practical training on the following areas: Communicative lesson planning, Interactive classroom management, Contextualized grammar teaching and Formative assessment. Training should be based not just on theoretical workshops, but also on lesson demonstrations, supervised practice, peer observation, mentoring, and feedback. The teacher should be able to plan activities for pairs and groups of students in large classes, and help those with mixed abilities. It is also the right time for language-proficiency programs to boost teachers' confidence in spoken English. To facilitate the sharing of resources, classroom experiences, and locally appropriate communicative strategies, a continuous professional-development community should be created in each provincial education department.

Aligning Assessment with Communicative Objectives

The secondary school exam must be matched with objectives of the curriculum concerning listening, speaking, reading, writing, and functional language. Use of memorised essays, predictable exam book questions, translation and isolated grammar exercises should be phased out gradually by examination boards. Internal and external assessment should include speaking interviews, oral presentations, listening comprehension, contextualized grammar, and original writing tasks. Explicit scoring rubrics should include items to assess fluency, accuracy, organization, appropriateness, and task achievement. Assessment reform would benefit students' learning by promoting classroom practical communication, which is a positive washback effect.

Developing Contextualized Teaching Materials

Dialogues, role plays, information gaps, collaborative projects, presentations, problem solving activities that have meaning in the local context and whose outcomes are reflected in textbooks and other supplementary materials should be included. Lessons should be linked to grammatical structures, vocabulary, and situations that learners might face in the learning environment, work, technology, and daily life. Teaching guides should offer alternative activities in large, multilingual, and resource-constrained classrooms. Audio recordings and offline videos, activity cards, pictures, and inexpensive worksheets should be provided. The materials should also reflect linguistic and cultural variations in Pakistan but not restrict students' experience in international communication contexts.

Improving Institutional and Classroom Support

School administrators have to make conditions conducive for teachers to use communicative activities. Class sizes should be smaller where possible, seating arrangements should be more flexible, and sufficient time should be allocated for interactive teaching. Schools should provide essential audio and internet equipment, printed resources, and easy-to-access digital content. For institutions with limited resources, consider alternative resources like peer interviews, role cards developed locally, and collaborative writing. Academic supervision should concentrate on mentoring and teaching enhancement, not just on syllabus completion. It should be prioritized to train and allocate resources to rural and disadvantaged schools.

Implementing a Context-Sensitive Hybrid Approach

The use of GTM and CLT features should be integrated into the classroom as per the proficiency levels of learners in the classroom and the classroom conditions. Grammar can be explained explicitly, and the difficult concepts can be explained in Urdu or regional languages, when necessary. All lessons with a form should, however, be followed by meaning through discussion, role play, pair work, presentation, purposeful writing or problem solving. Teaching and learning should gradually shift to independent communication from controlled production. Errors should be corrected constructively depending on the activity: a) if accuracy, b) if fluency. This balanced approach can address the examination needs while continuing to build students' overall communicative competence in a progressive manner.

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