

## ESL TEACHING USING GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD AT SECONDARY LEVEL ACCORDING TO THE CURRICULUM IN PUNJAB

**Zoha Kazim**

*M.Phil Scholar*

*The Women University, Multan*

*Gmail: [zohakazim35@gmail.com](mailto:zohakazim35@gmail.com)*

**Sumaira Manzoor**

*M.Phil. Scholar*

*The Women University, Multan*

*Gmail: [sumairamanzoor211@gmail.com](mailto:sumairamanzoor211@gmail.com)*

**Hafsa Farzand**

*M.Phil. Scholar*

*University of southern Punjab, Multan*

*Gmail: [hafsafarzand499@gmail.com](mailto:hafsafarzand499@gmail.com)*

**Fatima Kazim**

*M.Phil. Scholar*

*Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan*

*Gmail: [fatimakazim65@gmail.com](mailto:fatimakazim65@gmail.com)*

### **Abstract:**

*This research explores the implementation of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) at the secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan. Despite ongoing debates in language teaching methodology, GTM remains widely used in Pakistani schools due to its alignment with the national curriculum and the practical ease it provides to both teachers and students. The study aims to examine the reasons for the persistence of GTM, its strengths and limitations in teaching English grammar and vocabulary, and how it shapes classroom practices and assessment structures. Using content analysis, data was collected from English textbooks prescribed by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB), classroom observations, and secondary resources. The findings reveal that GTM is embedded in curriculum design and instruction, which relies heavily on translation, rote memorization, and rule-based grammar teaching, with minimal focus on speaking and communicative competence. Teachers and students prefer GTM due to its familiarity and exam-oriented outcomes, although it limits learners' ability to use English in real-life contexts. This study highlights the need to critically assess GTM's role in ESL instruction and recommends incorporating more communicative and learner-centered approaches to enhance language proficiency in Pakistani classrooms.*

**Keywords:** *Grammar Translation Method, Native Language, Target Language, Curriculum, Secondary School Learners*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was developed in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of its most prominent proponents include *Johann Meidinger, Johann Seiden-Stucker, Karl Plotz and H.S. Ollendorf*. They claimed that this method is a product of German scholarship. As, one of its critics describe its goal was: "To know everything about something rather than the thing itself." It was first found in United States as a Prussian Method. (*A Book by B. Sears, an American*

*Classics Teacher*, published in 1845 was entitled *The Ciceronian or the Prussian Method of Teaching the Elements of the Latin Language*.) [Kelley 1969]. This method is not a new one. It has been used by different names in different times and countries such as Old, Classical, Traditional or Prussian Method. Once, it was used for teaching Classical Languages such as, Latin or Greek, called Classical or Traditional Method. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was used with the aim of encouraging students to read and comprehension literature written in foreign languages. Additionally, it was believed that if students are taught the grammar of the foreign or second languages, they would grow more accustomed to the grammar of their own mother tongue, which would improve their speaking and writing skills. (Richards & Rodgers, 1999).

Basically, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is a method of second language teaching and learning in which grammar is taught to students by the translation in their mother tongue, which makes it easier for them to learn the second language and its grammar. All the activities in the classroom are carried out in students' native language. When it comes to the teaching and learning of a second language, there has never been an easy way to teach this new language to someone especially, who is not its native speaker. It is important to take into account a number of factor before the teaching of target language, including, students' background, learning environment, the language he/she know, and other things as well. Therefore, such factors must be taken into account when teachers select the method of teaching and content that might work for their students. Today's world is more interconnected. In this time period, communication is a fundamental part. Around the world, people communicate with one another in English. (Hedge, 2001). According to Chang (2011), in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, GTM was the most widely used method of teaching languages, especially in situations where reading comprehension was prioritized over spoken communication. Because success was just on the accuracy of the translation through careful examination of grammatical structures. At that time, the Ottoman Empire's educational policies supported GTM as the principal method of learning languages.

The background of this research paper is the use of Grammar Translation Method at secondary level in the teaching of English as a target language, in the schools of Pakistan according to the syllabus design by the curriculum officers and teachers.

### Statement of the Problem

This research analyzes the implementation of GTM inside the ESL classrooms. It especially focuses on exploring the use of this method for secondary level school students. It discusses how students are taught English as a second language and to what extent, it is helpful for them to learn English with this method. English curriculum is designed by following this method. That's why, teachers have to use the Grammar Translation Method in the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and in developing students' reading and writing skills.

### Research Objectives

The objectives of this research paper are stated as under:

- To throw light on the reasons for the continued use of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in ESL teaching at the secondary level in Pakistan and its relation to the national curriculum.
- To discuss the strengths and weaknesses of GTM in teaching English grammar and vocabulary to secondary school students.
- To analyze teachers' perceptions of GTM and understand why there is limited resistance to its role in curriculum design.

### Research Questions

In this research paper, the analysis of Grammar Translation Method will be done in the light of following questions:

1. Why is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) still used for ESL teaching at the secondary level in Pakistan, and how does it relate to the national curriculum?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of using GTM for teaching English grammar and vocabulary in Pakistani schools?
3. How do teachers view GTM, and why is there limited resistance to its use in curriculum design?

### Significance of Study

This research is very useful for the reason that, in Pakistan, English as a target language is taught using students' native language. As, Urdu is the native language of Pakistan. GTM is a method of language teaching and learning which makes use of the learners' native language. Translation is a primary means of language teaching and learning in this method. Without it, students would not be able to learn language. In this research paper, analysis of GTM has been done in the light of designed syllabus, exploring its advantages, disadvantages, how it affect students performance in the learning of English language as well as the teaching and learning techniques used in this method. So, this research is very important as it is based on the implementation of Grammar Translation Method in ESL classrooms according to the curriculum designed by Punjab Textbook Board Lahore, at secondary level in Pakistan.

### LITERATURE REVIEW:

#### Theoretical Framework:

According to *Richards & Rodgers*, GTM is a method of second or foreign language teaching which helps students to study literature of the target language. In this method, language is taught and learnt by providing the detail of grammar rules. Then these rules are applied to different tasks, assigned to the students by the teacher. These tasks include the translation of sentences from one language to another. It makes use of grammar and translation as the main teaching and learning activities.

GTM was the effective method of teaching foreign and European languages from 1840's till 1940's. In modified form, it is still commonly used in various regions of the world today. Howatt (1984) noted that, GTM at its best, was not necessarily that error that its critics portrayed it to be. The worst of its excesses were introduced by people who wanted to show that learning French or German was just as hard as learning classical languages. It led to the type of grammar translation courses that thousands of students recall with distaste. For them, learning a target language meant having to spend hours memorizing list of useless grammar rules and vocabulary while also trying to translate laborious and literary prose. GTM frustrate students' a lot of time, but it places you obligation on teachers. It is still employed in circumstances when reading literary material is the main goal of second language learning and speaking proficiency is not necessarily required. (Richards & Rodgers, 1999).

The key objectives of GTM in ESL teaching are to develop students' ability to read and understand literature in the target language, translate between the native and target languages, and build a solid foundation in grammar and vocabulary. This method is especially prevalent in regions like Pakistan, where English is taught as a second language and the focus of the curriculum often leans toward accuracy over fluency. GTM helps learners understand complex grammar structures

through their native language and is perceived as easier to implement for teachers with limited target-language proficiency.

Several defining characteristics of GTM contribute to its continued use. Instruction is mostly delivered in the native language of the learners, with minimal use of the target language. Grammar is taught deductively, meaning rules are explained first and then practiced. Vocabulary is presented in the form of isolated word lists rather than in contextual usage. Lessons often revolve around sentence-level translations, and students are expected to memorize vocabulary and grammar rules. Pronunciation and oral communication are generally neglected, while accuracy in grammar and written translation is heavily emphasized. Mistakes are discouraged, and the teacher is often the central authority in the classroom.

While GTM has several advantages: such as ease of use, emphasis on grammatical accuracy, and suitability for reading-based objectives—it also has notable drawbacks. It does not follow the natural order of language acquisition (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and it inhibits the development of speaking fluency. Since learners are encouraged to translate mentally from their native language, spontaneous communication becomes difficult. Additionally, the method often becomes monotonous, overly reliant on textbooks, and disconnected from real-world language use. It provides limited opportunity for interaction, and many students fail to acquire functional communication skills in the target language.

Despite its limitations, GTM remains in practice, especially in educational contexts where the curriculum supports a grammar-translation approach, and where emphasis is placed on examination performance, reading comprehension, and grammatical accuracy. Therefore, understanding its theoretical underpinnings is essential for critically evaluating its role in ESL instruction, particularly in contexts like Pakistan, where English continues to be taught using traditional methods.

### **Related Researches**

*Dr. Saber Ahmed Hago Eisa (2020)* in his research discussed the use of GTM in an EFL context add primary or secondary level in Saudi Arabia. Data was collected from 35 English teachers through questionnaires and interviews. The study highlighted both strengths and weaknesses of GTM in developing students' speaking and writing skills. The researcher recommended adopting an eclectic approach to better address learners' needs, rather than relying solely on one method.

*Milawati (2019)* in his research studied the use of GTM as a current practice in an EFL classroom through observation, using field notes and audio tapes. Data included 55 teacher utterances, showing that vocabulary was taught word-by-word via translation, grammar rules were explicitly explained, and the native language was frequently used. The study concluded that GTM remains a practical tool for teaching grammar and vocabulary, despite its limitations.

*Marzana Rahman (2012)* found GTM as effective for early learners based on her teaching experience at St. Mary's International School in Bangladesh, for the students of (KG-1 to Grade 2) who struggled to understand the target language. She observed that teachers used both the native and target languages to explain concepts. GTM was chosen to meet learners' needs, particularly for those with low English proficiency.

*Uzma Kirn & Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad Baig (2021)* compared GTM and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in EFL classrooms in Pakistan in his experimental study. While GTM was found effective in helping students learn grammar through their native language (Urdu), CLT was

recommended for enhancing communicative competence. The study acknowledged GTM's continued use in classrooms, despite criticism.

This study is distinct from others because it discusses the use of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) at secondary level schools in Punjab. Not only, it analyzes the use of this method in classroom but also throws light on the designing of English curriculum, taught as a compulsory subject, follows GTM. This research explains that GTM is used for ESL Teaching in Pakistan because English Grammar is found difficult for students as well as teachers also find it difficult to teach in English. When I was teaching at Noukhez Public High School, there, I found that a teacher was teaching English subject to grade 9 and grade 10 but she has done the specialization in Economics. From this, we can guess that why teachers don't resist against the designing of English syllabus, which is designed according to the Grammar Translation Method. Because they are not specialized or fluent in English and start teaching any subject.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Nature of Research

This study is qualitative in nature, which aims to explore the use of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in ESL teaching at the secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan. It focuses on understanding how GTM is embedded in curriculum design, teaching practices, and assessment patterns.

### Model of Analysis

The study employs a **content analysis model** to examine English textbooks, classroom techniques, and exam structures. The analysis focuses on identifying features of GTM, such as translation, rote memorization, and grammar-based instruction.

### Data Collection

Data was collected from official English Compulsory and Grammar & Composition textbooks prescribed by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB), along with exam papers and teacher practices reported through secondary sources.

## DATA ANALYSIS

In this research, the researchers have conducted the data analysis through qualitative content approach to identify patterns aligned with GTM. The main aim was to evaluate how this method is applied in the English curriculum, textbooks, classroom teaching, and board examinations at the secondary level in Punjab, Pakistan that reflect its practices.

### Use of GTM in English Curriculum at Secondary Level:

There are many methods or approaches used for teaching and learning foreign or second language. In this research, the researchers have analyzed the use of GTM at secondary level in Punjab province of Pakistan.

### Teaching and Learning Material

In Pakistan, English is taught as a compulsory subject from grade 1 to 12. At secondary level, students are taught two separate books of English. One is English Compulsory Textbook and the other one is, English Grammar and Composition Textbook. The curriculum of both the books is designed in the way that teachers will use Grammar Translation Method. The curriculum of first book include 12 chapters. These chapters are in the target language (English), but taught with the translation into the native language (Urdu). At the end of each chapter, glossary is given in the form of vocabulary (isolated words), which is taught to students while giving the translation of each word. Then, there is a question answer part. Questions are given in English language, teacher

tell the answers or sometimes students have to find their answers from the chapter which has been learnt. Vocabulary is taught through the columns given at the end of the chapter. Students have to join these columns by choosing the correct meanings of the given words. Then, isolated words are found which students have to use in making sentences themselves. Vocabulary is also taught by the given M.C.Q.s type questions.

As far as English Grammar and Composition Textbook is concerned, it comprises of grammar, including tenses, grammar rules, form of verbs, and reading comprehension passages. Tenses are present in this book in deep detail. This book has been designed by following GTM. It includes the grammar exercises in Urdu language. Teacher teaches tenses by giving detailed explanation of each. Let's take an example: If teacher is teaching Past Indefinite Tense, first he/she will tell them how they would be able to know which tense is in the given sentence. For students' ease, he/she very tell them the identification of tense which is being taught in the classroom. As, the Urdu sentence is: اس نے میری مدد کی۔ In this sentence, the teacher will tell them, the sentence will be Past Indefinite which will be ended at some alphabets like: ے، ی، ا، Students cram it. When they are given sentences related to that tense, they easily produce sentences in English.

Form of verbs are also found in the Grammar book. Teacher says students to memorize these because it would be helpful for them while producing new sentences, that which form of verbs is to be used in the sentence.

Reading Comprehension Passages are also found in the designed syllabus. These passages are in the target language (English). At the end of these passages, some questions are given. Teacher reads the given passage loudly, and translate it into the native language (Urdu). Then ask students to find the answers of the given questions from the passage.

### **Role of Students' Native Language**

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. For ESL teaching at secondary level, Urdu is used for the teaching of English language. Because students find it a difficult task to learn a new language without the use of their mother tongue. It is used for explaining the concepts like grammar rules, vocabulary and in teaching translation. Students are able to easily understand the target language with the help of their mother tongue. That's why, in this method, the use of native and target language go hand in hand. It is easy for both teachers and students. The reason is a teacher can easily clear students' concepts using their mother tongue as well as students also pick up the concept quickly.

### **Nature of Interaction in the Classroom**

In Grammar Translation Method, the interaction between teacher and students occur frequently because teacher listen the lesson from students on daily basis or almost every student is given a chance of it. But the interaction between student- student is negligible. All the time, teacher dedicates in teaching and listening lesson from them. So, students have no chance to interact with each other.

### **Curriculum Designing of English Follows GTM**

Here, in this research paper, the researcher has discussed the syllabus of English, taught as a compulsory subject at secondary level in Punjab. This syllabus is designed by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore (PCTB). At secondary level, there are two English books which students have to study. These include, English Compulsory Textbook and English Grammar and Composition Textbook. The syllabus of first one is designed in English, while the other one's is designed in both English and Urdu language.

### **Role of GTM in Conduction of Exams:**

The board exams conducted for Secondary School Learners' follow the Grammar Translation Method. Paper of English is designed according to this method. From English Compulsory Textbook, two passages of 8 marks are given in English and students are supposed to translate these into the other language. From the Grammar book, 5 sentences are given in English and students are asked to change these sentences from active to passive or from passive to active voice. 10 marks reading comprehension passage is given in English; students have to read this message carefully, and answer the given questions at the end of the passage in English.

### **Is GTM Useful For Secondary School Learners?**

Yes, according to the researcher, this method is useful to some extent, for students. Because some learners easily understand the lesson in target language, but most of them find it difficult. When teacher translate the lesson into Urdu, they are able to understand the lesson quickly.

### **Present Situation of Teaching English Language Grammar and Vocabulary in Pakistan**

Nowadays, English has become an international language and is used as a means of communication all around the globe. It is taught as a compulsory subject from play group to graduation level in Pakistan. After the learning of many years, students still find English grammar difficult and are unable to use English language in their daily lives. Although, it is recommended not to use GTM because it does not fulfill students requirements and less helpful in complete learning of second language. But, it is most widely used method of can be teaching and learning in Pakistan. With this method, at least, students are able to use and communicate in English to some extent. It is taught as a subject not as a language course. So, teachers teach students this subject according to the preparation of their exams, because in a written exam speaking skills are not tested, only writing and reading skills are tested, that how much accuracy students have in using grammar rules and to what extent they can read and answer the given questions in the paper, like in the case of reading comprehension passage.

Teacher explains the grammar rules in the way, first, he/she write tense name on the whiteboard which they are going to teach. Then, he/she write sentence and tell students by underlining each word: subject, verb, and object. For example: "Ahmad bought a new bicycle." In this sentence, teacher will tell: Ahmad (subject), Bought (verb), and Bicycle (object). In this way, grammar is taught to students at secondary level. Teacher explains each and every thing in detail because they think that, students pick up the concept this way, very quickly.

### **Techniques Used By Teachers At Secondary Level For Teaching English**

As, it has been mentioned earlier in this research article, that the syllabus of English compulsory subject at secondary level follows GTM. Now, let's take a look at some techniques which teachers use in the classroom for ESL teaching. These techniques are given below:

- 1) **Translation:** In GTM, translation is a finding means of language teaching. Without it, the learning of second language is not possible. As, in English Compulsory Textbook, the chapters are taught with the translation of English to Urdu. Exercises of grammar are given in English Grammar and Composition Textbook in Urdu. Students practice these exercises while translating this sentences from Urdu to English.
- 2) **Memorization:** At secondary level, by following this method, vocabulary, grammar and steps from compulsory book are taught by memorization. Students are asked to memorize all these things. Because these would be included in their exam.

- 3) **Deductive Application of Rules:** At secondary level, students are not our separate book of English Grammar, comprises of English grammar rules in deep detail. First, teachers teach students, the tenses by using these grammar rules in producing sentences. Then, he/she assigns them the exercises from the book for applying the grammar rules while making news sentences. Students produce these sentences in English while making mistakes.
- 4) **Reading Comprehension Passages:** Students are given comprehension passages in Urdu, asked to read and translate into English. Questions are asked in first language (Urdu) and answers are required in second language (English).
- 5) **Fill in the Blanks/M.C.Q.s:** In English compulsory book, students are taught vocabulary in the form of isolated words. Then, it is asked in the form of M.C.Q.s type questions. Four options are given in the target language and students have to choose our correct one, related to the given word. From this book, the chapters which are taught, teacher give fill in the blank type questions to check students knowledge that how much they have got the lesson.

## CONCLUSION

Above discussion proves it very well that using Grammar Translation Method in Secondary Schools of Punjab is a problem that is so visible. It also deals with the effectiveness of GTM for secondary school learners as well as the present situation of teaching English grammar in Pakistan. Pros and cons of this method has been discussed with respect to the English curriculum, taught at secondary level. The reason I have found for English curriculum designing according to GTM, maybe it is an easiest method for second language learning and can be implemented in the classroom easily. Because it does not require fluent teachers in English language. The drawbacks include, students are not given the chance of communicating in the target language (English) because of putting more emphasis only on reading and written texts. All the time, teacher uses mother tongue (Urdu) for teaching lessons in the classroom. Very little teaching is done in the target language which includes, reading of passages written in English.

Teaching and learning material is followed from the books included in the course.

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