

Comparing GTM and Direct Method for Enhancing Creative Writing and Speaking in Pakistani EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

This literature review discusses two widely used methods for teaching English in Pakistan: The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method. GTM is commonly applied in Pakistani classrooms and focuses on grammar rules, memorizing vocabulary, and translating English into the native language. While this approach helps students understand sentence structures and perform well in exams, it often falls short in enhancing their ability to speak or write creatively. In contrast, the Direct Method encourages the exclusive use of English and emphasizes real-life communication through speaking and listening activities. This approach supports natural language use and fluency. Drawing on both national and international studies, the review compares the strengths and weaknesses of these methods. GTM is found to be effective for exam-oriented learning and grammatical accuracy, whereas the Direct Method proves more beneficial for developing confidence in speaking and encouraging creative expression. Overall, while both methods have their advantages, the Direct Method is considered more effective in fostering active and creative language use. The findings suggest that neither method alone fully addresses the complex needs of EFL learners in Pakistan. Therefore, the review recommends an integrated pedagogical approach that combines the structural rigor of GTM with the communicative strength of the Direct Method to promote both accuracy and fluency in language learning.

Keywords: Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Creative Writing, Speaking Proficiency, Pakistani EFL Learners

Introduction

Overview of EFL Context in Pakistan

In Pakistan, English holds a conflicting position. It helps many young people succeed, yet it also blocks opportunities for others. Most Pakistanis, even in cities, know only

basic English words. They cannot understand or speak it fluently. In contrast, the elite use English naturally and casually, not to impress but out of habit. English is the main language of government and law. Court judgments and official orders are written in English. In Pakistan, the military and bureaucracy use English. The same goes for universities, media, NGOs, and research centers. English is seen as a language of power and status. English use in Pakistan has changed over time. Different generations have used it in different ways. Studies also look at how English might shape the country's future (Rahman, 2020).

English has deeply shaped Pakistan's education system, job market, and social structure. Over the years, it has moved from being a colonial legacy to a marker of progress and success. Its influence is clear in how it opens doors to better schools and career opportunities. However, access to English is not equal; students in rural areas often face more challenges than those in cities. There's a growing call for fair and practical language policies to help reduce this divide and make English learning more accessible for everyone across the country (Mehmood et al., 2024).

Khan et al. (2025) studied English teaching in Pakistan. They looked at how well students learn through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the role of teacher training. The study used both numbers and interviews. Results showed CLT works better than old teaching methods. Also, trained teachers help students learn more. The authors said teachers need proper training and ongoing support. They also said teachers face many problems in classrooms.

These results match what Channa (2017) found earlier. He looked at how English was taught in public schools in the past. He said teaching quality has always been low in government schools. Rich schools teach English better and help students get good jobs. In 2009, a policy started English from Grade 1 and used English for science and math from Grade 4. But it was not done well. Channa said teachers should help make education policies to improve learning for all.

Adding another layer to the discussion, Ali (2025) examined how Pakistan's language-in-education policies are shaped by colonial legacies and neoliberal globalization. Applying Tollefson's historical-structural lens, the study analyzed how NGOs like SPELT and LAP strive for inclusivity but unintentionally reinforce English hegemony. English remains a symbol of progress and modernity, while local languages are marginalized, reinforcing social stratification. Ali's findings suggest that unless policies are critically re-evaluated, the current system will continue to favor elite groups and widen educational disparities.

Wang et al. (2023) discuss the vital role of English in China and Pakistan as a symbol of opportunity and development. The article compares teaching methods, teacher training, and challenges in both countries. China focuses on language skills for global influence, while Pakistan connects English with socio-economic mobility. The study highlights the value of digital tools and suggests addressing shared challenges to improve English education and support national progress.

Challenges in Creative and Academic Writing in Pakistan

Developing English writing skills among ESL learners in Pakistan remains a significant challenge, especially in the context of academic and creative writing. Naseem et al. (2021) found that ESL learners in Pakistan struggle with grammar,

weak vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling errors, and overall coherence in writing. Learners particularly face difficulty with verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and organizing ideas. Cultural and rhetorical differences also negatively affect writing style and structure. Similarly, Fatima et al. (2024) revealed that creative writing enhances academic performance by promoting self-expression and artistic development. However, students in Pakistan face challenges such as lack of institutional support, outdated teaching methods, and limited creative opportunities. Traditional classroom practices and poorly trained teachers hinder the growth of creativity.

In line with these findings, Fitria (2024) explored how English creative writing helps students develop creativity and potential. The study used a library research method. Findings show that creative writing includes storytelling, characters, personal views, and informal styles. It covers both fiction and nonfiction forms like poetry, stories, plays, scripts, and articles. This type of writing aims to entertain and engage readers. It builds imagination and research skills. Creative writing also boosts language ability and self-expression. Students can improve by reading literature, writing regularly, trying different styles, using prompts, and accepting feedback. These habits enhance imagination, vocabulary, and message delivery.

Role of Culture and Strategy Use in EFL

Devrim and Bayyurt (2010) found that students prefer learning both local and target language cultures and value native and non-native English teachers equally. The study highlights the importance of including student perspectives to improve language curricula. Similarly, Deneme (2010) showed that cultural background shapes learners' strategy use. Jordanian and Turkish students favored memory and affective strategies more than Spanish students, while Jordanians used more social strategies than Turkish learners. Both studies stress the need to consider cultural context and learner preferences in EFL instruction.

Alfaqi et al. (2025) emphasized that cultural awareness enhances EFL learners' communication skills and intercultural competence. Students with cultural knowledge became more confident and effective communicators. However, barriers included limited resources and student reluctance toward cultural topics. The study recommends integrating cultural content, using authentic materials, and training teachers to create inclusive, interactive classrooms. Shen et al. (2025) demonstrated that SVVR enhances argumentative writing, particularly in content and language use, and improves self-regulation through metacognitive and motivational strategies. While gains in cognitive and social strategies were limited, themes such as contextual support, interaction, and motivation suggest SVVR's potential for strengthening writing and learning in EFL contexts. Axtamova (2025) discussed different methods used in teaching English as a second or foreign language. These methods aim to help students learn and communicate effectively. The field of English language teaching has changed over time to meet learners' varied needs. The study outlines common teaching approaches, their benefits, challenges, and how they are used in classrooms.

Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

Naghiyeva (2025) reviewed the use of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) in non-native English settings. GTM is effective for teaching grammar and translation, building vocabulary and accuracy. However, it overlooks speaking and listening, limiting communicative ability. The study suggests combining methods, using technology, promoting real interaction, and focusing on learners' needs to modernize GTM. Rosi (2024) examined the continued use of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) in English teaching. GTM, developed in the 19th century, focuses on grammar rules and reading texts, with little emphasis on speaking. As a result, learners often fail to use the language in real situations. Despite its limitations, GTM is still common in classrooms. This study reviewed its history, key features, pros and cons, and teaching techniques. It found that GTM supports grammar and vocabulary learning but lacks in building communication skills. The study offers suggestions to make teaching more interactive and communicative.

Historical and Conceptual Perspectives

Corvo Sánchez (2021) examines the widespread but unclear understanding of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), especially in Spanish-language literature. Many teachers and researchers rely on vague or outdated ideas about GTM. The article challenges the belief that foreign language teaching started with GTM and criticizes its oversimplification as merely grammar-focused. Coffey (2025) outlined how language teaching has evolved with geopolitical and cultural changes. Language learning developed alongside writing and technologies that spread knowledge. Historical teaching texts reveal changes in methods and ideas. However, these texts limit our view, as many language interactions were never recorded. Historians' study old grammars and glossaries but must also consider cultural contexts. Using an ethnographic view helps uncover hidden power dynamics that shaped language value and use.

GTM in Global and Comparative Contexts

Bunrosy and Vireak (2024) examined how Cambodia's English Language Teaching (ELT) practices compare with global trends. While communicative methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are widely adopted internationally, Cambodia still relies heavily on the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), particularly in rural areas. The study attributes this reliance to challenges like inadequate teacher training and limited technological resources. A hybrid instructional model that combines traditional and communicative approaches is beginning to take shape. However, the researchers emphasize that sustained support and investment are essential to align local practices with global ELT standards.

Further exploring instructional choices, Nisha (2024) contrasted GTM with CLT and underscored that teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) requires different strategies than teaching it as a first language. While CLT is now widely endorsed, GTM retains certain advantages in specific learning environments. The article highlights the importance of aligning teaching methods with local contexts and learner diversity. Hasan (2025) added to the discussion by comparing GTM, the

Direct Method, and CLT. He found that mixing all three works best. This mix helps with grammar, speaking skills, and real-life communication. Ali et al. (2025) also did a survey with English teachers in private universities in Karachi. Most teachers liked CLT the most. GTM was still used but not as much. Their findings show a clear move toward more student-friendly and tech-based teaching methods.

Challenges of GTM in Diverse EFL Contexts

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) has long been used to teach grammar. But many now see it as outdated, especially in today's mixed and multicultural classrooms. Shahina (2025) looked at how GTM works in such settings. She found problems like different language backgrounds, mixed skill levels, and students losing interest. GTM helps with grammar, but its fixed way of teaching doesn't work well for all types of students. Shahina suggests making changes to GTM so it can fit different cultures and support all learners better.

In the same way, Barchinoy (2025) also sees GTM as an old method. He says that its focus on translation and memorization keeps students from learning how to speak and understand English in real life. His paper supports newer methods that help students talk, listen, and use English in real situations. He thinks classes should use activities and tasks that connect with everyday language use.

Yuan (2025) agrees that GTM is good for learning grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. But it doesn't help much with speaking or listening. That makes it weak for real communication. It works best for students who want to do well in exams, especially those that test grammar and reading. GTM is also useful for learning translation and literature. It may not build fluency, but it still helps in academic and exam-focused learning.

Regional Evaluations and Classroom Realities in Pakistan

In Pakistan, many researchers have studied how well the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) works in today's classrooms. Siddique and Zahid (2025) looked at BS-level students in Rahim Yar Khan. They found that GTM helped with grammar but not with speaking. Students talked more only when their teachers spoke English fluently. Those teachers improved students' confidence and pronunciation. Bano (2025) also said GTM doesn't work well in Pakistan's multilingual classrooms. It focuses on memorization and ignores speaking and listening. She suggested using methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBL), which are better for today's learners.

Other studies also support using new or mixed methods. Haque et al. (2021) tried a mix of GTM and TBLT in public schools in Okara. Students showed better learning and were more active in class. Hussain et al. (2022) looked at college students. They studied how GTM and the Direct Method affected students emotionally. They also talked about using the mother tongue in English classes. This helped improve teaching strategies in higher education. Kirn and Baig (2021) compared GTM and CLT for teaching grammar to 7th graders. Students who learned through CLT did much better. They suggested using a simple form of CLT to improve grammar in English classes.

Direct Method

The Direct Method emphasizes full immersion in the target language, avoiding the use of the learners' native language. It focuses primarily on speaking and listening, making it especially effective for developing oral communication skills among beginner learners (Dakhlan & Tanucan, 2024). The teacher plays a central role in delivering instruction, and native speakers are often preferred due to their fluency and natural command of the language (Agapova, 2021). However, the method presents challenges in teaching reading, writing, and complex grammatical structures, and its success heavily depends on the teacher's language proficiency.

Despite these limitations, various studies confirm the method's strengths. For instance Simanjuntak and Prayuda (2025) conducted a quasi-experimental study involving two student groups and found that those taught through the Direct Method showed significantly higher gains in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and confidence. Their scores improved from 60.63 to 84.1, compared to the control group's rise from 57.16 to 71. These findings show that the Direct Method helps improve speaking skills. But the method also has some limits. To make it better, some teachers suggest using the native language in the beginning. Agapova (2021) said this helps students understand better and feel less nervous. Later, they can slowly move to full English use. This way, students can understand and speak more confidently.

The Direct Method also works well for learning new words. Yuldoshova and Khudoyorova (2021) found that using pictures, real objects, and gestures made learning fun and easier. Students remembered words better and felt more motivated. In many classrooms today, teachers don't use the Direct Method alone. They mix it with other techniques, like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Zairjanovich et al. (2025) said most teachers in their study used CLT, often with the Direct Method. Videos and images were also used a lot, especially with beginners, to keep lessons interesting and easier to follow.

Group work and role-play make Direct Method lessons even better. Asgawanti et al. (2025) found that group discussions made students more confident in speaking (80%) and more comfortable (75%). It also increased their talking in class by 60%. Kedungjati (2025) shared five steps to use role-play well: prepare, assign roles, explain, evaluate, and reflect. These steps help students speak better and feel more sure of themselves. Role-play isn't just for speaking. Axrorova (2025) showed it also helps with writing. Students used better words, clearer ideas, and were more active. It helped connect speaking and writing, improving both fluency and accuracy.

Comparison of GTM and Direct Method

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method are two very different ways of teaching a language. GTM is old and focuses on grammar, vocabulary lists, and translation. It helps with reading and writing but mostly ignores speaking and listening. Even though people often criticize it, GTM is still used where grammar and reading matter most (Zayniddinova, 2025).

Akyıldız (2024) said GTM is good for learning grammar correctly. But it doesn't help much with real-life conversation. To fix this, Akyıldız suggested mixing GTM with modern methods, like tech tools and speaking activities. This kind of blended learning is great for today's students who like interactive and flexible lessons. Good teacher

training and smart use of digital tools are key for success. The Direct Method came as an answer to GTM's weak points. It teaches language through full use of the target language, with no translation (Oraznepesova & Berdiyeva, 2025). Students learn by speaking, listening, acting out scenes, using pictures, and reading aloud. This builds fluency and confidence.

Babayev (2025) asked students to rate different teaching methods. The Direct Method came in second after Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Students liked it for helping with speaking and pronunciation. But they also said it doesn't teach grammar very well. Most students thought that real-life practice and conversation helped them learn the most.

Even though English is taught early in many schools, students still struggle to speak well. Chasipanta et al. (2022) said this happens because schools still use old methods like GTM and the Audiolingual Method. These focus too much on memory and not enough on speaking. The authors said that lessons should include group work, role-plays, and discussions activities that help students use English in real ways, like in the Direct Method and CLT.

To sum up, GTM and the Direct Method both have strengths. GTM helps with grammar and structure. The Direct Method helps with fluency and speaking in real life. New research shows that combining them with modern, interactive methods can create better language learning for today's students.

Creativity and Language Learning

Creativity in language learning has become more important, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Oladimeji (2025) talked about how English helps students think and write creatively. The study showed that students use their thinking skills while writing, and English plays a key part in this. When teachers use thinking-based methods in class, students learn to express ideas in a more creative way.

Zhang and Umeanowai (2025) looked at how AI tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly help in learning English. These tools improved students' vocabulary, sentence structure, and fluency. The study also noticed global trends like better motivation, better assessments, and more use of technology. This shows that digital tools can really support creative writing in English. But some problems still exist. Siddiqui et al. (2025) found that during the switch to online learning, many teachers were not trained to use digital tools. They didn't have enough resources to use creative methods like games or slides, especially in grammar lessons.

Islam and Roy (2024) found it hard for students to improve speaking. Many felt nervous, lacked practice, and had low confidence. Also, the exam system focused too much on reading and writing. This left little room for speaking or creativity in class. Both studies say that teachers need support and training. Classrooms should include fun and engaging activities. This can help students feel confident, speak more, and be creative in learning English.

Recommendations from Literature Review

Many studies suggest new ways to make English learning better. One method is blended learning. It mixes classroom teaching with online tools. Sumbayak et al. (2025) saw good results in a third-semester writing course. Students improved their

grammar and were more active. Most of them felt motivated and liked the method. Another idea is the flipped classroom. Zhai et al. (2025) studied this with 420 students. In this model, students watch videos before class. In class, they work together in groups. The study found better creativity, higher self-esteem, and more social interaction. Both studies show that using digital tools and group work helps students learn more. But more research is needed to see how long these effects last. Artificial intelligence is also being used. Van Horn (2024) said students using ChatGPT felt more confident and worked better with others. Some had tech problems or doubts, but most gave good feedback. Hossain and Al Younus (2025) also found that teachers liked ChatGPT. It helped students with ideas and writing structure. Still, they said teachers need training to use it well. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is another good strategy. Song et al. (2024) said it helped students think better and use real-world language. Vocabulary and interest in class also improved. But some teachers found it hard to manage. Orrala Tomalá (2025) talked about issues like anxiety and lack of focus. These make it hard for students to speak clearly. Teachers knew about the problem, but said they didn't have enough time to deal with it properly. All these studies say one thing: students learn better when teaching is flexible, fun, and supports both the mind and emotions.

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