AN ANALYSIS OF PREFERRED METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN BANGALORE, INDIA

By

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the preferred methods of teaching and learning English language among a sample of teachers and students from higher secondary schools in Bangalore, India. A total of 67 participants took part in this study which included 30 students (m=14, f=16) and 37 teachers (m=16, f=21). The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method was found to be the most preferred method of teaching English language among the teachers, whereas the Situational Language Teaching (SLT) was the least preferred method of teaching English language. Similarly, using written content in terms of books, newspapers, journals, etc., was found to be the most preferred method of learning language for the students, followed by learning through informal interaction. The least preferred method of learning English according to the students was the use of audio resources. Gender variability in preferences was also tested using independent samples t-tests, which revealed that male teachers gave significantly higher preference ratings for the direct method and audio lingual method in teaching, whereas male students also gave significantly higher preference ratings for the audio resources method in learning than their respective female counterparts. Both male and female teachers preferred the CLT method of teaching the most, while the use of written content was selected as the most preferable by both male and female students in terms of learning English language.

Keywords: Preferred Teaching Method, Preferred Learning Method, English Language.

INTRODUCTION

The English language holds an undisputed status in the modern globalized world, and has come to be intertwined with the economic, political, and cultural realities of a host of countries worldwide. It has reached a point where English language is almost synonymous with educational status or progress, and its importance in the new age of internet and networking is even more pronounced (Plonski, Teferra, & Brady, 2013). Even until 1950s, there existed no clear indication of the imminent rise of English as a global language (Crystal, 2003). Although the British colonial rule did extend the reach of English language to all the continents, it was only with the post-Second World War dominance of the American culture in facets of sciences, arts, technology, as well as politics and economy that led to the English language reaching a status of new found importance. At present, English is the most widely spoken and written language in the world, and it is also the richest in terms of vocabulary with over 250,000 different words (Ayusa, 2016).

In order to acknowledge the unprecedented role of English language in the modern era, it must be noted that it has become the official language in world academia, sciences, computing, tourism, politics, and diplomacy. More than 50 percent of the world's scientific periodicals and journals are in English, and almost four fifths of the information stored on the internet is also in English (Genc, & Bada, 2010; Ayusa, 2016). It is also estimated that by 2050, half the world's population will be proficient in speaking English (The Triumph of English, 2011). Given the increasing reliance on the English language, one major issue that has come up has been the nature in which it is

brought up among individuals in countries where English is not the primary language. Language instruction through educational institutions has played a pivotal role in the growth of English language in non-English speaking countries.

The most ideal path to developing English proficiency among non-native speakers in most countries has been through systematic instructions during schools at a relatively young age, which has some variations, but is widely accepted to be most effective (Archibald et al., 2006). Moreover, there is also a great deal of involvement from organizations based in English speaking countries such as English Language Teaching (ELT) and Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which provide funding in order to shape educational policies and encourage English proficiency in third world countries, which directly corresponds to development (Imam, 2005). While these policies and practices largely exist on a broader level and represent ideal versions, the exact results of such schemes remain very subjective as second language acquisition is affected by a vast array of linguistic, social, cultural, and psychological-personal factors (Nunam, 2003; Narayanan, Nair, & Iyyappan, 2008; Raja & Selvi, 2011; Al-Ahdal, Alfallaj, Al-Awaied, Al-Hattami, 2014).

India remains a developing nation striving towards a status of a global power, but has been affected by the same pitfalls in terms of nurturing an English speaking workforce that can compete with the rest of the world. The English language is definitely not new to the Indian subcontinent as during the British rule, English remained the medium of administration, communication and politics, which was carried forward by the English educated elite class after independence in 1947 (Imam, 2005). Given the population's vast linguistic diversity, English has surprisingly come to play a pivotal role in its social and economic evolution for many decades now (Azam, Chin, & Prakash, 2013), although the pace at which Indians have taken up the English language is still considered slow and far behind the other emerging countries (Kumar & Sailaja, 2015). One of the main precursors to such a state has been rulings of the

Education commission in 1961-66, which delineated English as a 'library language' to be enforced only in higher education (Reddy, 2012). It has led to a scenario where three fourths of graduates today come from regional language medium schools, which has led to English speaking proficiency being barely five percent of the total population (Murali, 2009; Kumar & Sailaja, 2015).

The teaching and learning of English in majority of elementary schools in India remain in an unruly state, characterized by poor attendance, disinterestedness, and constraints of materials and time, based on an elaborate syllabus that fails to address the vital aspects of English communication skills (Thakur, 2013). There are mentions of structured and systematized methods or approaches in all of the major education boards, but the reality of classrooms remain very different. The oral work is usually neglected, but writing, which is considered as an advanced skill, is rather taught in principle and learnt by rote memorizing (Reddy, 2012). This has led to a large number of graduates and working professionals who have English language proficiency on paper, but are mostly incompetent in proper English language use.

In terms of the major trends existing today in teaching English language, there remains an elaborate timeline of events that led to formulation of different methodologies which focus on different aspects of the same teaching process (Anjaneyulu, 2015). Although these methodologies have primarily come up to make up for flaws in their predecessors, in the context of India, these methods remain largely unexplored in terms of its prevalence, preferences or its consequences. Some of the most relevant English language teaching methods in India are given below with brief descriptions.

a) Direct Method

The Direct Method (DM) is an offshoot of the grammar-translation method, and represents a shift from literary language to language spoken on an everyday basis (Qing-xue & Jin-fang, 2007). It is also widely known as the natural method, as it is based on the natural everyday use, which gives more emphasis to teaching aural-oral skills (Mart, 2013a). In India, the teachers usually follow the

direct method of language teaching, where the target language, English (L2) itself is used as a medium of instruction. The positive aspect of this method is that students are trained to use the target language as well as the practice it in order to strengthen their aural-oral skills. As the target language is used directly, it remains difficult for school students, mostly from rural backgrounds to understand and communicate in English, as they remain more comfortable with their native language (Nunam, 2003; Raja & Selvi, 2011). In DM, translation is completely abandoned and grammar is taught inductively such that teachers themselves ask questions or initiate conversations in the target language (L2) and students are also required to respond back in L2.

b) Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method refers to a collection of approaches to develop competence in language use through individually meaningful learning experiences (Littlewood, 2013). In CLT, importance is given to communicative competence rather than linguistic competence, such that communicative proficiency is encouraged over mastery of sentence or grammar (Vongxay, 2013). It includes the ability to make use of the language for a range of different situations and purposes (Kolakaluri, 2015). The prime focus of CLT is on individual speech and it involves a trial and error process, with fluency in language and transmission of meaning as the most important goals.

In India, school teachers usually adopt this method, and they ensure that the target language, English (L2) is used by the students as a medium of communication. In this method, using translations from one's native language (L1) to target language (L2) is allowed only to a certain extent, depending on the teachers' judgment. Students are usually encouraged to take part in real communication and carry out meaningful tasks, and to use one's native language only when they find it difficult to use a specific phrase or a word (Qing-xue & Jin-fang, 2007). This liberty is given until the students become competent enough to speak well in English. In CLT, the guidance and skills of teachers remain the most crucial

aspects and only they can enable and motivate students to use spoken English not only in academic situations, but also in real life situations. Frequent practice enables students to develop a fluent and spontaneous conversation in English. It remains a popular method adopted into educational policies in many Asian countries as well in recent times (Nunam, 2003).

c) Audio Lingual Method (ALM)

The Audio Lingual Method (ALM) was derived from psychology and linguistics and describes language learning as a process of mastering the basic blocks or elements of language, and learning the rules of combining those elements (Qing-xue & Jin-fang, 2007). It is also known as the Drilling Method and is based on the Structuralist approach and modelled on the Behaviourist theory from the 1900s (Richards & Rogers, 1997). This method gives importance to hearing and speaking the target language (L2) before reading and writing. In schools and colleges in India, ALM is sometimes used to train the students for recitation of poems and dialogues in the target language. The teachers who use ALM argue that through drilling and dialogues, the English language can be learned as a process of habit formation (Mart, 2013b). In ALM, importance is given to the spoken form of the target language (L2) and its use in the classrooms is emphasized. Students imitate their teachers' pronunciations or are instructed to verbally repeat what they hear on audio tapes or recordings in order to improve their spoken English accent. The teachers continually provide feedback and correct the students' mistakes. It remains a very useful method of teaching English and is suitable for improving the pronunciation and accent of English learning students.

d) Bilingual Method

The Bilingual method of language teaching was brought up by C. J. Dodson in 1967 as an expansion of the audio-visual method. He identified the 3 Ps of learning any foreign language, which included presentation, practice, and production (Alexander, 1978). In the Bilingual method of language teaching, two languages are used, which consist of the mother tongue (L1) and the target language

(L2). BM is like a combination of the direct and grammar-translation method, and it encourages understanding through constant back and forth between two languages. In Bangalore, if the Bilingual method is used for English language teaching, then Kannada and English would be used simultaneously as a part of the verbal instruction. The benefit of using Bilingual method is that students have less inhibitions to use the target language as they can use their native language to fill in gaps anytime they do not know a specified word or pronunciation of a word. This method makes use of written language from the beginning and works best with a bilingual teacher who can shift between two languages while teaching (Baker, 2006).

e) Dr. West Method

It is known commonly as the Textbook method or the "New method" modelled on the works of Dr. Michael West, an administrator in Pre Independence India. According to West, "the bilingual child does not need to speak his second language (English) much, but rather read it" (Rahamathulla, 2008). It remains a home-grown approach that views the problem of English language from the standpoint of the social needs of the people rather than the academic context. This method emphasizes the need for proficiency in reading of a foreign language first as it remains the shortest route. Only after reading proficiency is ensured, individuals can aim towards understanding and purposeful use of the language (Ardhendu, 2011). Although the premises of the method are rudimentary, it perfectly captures the prevailing situations in India as large numbers of English language users are only proficient in laborious reading, while actual use of English remains limited.

f) Situational Language Teaching (SLT)

The Situational Language Teaching (SLT) approach is an offshoot of the Oral approach which was developed by British linguists from 1930s to 1960s. In SLT, language is seen as purposeful and always related to certain goals or real world situations (Kamhuber, 2010). In this method, the teaching of oral communication skills is given prime importance, which is later followed by the written form. In SLT, only the target language is used in the classrooms for instructions and students are increasingly encouraged to apply the language learnt in class to situations in real life (Hussain & Sajid, 2015). The meaning of a language units are derived through situations, and not through direct translations into native language, which helps in strengthening the associations with the newly learnt words or sentences (Hussain & Sajid, 2015). SLT trains the students to use language in particular situations, but CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method is preferred over SLT by the teachers because it is not possible to train the students to speak only for a few particular situations. Oral English communication should be spontaneous and students must be trained to use spoken English in any situation.

The methods described above capture the basic essence of the progress in the approaches people have had towards the issue of learning the English language. There has been a gradual shift towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its versions from earlier ones like the direct, situational based, and translation methods (Nunam, 2003). This shift in methodologies signify a process of change in trends of research, as well as education sectors, teacher and students profiles, English language standards and the overall society at large (Poon, 2009). The methods signify a macro level understanding of the prevailing systems of teaching. However, another point of consideration remains the realities of what students face, in terms of the methods they employ in the learning of English language. Granted that no single teaching method would work uniformly for all, it is important to also explore the methods used by students in learning the English language. Given below are some of the different learning methods used by English language students.

a) Informal interaction (with peers, friends)

Interaction of students with peers in the context of schools is usually very informal compared to language used when doing coursework or even interacting with teachers. Positive interactions help students to overcome their inhibitions and motivate them to speak English more. If mistakes are corrected among the peers during

interaction, without any ridicule, then there will not be fear in students of making mistakes, thus enabling them to speak in English without inhibitions. Informative interaction can help students learn new words and vocabulary, and it can also boost confidence among students to communicate in any given situation.

b) Written content (Reading Books and Newspapers)

Reading books and newspapers in English can help improve one's English skills in terms of vocabulary as well as grammar. It can help students acquire facts and content such that there is smoothness in communication because of the wide knowledge acquired through reading. Newspapers, magazines, and periodicals not only help in providing excellent practise of English skills, but also improve one's general knowledge. Academic books and journals help improve one's knowledge in the specific disciplines as well as in the inter-disciplinary areas. Books on fiction and poetry can also help in improving imagination and enabling students to enjoy the aesthetic beauty of various texts

c) Formal Interaction (with Teachers and Professors)

Interaction with professors and teachers can help improve spoken English as teachers and professors usually correct and guide students to learn spoken English. Students who are motivated by one's teachers and professors are inspired to speak well in English. They correct the mistakes which students make and enable them to face competitive situations in speaking English. Most students prefer to interact with teachers and professors and seek out their help in order to improve their English since teachers and professors are subject experts.

d) Audio Resources

Audio resources include podcasts, audiobooks, radio, etc., and it helps students learn vocabulary and pronunciation. Students generally use audio resources as a part of learning and improving their spoken English. Learning on the go is also possible with the help of audio resources through the use of smartphones, iPods, and portable audio players, which enable learners to improve their English language by listening to the spoken English audios.

e) Activities based on Spoken English

Activities in English language, such as debates, just a minute (JAM), public speaking, etc. are considered as preferred methods used by students to learn and improve their spoken English. At first, if the students are not fluent in spoken English, they might find it difficult to converse and take part in English debates and events. As they become fluent, it becomes easy for them to converse and participate in debates and other spoken English activities provided that they have good content knowledge of the topic in hand.

f) Audiovisual Resources (AVR)

Audio-visual resources are mostly used by teachers and professors to teach a range of different subjects, including the English language. In the same way, students also make use of audio-visual resources to learn a language. Watching English news channels and television programs can help develop good spoken English accent. Watching English movies can serve two different purposes, one for entertainment and other for improving language skills. Using audio-visual resources help reduce boredom and makes learning more interesting. Most of the e-courses are taught using audiovisual resources. Students can learn a second language as well as different subjects using Audio-visual resources. Many MOOC courses are taught using AV resources; Eg. Coursera, Open Yale Courses, etc. Due to the advancements in smartphones and video tablets, usage of audiovisual resources for learning purpose is convenient for learners to learn and teachers to teach.

1. Rationale of the Study

There exist a lot of debates and speculations with regard to the nature of pedagogic and academic philosophies, which would best nurture proficient English language users in India. While most of these discussions operate on very macro level, the exact reality of the conditions in the Indian classroom is often ignored. This research looked to explore the cognitions of the two most important players in terms of English language education; the teacher and the student. It is widely accepted that there remains numerous standardized methods of teaching and even

more methods of learning the English language as described above. This research aimed to get an idea of what kind of methods the teachers at the basic level prefer in teaching, along with the kind of methods that the students prefer and make use of while learning in order to find out whether there is any point of convergence between the two.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study used a mixed research design, employing both quantitative and qualitative measures to draw insights about the preferred methods of teaching and learning English language among two sample groups; English language teachers and students respectively. The quantitative part included a rating scale of preference of various teaching and learning methods, the results of which were analyzed using inferential statistics. The qualitative part included a set of open ended questions concerning various aspects of the teaching and learning processes, and frequencies were calculated based on responses. A questionnaire booklet was formulated, which consisted of both the qualitative and quantitative parts, and it was distributed among English language teachers and students in Bangalore, India.

2.2 Sample

The participants for this study comprised of two main groups; English language teachers and students. A total of 67 filled questionnaires were collected from participants in Bangalore, India, which included 37 teachers (m=16, f=21) and 30 students (m=14, f=16). The results were analyzed based on the questionnaire filled by the participants.

Students from various higher secondary schools from different parts of Bangalore, India were selected for the study. All the students were studying in English medium schools and had good background of English language as their medium of instruction was also in English. Teachers were taken from various higher secondary schools in Bangalore. The inclusion criteria for the teachers were that they taught English as the main subject and had at least a Master's degree in English with Bachelor's degree in

Education. Those who did not teach English as the main subject in higher secondary schools and those who did not have Master's degree in English and Bachelor's degree in education were excluded from the study.

The responses were collected from the higher secondary schools in which the teachers taught and responses were collected from the students from the same schools in order to analyze the preferred teaching and learning methods used by the teachers and students respectively.

2.3 Tools

In order to analyze the preferred methods of teaching spoken English by the teachers and preferred methods of learning spoken English by the students, a list of six most commonly used methods of teaching and learning English language were first identified (Table 1). In the student questionnaire, students were asked to rate the learning methods in terms of their preference. In the teacher questionnaire, teachers were asked to rate the preferred method of teaching English language. The teachers were asked to rate the six teaching methods in terms of their preference. In both the teacher questionnaire and the student questionnaire, the ratings were converted into standard scores for further analysis.

Apart from the rating scales, the participants were also asked to answer a few yes/no questions regarding their opinions about various aspects of English language learning and teaching. The teacher and the student questionnaire focused particularly on the notions relating to English language learning and teaching as a skill, teaching and learning motivation, attitudes, etc. In both the questionnaires, there were open-ended questions and the participants were given freedom to justify their answers as well as their thoughts on different aspects of

Teaching Methods	Learning Methods
Direct method	Informal interaction
Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT)	Written content
Bilingual method	Formal interaction
Dr. West method	Audio resources
Situational Language Teaching (SLT)	Activities based on spoken English
Audio Lingual method	Audio visual resources

Table 1. Teaching and Learning Methods of English Language

spoken English language learning and teaching.

2.4 Data Analysis

Two sets of data, one from the teacher questionnaire and the other from the student questionnaire were obtained and the scores were tabulated using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). In both the learning and teaching methods, the mean and the standard deviations were tabulated to find out the most preferred method of learning spoken English by the students and teaching spoken English by the teachers. The opinion based questions were tabulated and frequencies of the yes/no questions were also recorded. The average ratings of the preferred teaching and the preferred learning methods were compared between the two genders using a series of independent samples t-tests to find out if there were any significant differences between the male and female students and teachers in any of the learning or teaching methods preference.

3. Results

A total of 67 participants took part in this study and filled the questionnaire during the period from January to February 2017. A basic composition of the sample is given in Table 2.

3.1 Preferred Teaching Methods

In terms of analyzing the methods of teaching preferred by the teachers of English, they were provided an objective scale to rate six different teaching methods; mainly Direct method, Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT), Bilingual method, Western method, Situational Language Teaching method (SLT), and Audio Lingual method. Each participant provided ratings for each of these methods to indicate their preferences, and their responses were converted into standard scores for comparison. The average ratings given to the six methods are given in Table 3.

According to Table 3, it was found that the most preferred

Teaching Method	Mean	Std. Deviation
Direct method	3.43	1.501
Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT)	5.27	.902
Bilingual method	4.32	1.132
Dr. West's method	3.41	2.047
Situational Language Teaching (SLT)	1.86	1.228
Audio Lingual method	3.51	1.574

Table 3. Preferred Teaching Methods of the Participants (N=37)

method of teaching English language was the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method (mean=5.27, SD=0.902). As the participants were teachers, it could be assumed that it was the same method that they would have employed in the classrooms to teach spoken English communication skills to their students. It also echoes the similar notions teachers and instructors have had worldwide regarding the utility of the CLT method as the most relevant one for the classrooms. Although it is not perfect on its own, the CLT method still has been able to cover up huge limitations of the other methods.

The second most preferred method was the Bilingual method (mean=4.32, SD=1.13), which does have a huge relevance in the context of India, where the teachers do not have native speaker like competence in English language use. It remains one limitation of the CLT, and has been rightly covered by the Bilingual method, where both the teachers and students speak a common primary language (L1) and the target language (L2) such that the L1 aids the process of learning L2. The Situational Language Teaching (SLT) method remained the least preferred method, owing to the fact that it does not fully capture the needs of the Indian population. The fact that teachers rated it could also suggest some difficulties in using the method in classroom settings.

As a part of the study, the teachers were also asked some opinion based questions regarding their views on some specific aspects of the English language usage, and especially in reference to the Indian context. A summary of their responses is given in Table 4.

From Table 4, it can be seen that there was a clear

Group	Male	Female	Total
Teachers	16	21	37
Students	14	16	30
Total	30	37	67

Table 2. Composition of the Sample

RESEARCH PAPERS

S.No.	Question	Yes	No
1.	Do you like to teach English Language?	31	6
2.	Do you consider English Language as a skill?	29	8
3.	Do you think motivation and attitudes of teachers impact spoken English skills of students?	36	1
4.	Do you think attitudes of students impact their spoken English skills?	34	3
5.	Do you think it is better to teach English writing skills over speaking skills to your students?	5	32

Table 4. Opinions of the Teachers on the Different Aspects of English Language

favourable response in all five categories. Most of the teachers liked teaching English language; they considered English language a skill which is impacted by teachers' motivations and attitudes as well as the attitudes of the students. Finally, the teachers also did not see any utility in teaching writing skills over speaking skills, which is in sharp contrast to the central idea behind Dr. West's method too.

In Tables 5 and 6, the gender differences in preferred teaching methods were analysed. It was seen that there were significant differences in preference for the Direct method (t[35]= 3.955, p<0.01) and Audio Lingual method (t[35]=4.318, p<0.01) of teaching English language between the genders (Table 5). It revealed the extent of differences in ratings obtained on the teaching methods, as the direct and audio lingual methods were

Teaching method	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Direct method	Male	16	4.38	1.628	3.955	.000*
	Female	21	2.71	.902		
Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT)	Male	16	5.00	.966	1.627	.113
	Female	21	5.48	.814		
Bilingual method	Male	16	4.25	1.238	.344	.733
	Female	21	4.38	1.071		
Dr. West's method	Male	16	3.19	1.940	.560	.579
	Female	21	3.57	2.158		
Situational Language Teaching method (SLT)	Male	16	1.56	1.031	1.320	.195
	Female	21	2.10	1.338		
Audio Lingual method	Male	16	4.56	1.548	4.318	.000*
	Female	21	2.71	1.056		

p<0.01, df=35

Table 5. Differences in Preferred Teaching Method between the Genders (t test)

Rank	Males	Females
1st	Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT) (5.00)	Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT) (5.48)
2nd	Audio Lingual method (4.56)	Bilingual method (4.38)
3rd	Direct method (4.38)	Dr. West's method (3.57)
4th	Bilingual method (4.25)	Direct method (2.71)
5th	Dr. West's method (3.19)	Audio Lingual method (2.71)
6th	Situational Language Teaching method (SLT) (1.56)	Situational Language Teaching method (SLT) (2.1)

Table 6. Ranking of Preferred Teaching Methods of Males and Females (along with Average of Ratings)

relatively higher rated by males compared to females. From Table 6, it can be seen that the most preferred (CLT) and least preferred method (SLT) remained same for both the genders, and there were only variations in the middle.

3.2 Preferred Learning Methods

According to Table 7, it can be seen that the learning method most preferred by the students was the written content (mean=4.47, SD=1.53). This finding is significant for a lot of reasons. While the literature itself suggested that a heavy reliance on just the written aspects of language in terms of assignments and exams remained one of the main reasons for the state of English language in India, the study has revealed that students also prefer the same kind of method when it comes to learning or perfecting their English communication skills. Informal interaction (mean=3.97, SD=1.54) and Formal interaction (mean=3.9, SD=1.56) closely followed the written content method, which seems to suggest a preference for an array of different methods for learning English by the Indian students. Definitely, it is not the case that students only use one method for learning, and a combination of different methods makes the process efficient. The audio resources method obtained the lowest ratings, which

Learning Method	Mean	Std. Deviation
Informal interaction	3.97	1.542
Written content	4.47	1.525
Formal interaction	3.90	1.561
Audio resources	3.17	1.487
Activities focused on specific aspects of English	3.50	1.526
Audio visual resources	3.83	2.019

Table 7. Preferred Learning Methods of the Participants (N=30)

appears very plausible given the fact that audio-visual also remains one of the methods. It should be considered that in the present context where technological advancements due to internet and smart gadgets have really changed the contexts for learning; merely audio resources would be very limited and unable to stimulate one's senses fully.

For the opinions based questions, the students answered along the lines of the teachers too by indicating that they generally liked speaking in English, and also that vocabulary would have an integral impact on one's spoken English (Table 8). However, there were equal number of differing perspectives in terms of seeing English language as a skill evident by the almost equal 'yes' and 'no's. It reflects the varying positions that people are in terms of learning English language as teachers, who can be seen as relatively experienced in the English language would likely see English as a skill.

Tables 9 and 10 show the analysis of the gender

S.No.	Question	Yes	No
1.	Do you like to speak in English Language?	25	5
2.	Do you think that there is an impact of vocabulary on spoken English?	23	7
3.	Do you think English Language is a skill?	16	14

Table 8. Opinions of the Students on the Different Aspects of English Language

Learning method	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	value	Sig.
Informal interaction	Male	14	3.57	1.158	1.330	.194
	Female	16	4.31	1.778		
Written content	Male	14	4.00	2.000	1.610	.119
	Female	16	4.88	.806		
Formal interaction	Male	14	3.86	1.610	.138	.891
	Female	16	3.94	1.569		
Audio resources	Male	14	4.00	1.414	.978	.002*
	Female	16	2.44	1.153		
Activities focused on specific aspects of English	Male	14	3.57	1.222	.245	.815
	Female	16	3.44	1.788		
Audio visual resources	Male	14	3.57	1.950	.357	.516
	Female	16	4.06	2.112		

$p < 0.01$, df= 28

Table 9. Differences in Preferred Learning Method between the Genders (t test)

Rank	Males	Females
1st	Written content (4.00)	Written content (4.88)
2nd	Audio resources (4.00)	Informal interaction (4.31)
3rd	Formal interaction (3.86)	Audio visual resources (4.06)
4th	Informal interaction (3.57)	Formal interaction (3.94)
5th	Activities focused on specific aspects of English (3.57)	Activities focused on specific aspects of English (3.44)
6th	Audio visual resources (3.57)	Audio resources (2.44)

Table 10. Ranking of Preferred Learning Methods of Males and Females (along with Average of Ratings)

differences in terms of the preferred methods of learning English language between males and females. There was a significant difference in average ratings for only the Audio resource method (t[28]=.978, p<0.01) between males and females, with males giving it a consistently higher rating compared to the females (Table 8). Written content as a method for learning received the highest rating for both males and females, while there seemed no discernable differences in the following choices of methods.

4. Discussion and Implications

The study primarily aimed to explore the subjective opinions of English language teachers and learners towards the instruction of the English language at the school level. In the present context, there remains a plethora of resources in terms of the efficacy of various methods or strategies in teaching and learning English language. However, the ground reality, especially for a country like India, which is still coming to terms with the English language, remains very different as indicated by the study. In India, macro policies have been formulated, which have also been translated into curriculums and syllabuses with regard to the ideal methods or circumstances for English language teaching and learning. However, given the vast difference in social, political, and economic realities of schools and students over the country, it is difficult to assume that the ideals have been realized in reality.

In terms of methods of teaching, the study found that most English language teachers preferred the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or the Bilingual (BM) method. It reflects the prevalence of the same in

other parts of the world and the gradual importance being placed on 'competence' in language use. However, the implementation of the CLT methodology needs a lot more than just the interest of teachers, and requires a structural overhaul in terms of the curriculum, resources in the classroom, and the competence of teachers themselves. The preference of teachers can be interpreted as the teaching system being on the path towards holistic methods such as CLT and BM, which will definitely take years and effort to materialize.

The students' responses in terms of their preferred learning method reiterates the grim reality of the educational system prevalent in India as the most preferred method remained 'written materials'. Out of the six methods, written material is probably the least favorable in terms of developing spoken skills or communication competence. However, students prefer the method as educational system remains very exam centric and students would rather prefer to rote memorize written materials to pass written exams, instead of learning to effectively use English. It highlights further problems of inefficient testing, overreliance on written language and disconnect between teachers and students. The goal of learning a language needs to be competence and mastery, which can only be achieved if the education system fosters the same. In India, a massive overhaul is required at all levels, right from the policies and curriculums to the mindsets of teachers, students and parents.

The final part of the study was an exploration of differences in teaching and learning method preferences between males and females. It was based on the established notion of differences in various intelligence systems between males and females and how the same translate to classroom situations. Certain dispositions related to gender have been established such as females being more emotional learners and inclined to sciences, whereas males being logical or perceptual learners and inclined towards mathematics and commerce. The comparison in the study was merely an initial attempt to explore the implications of the same, although no significant differences were found overall in terms of favored methods in teaching or learning. The implications of such differences would also remain problematic in language classrooms, where males and females receive the same instruction and resources.

Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method was found to be the most preferred method for teaching English language among the teachers since it helps them train students to use English in situations without any prerequisite conditions. Even though the students may initially make mistakes, through practice they are able to overcome the mistakes and be fluent in English. The second preferred method in Language teaching was Bilingual Method in which the teachers use both the target language (L2) and mother tongue (L1) as medium of instruction. The least preferred method in language teaching was the Situational Language Teaching (SLT) since it focuses only on teaching spoken English for particular situations, which does not help students in developing their communicative competence. The CLT method of teaching spoken English is more practical compared to the SLT in the context of India because in CLT, students are trained to communicate regardless of contexts, compared to just memorizing speech units for particular situations in the SLT. Although CLT may require more time in teaching English language, it remains more efficient in developing communicative competency among the students.

Among the preferred methods of learning English language in students, written content was found to be the most preferred method. It could be because students first prefer to read and internalize aesthetic elements in the books before using the vocabulary gained from reading in oral communication. While reading, students learn vocabulary, phrases, and grammatical structures, which they then use for spoken English communication as it can enhance the quality of the linguistic elements in their speech. The informal interaction was the second most preferred method of language learning among the students. It is only through interaction, one can master the spoken aspects of language because language learning

is a skill and the process and methods of learning a language are dynamic and not static. The least preferred method of learning English language was the use of audio resources as students might prefer to use audio-visual resources rather than just the audio resources.

This study identified the preferred methods of learning and teaching English language. It also demonstrated the reality of classroom situations in India, where there is a great disconnect between policies and standards, and the actual interactions in classrooms. Although, effective methods of teaching and learning English language might be identified and confirmed through research and reviews, it is still a difficult task to actually implement the same in all schools. While urban middle class private schools might have emulated the methods effectively, the heart of India lies in the rural spaces, in the low economy schools, and it will take a great deal of resources and effort to bring about changes at that level. This study has only given a limited view of the situation and has only focused on the preferred methods of teaching spoken English by the teachers and preferred methods of learning spoken English by the students. Socio-cultural aspects, teacher competence, psychological factors, economic factors, academic performance, etc. have not been considered in this study, which contribute to the myriad of factors relevant in English language teaching and learning.

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