





## ANALYZING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PRACTICES IN PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS OF AJK, PAKISTAN



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### ABSTRACT

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Effective English language teaching has been a great challenge in Pakistan and particularly in Azad Jammu and Kashmir district at middle level schools. This research explored teachers' perception of using appropriate teaching strategies in public sector schools of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan. The population of the study included male- female teachers of public sector schools of the Bagh district of Pakistan. A sample of 50 schools and 150 teachers of English Language were selected. The findings reveal an insignificant difference between the perception of male and female teachers about the use of different teaching methods. The p-value was greater than alpha that confirms this there is insignificant difference of insights among male and female teachers. It was also discovered that classroom instructions at middle school level were not aligned with National Curriculum 2006. The teachers in AJK were not aware about the spirit of curriculum 2006 as well as National Professional Standards of Teachers. A majority of respondents used grammar translation method for teaching while a very low percentage used other teaching methods. It is recommended that teachers need to be trained in using other useful and effective strategies. In-service training programs for teacher should be arranged, specifically focusing on ELT. There is a need draw a perfect alignment between curriculum instructions and assessment in general and more specifically in subject of English.

**Contribution/ Originality:** The study contributes in the existing knowledge by exploring the mindset of the English teachers who are practically involved in teaching learning process. This is a first study of its kind in AJK district, Pakistan on teaching methods by making use of a survey method with a view to understand the larger perspective of the issue.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching EFL in a non-native environment is a big challenge to a school teacher as the selection of the right teaching methods determines student's comprehensive abilities to acquire a foreign language. An appropriate teaching method cultivates the understanding of a foreign language as a tool of instruction as well as communication. However, in most third world countries, the goal of learning English is to take examinations, not for communication. In order to qualify for higher courses, learners adopt rote learning in both grammar and vocabulary acquisition. As a result, majority are unable to communicate in English, both orally and in written forms. To make the matter worse, the monotonous teaching and lack of adequate training in teaching methodology makes

it difficult to acquire the English language. Most teachers are involved in “rigid theorizing” distancing themselves from an appropriate teaching methodology. English as a subject has alarming results in Secondary Board as well as those in middle schools. A majority of students leave school because the English subject is considered one of the most difficult ones. There is no doubt that fault lies somewhere in curriculum, teaching methods, assessment procedures or social behaviors.

In this study, the researcher’s concern is teaching methods that play a vital role in learning. Although there are different methods of teaching English as a second language or a foreign language, all of them had some characteristics and merits but it depends on the nature of environment and the facilities available to the teacher and students.

Malik (2005) points out the following twelve methods of teaching English;

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (a) The Direct Method           | (b) Grammar-translation Method            |
| (c) Audio-lingual Method        | (d) Structural approach                   |
| (e) Suggestopedia               | (f) Total Physical Response (TPR)         |
| (g) The Silent Way              | (h) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) |
| (i) Community Language learning | (j) Task-based language learning          |
| (k) The Natural Approach        | (l) Lexical Syllabus                      |

For the purpose of the current study, and in order to derive a realistic picture, the researchers selected to study four teaching methods: Grammar-translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching Method. The rationale behind this selection was to understand the significance of each of these methods and also the implementation in the middle schools sampled for the study.

The Grammar-Translation Method requires students to learn first grammatical rules and then apply those rules by translating sentences from their native language into the target language. Students learn grammar rules by rote learning methods, and then practice those rules through grammar drills. The main drawback of this method was that there was no listening or speaking practices, and no attention was put on pronunciation or the communicative aspects of the language. The vocabulary is also confined to a few isolated words. The texts are explained without their contexts and their assessment was limited only to exercises in grammatical analysis.

The Direct Method, founded by L Sauveur, revolutionized the idea of teaching a foreign language without translation and by making use of the learner's native language, provided the meaning is adequately conveyed directly through gestures, action or demonstration. The Direct Method, rejected the idea of grammar translation method and asserted that language teaching should be confined to the target-language only. The method focuses on making learners find out rules through identifying linguistic forms in the target language itself through real-life objects, visual material, native-like pronunciation and making use of question-answer patterns.

The Audiolingual method, invented at the University of Michigan, emphasized that students first hear a language and then speak it, and then read and write it. This method too uses grammar as a most important tool to learn the foreign language. The teacher uses drills to teach linguistic structures, which student repeat until they learn to practice them. This method too requires the use of the target language, restricting the use of the native language. There is also an emphasis on the vocabulary and their context; audio-visual aids are also used as the focus is on pronunciation as well.

The Communicative language teaching (CLT) method emphasizes upon interactive communication as the purpose of study. The teacher facilitates the learning of the target language through classroom interaction, through the study of "authentic texts" and using topics outside the realm of traditional classrooms. Often the instructor would encourage learners to interact and share their personal experiences in a language learning environment.

### 3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Pakistan, hardly any attempt has been made to institutionalize any particular method of teaching. Various efforts have been made to incorporate English as a medium of instructions as secondary level and middle level. The Government of Pakistan (GoP, 2009) mandated that all public middle schools will follow English as medium of instructions. Resultantly Government of AJK in the year (2012) borrowed the National Curriculum of 2006. An official order was issued by the department of education that English should be taught as core subject and medium of instruction for science subjects. English at middle school level will be taught in modern way in AJK.

Moreover, the perception of school teachers about teaching methods of English at middle school level in AJ&K is also not well-defined as they do not consistently use a specific or need based teaching method. They also lack appropriate training in teaching strategies and techniques In Pakistan, private schools that are situated in city areas use standardized practices while in public schools teachers are not so much familiar to techniques and strategies as private school teachers.

Hence it was very much appropriate to conduct a study to find out the current practices of English language teachers in Azad Jammu and Kashmir state. This study aims to find out the real practices in the remote schools of Pakistan. The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To investigate the perception of teachers regarding appropriate English teaching methods at Middle school level.
2. To analyze the differences in perceptions of male and female teachers about English teaching methods at middle school level.
3. To analyze the differences in perceptions of high and low qualified teachers at Middle school level.
4. To discover the mostly applied teaching method of English at Middle school level.

### 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is likely to be useful for language teachers and learners because it provides a clear picture of what is currently happening with the language teaching in the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It will also be helpful for English Text books writers, publishers and administrators to maintain certain types of levels and methods of teaching language, the teachers' likes and their favorite methods of teaching. It is imperative to design and develop such material that could be taught effectively and students could learn language skills. The policy makers could get benefit of it too and declared and design such policies that focus on language skills rather than on grammatical accuracy.

### 5. LITERATURE REVIEW

A large scale study by Government of Azad Jammu& Kashmir (2013) on students' performance was organized at Kashmir Education Assessment center. This study suggested different areas that had different dynamics geographically as well as culturally so there should be a conciliation in remote areas and this process must be sorted more logically where the gap is lying. Usually traditional teaching methods are applied in classroom. These deficiencies stimulated much debate around processes that are used to promote teaching methodology used in classroom. However, there can be other aspects as well for these techniques and practices not being used. There is need to rectify these deficiencies to take teaching learning in right direction.

Connor *et al.* (2005) find out that educational institution and classroom environment play an important role in shaping the comfort of students, positive change and wisdom. For the specific subject teacher, it is always preferable for them to use the method with their own convenience. This study analyzed the conception of school teachers about the teaching method of English at middle school level in AJK. It attempted to find out the current situation so that a mechanism could be proposed to find conclusive results. There is no uniformity of teaching method in public sector schools in Azad Jammu and Kashmir district Muzaffarabad. This study emphasized upon the variety

of methods to be used in these schools. The current practices were identified and recommendations were made that could be useful for future studies.

Siregar (2017) focusses on the practices of listening comprehension in the class room which indicated one aspect of the learning procedures. The focus of his study was on listening comprehension which is an integral part of language teaching learning.

Rashid (2004) claims that middle level education plays a pivotal role in the development of basic skills and knowledge of the students and it is true because at this level of education, students prepare for further education. Hence, in AJK middle level education was not given much importance and priority as policy makers face two types of challenges: requirement of physical facilities and quality of delivery services. These challenges could be met by sensible and pragmatic programs to implement and monitor the effective strategies of teaching English at this level. A gap has been observed continually in policy making and its implementation since long. The text books were also a major issue to provide resources and assessment (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

Since the teaching shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered, learning outcomes role has increased to determine the quality of education. It seems very difficult to achieve learning objectives without coordination and harmonization of resources and assessment with curriculum at middle level (Sim *et al.*, 2012).

An appropriate procedure is needed to enhance teaching methodology in pursuit of the objectives in communicative curriculum of the language, having a measureable objectives and effective evaluation procedure. Additionally the whole curriculum needs to be enacted in the classroom. This can only be achieved if some localized mechanism of language teaching is developed (David and Hewings, 2001).

Hlebowitsh (2005) believes in granting teachers the academic authority and selective sovereignty and allowing them to exercise it in order to attain objectives of the curriculum. Teachers have to become innovative and creative especially in designing and developing activities that involved and engage students in classroom. Drake and Sherin (2002) declare that professionalism can only be a source to combine theory with practice by making accurate and delicate decisions while practicing the curriculum in class by playing a role of mediator among students and the text books or teaching materials. Whereas traditional teachers suppose that instruction is usually connected with only telling.

Brophy (2009) adds that learning can be improved by improving classroom environment, while without wasting time in curriculum related activities because classroom management is another issue that has to be addressed to complete assigned actions, hence a quality reforms are required in all direction like teacher quality, curriculum, instructions, learning atmosphere and physical facilities.

Yasmin (2018) recommends granting autonomy to the students and designing such teaching activities that could help students to improve their confidence which is an imperative for language learning particularly in this region.

Erber and Erber (2018) declare that language learning is a phenomenon of mental state until and unless one is ready to learn. Language learning is matter of confidence especially when we talk about speaking skills. In state of AJK students are really very poor in speaking and they require having competence and speaking skills.

Farheen *et al.* (2016) claim that reading comprehension is another aspect of language learning and teaching which is normally ignored at school level and due to this issue students are unable to comprehend the text as well as other media so it is necessary to focus on this aspect of language learning.

Edwards (2016) believes that there is need to explore practices of the language teachers in the classroom that would provide a better understanding of the situation in developing future course of actions. Hence this study is very much pertinent to provide a chance for better understanding of the situation.

## 6. METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The study used a descriptive survey method for data collection. The population for this study was determined at two levels, one is middle schools and other is English language teachers. All the English language teachers of Middle schools in district Bagh of Azad Jammu and Kashmir made the population of the study. In order to ensure legal and reliable findings, it was necessary to avoid sampling errors and bias. Hence, a sample that thoroughly represented the population was chosen in the following manner: For the selection of District Random Sampling technique was used. The district Bagh was selected randomly from sample of 10 districts of AJK. For the selection of 50 schools, Stratified Random Sampling technique was used. For the selection of 150 school teachers convenient sampling technique was used.

The instrument used for collection of data from teachers was a Survey questionnaire. This questionnaire had 20 items out of that 15 were close ended. The items were placed in Likert scale and the respondents were to mark only one option out of five. The instrument was used after ensuring the validity and reliability of instrument. This was ensured by pursuing professionals' judgment of the respondents and field-testing methods. The questionnaire, designed according to the needs of subject, was administered on 20 teachers. SPSS software was used for reliability testing. The result showed the reliability of instrument to be 0.723, which depicts satisfactory alpha-reliability.

## 7. DATA COLLECTION AND RESULTS

For distribution and collection of data, 5-6 volunteer trainee teachers were trained. The training was administered by instructing them and practically showing them their role during this process. They were given three hours training of getting face-to-face filling of survey questionnaire form. In addition to orientation of trainees, a field testing was also carried out to ensure that the participants were fully aware of the procedures.

Figure 1 indicates that currently, 89.30 % respondents are using the grammar translation method during English language teaching at middle school level. 08.70 % respondents use the direct method during English language teaching class at middle school level. Only 0.70 % respondents use audio-lingual method during English language teaching class at middle school level, while 01.30 % respondents are using communicative language teaching method at middle school level during teaching of English.

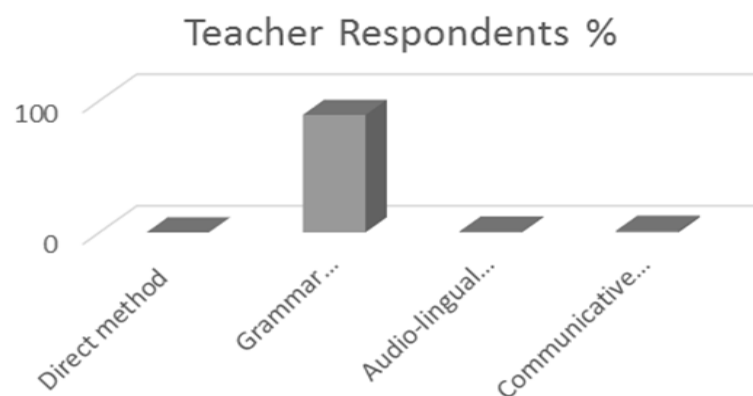


Figure-1. English language teaching methods mostly applied in the classroom.

Figure 2 however, indicates that 41.30 % respondents have the awareness of the National Professional Standards of Teacher Education, whereas 58.70 % respondents have no such awareness. While 1% do not know about it. It indicates an alarming situation because teachers must know and strive for the purpose. If they do not know themselves how can they upgrade their knowledge skills and techniques?

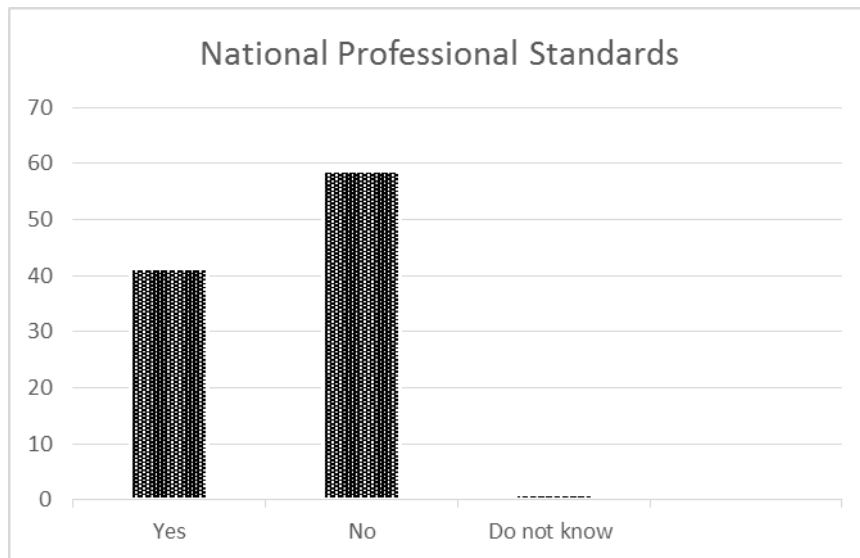


Figure-2. Knowing of national professional standards of teachers.

Figure 3 indicates that 36.00 % respondents agreed and 18.00 % respondents strongly agreed to the statement that Audio-lingual method of teaching English was suitable for students at middle school level while 22.70 % respondents partially agreed to the statement. Only 30 % respondents disagreed. In overall a majority of respondents were in the favor of the statement.

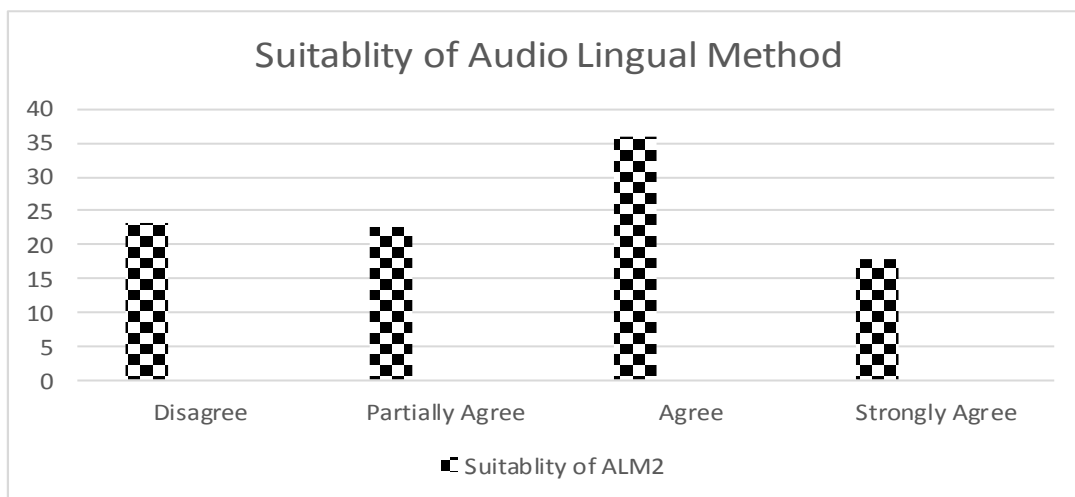


Figure-3. Audio-lingual method's suitability in the classroom.

Figure 4 indicates that 06.00 % respondents disagreed with the statement that Direct Method (DM) contributes significantly in the improvement of pronunciation of students whereas 14.70% respondents partially agreed. A majority of 60.60% respondents agreed and 18.70 % strongly agreed with the statement that Direct Method (DM) contributes significantly in the improvement of pronunciation of students. In overall, 79.30% respondent agreed with the statement while only 6% showed disagreement with statement.

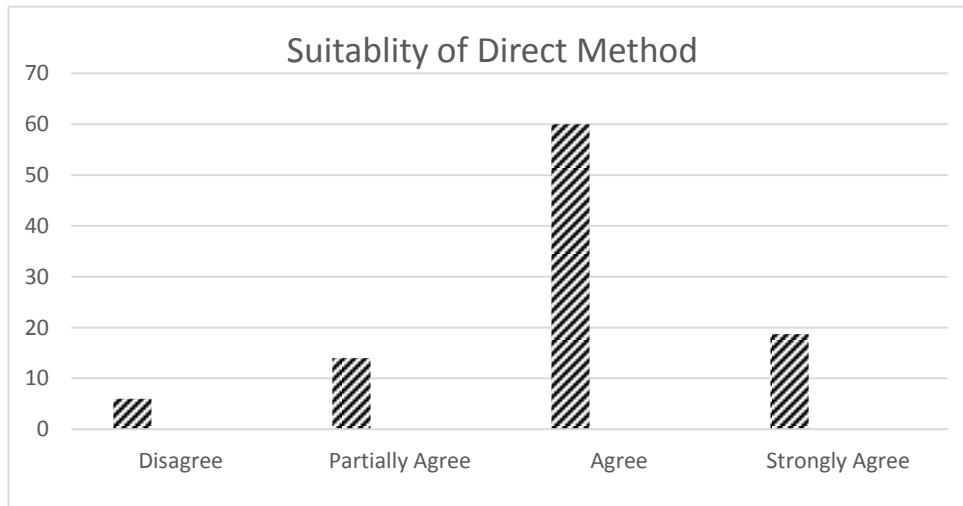


Figure-4. Direct method (DM) and pronunciation improvement.

Figure 5 indicates that 12.00 % respondents strongly agreed and 28.70% agreed to the statement that Direct-Method of teaching was an easy and interesting teaching method English at middle school level. 24.00% respondents partially agreed whereas 35.30 % disagreed that Direct Method of teaching was a stress-free and interesting teaching method English at middle school level. Overall a majority respondents agreed or partially agreed with the statement.

Suitability of Direct Method



Figure-5. Direct method and interest of students.

Figure 6 indicates that 17.30 % respondents denied the statement that Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) is more helpful in studying Abstract Ideas during teaching-learning process and 28.70 % respondents partially agreed while 32.70 % respondents agreed with the statement. 21.30% respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was more helpful in studying Abstract Ideas. Overall 54.00% respondents were in favor that Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was more helpful in studying Abstract Ideas whereas 17.30 % respondents declined the argument.

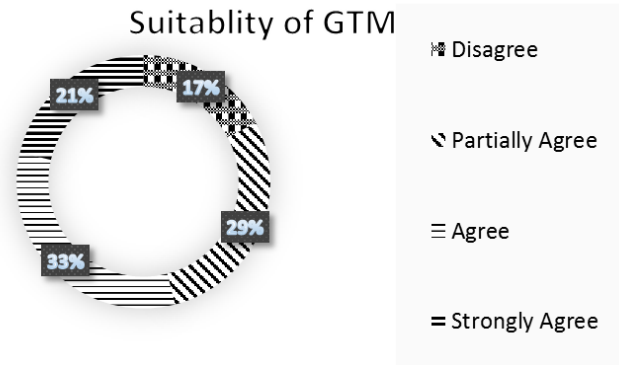


Figure-6. Grammar-translation method (GTM) and abstract ideas.

Figure 7 indicates that 22.00 % respondents disagreed to the proclamation that Eclectic Approach was the most appropriate for Teaching of English at middle school level while 40% respondents partially agreed and 21% respondents agreed whereas 17.30 % respondents strongly agreed with the statement. In overall 38.60 % respondents were in the favor of the statement, whereas 22.00% respondents were against the statement and 39.30 % partially supported the statement.

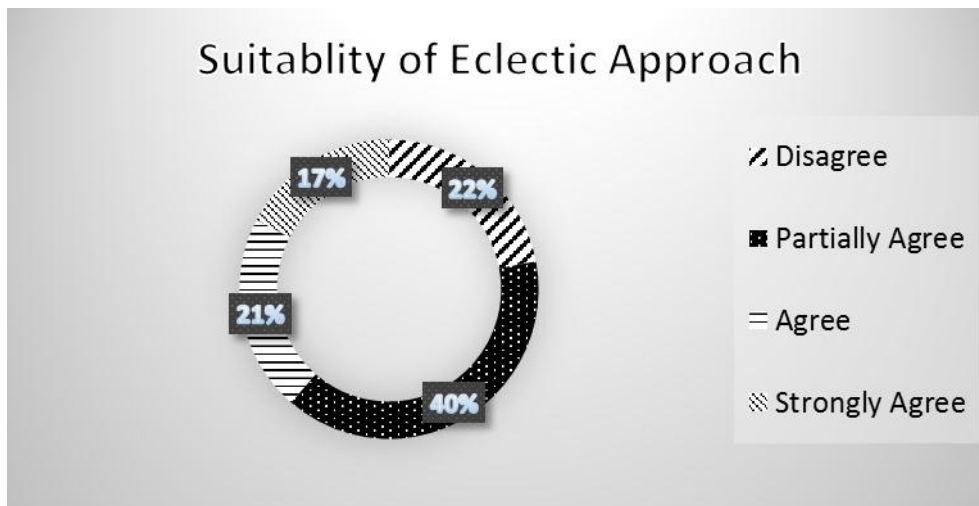


Figure-7. Eclectic approach for English language teaching.

Figure 8 indicates that 14.70 % respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Class-room goals are concentrated on all of the constituents of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) competence during teaching at middle school level while 43.30 % respondents agreed and 30.70 % respondents partially agreed with the statement whereas 11.30% respondents disagreed with the statement. In overall 48.00 % agreed and 11.30 % disagreed with statement that Class-room goals are absorbed on entirely the constituents of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) proficiency during teaching at middle school level.



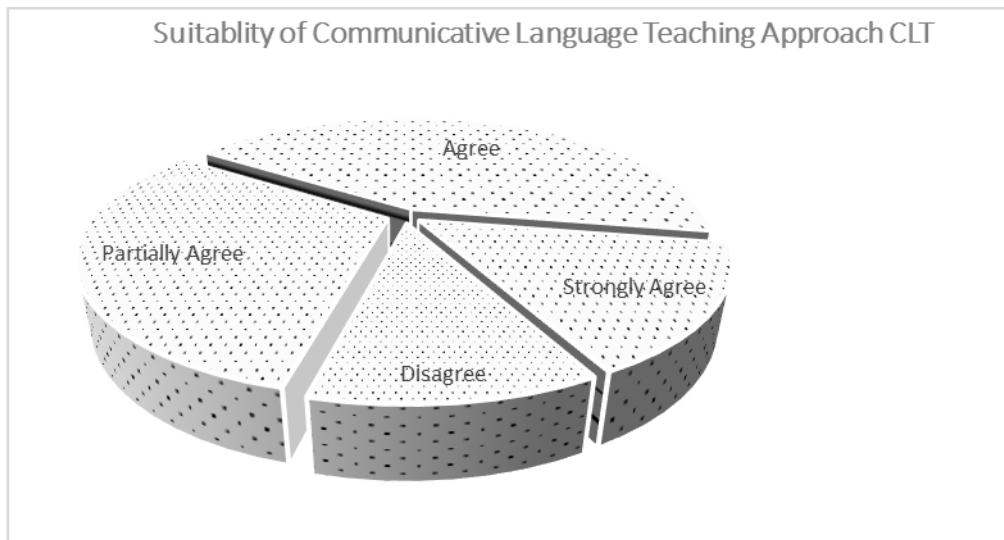


Figure-8. Classroom goals and communicative language teaching (CLT).

Figure 9 indicates that 20.70 % respondents viewed that Assessment system in school never focused on language skills while 44.00 % found it rarely and 26.7% found it sometime whereas 8.70 % found it often. In overall 64.70 % respondents were of the view that Assessment system in school hardly focused on language skills.

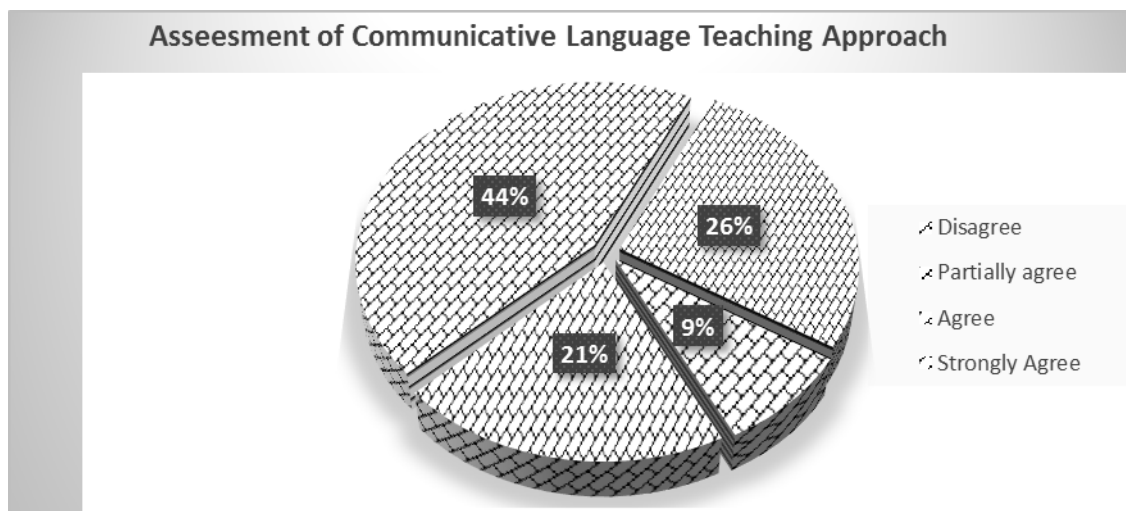


Figure-9. Assessment system in school and language skills.

Figure 10 shows that 22.70 % respondents viewed that they often taught the student with diverse strategies and learning styles while 36.00 % found it sometime and 22.00 % found it rarely while 19.30 % respondents never found it. In overall 77.30 respondents hardly adopted diverse strategies and styles during their instruction in the classroom at middle school level.

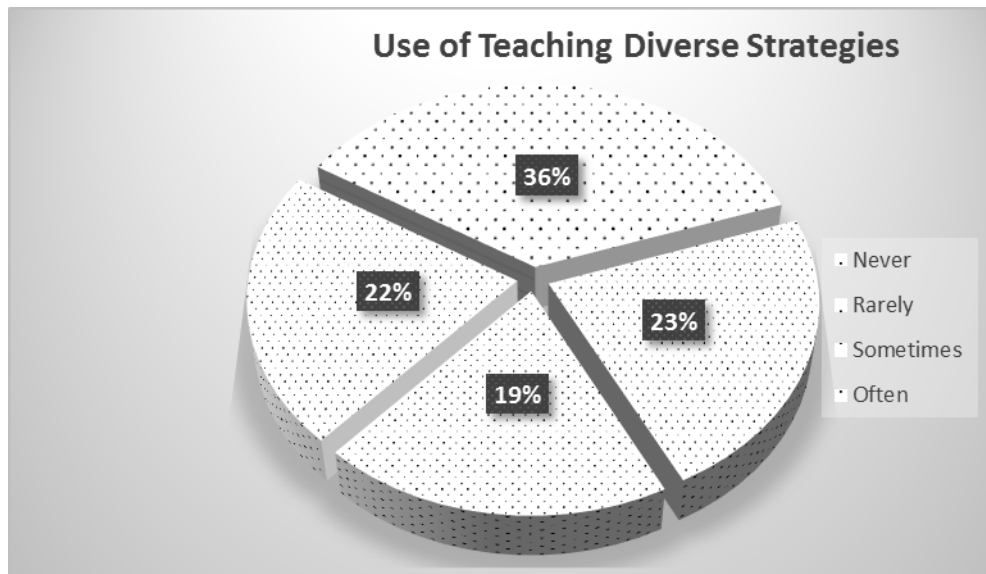


Figure-10. Teaching-diverse strategies.

Figure 11 indicates that 68% of teachers were in favor of GTM while 26 % were in favor of DM. and 2.70 % were in favor of ALM whereas 02.70 % of teachers were in favor of Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLTM) and 0.70% respondents were in favor of Eclectic Approach.

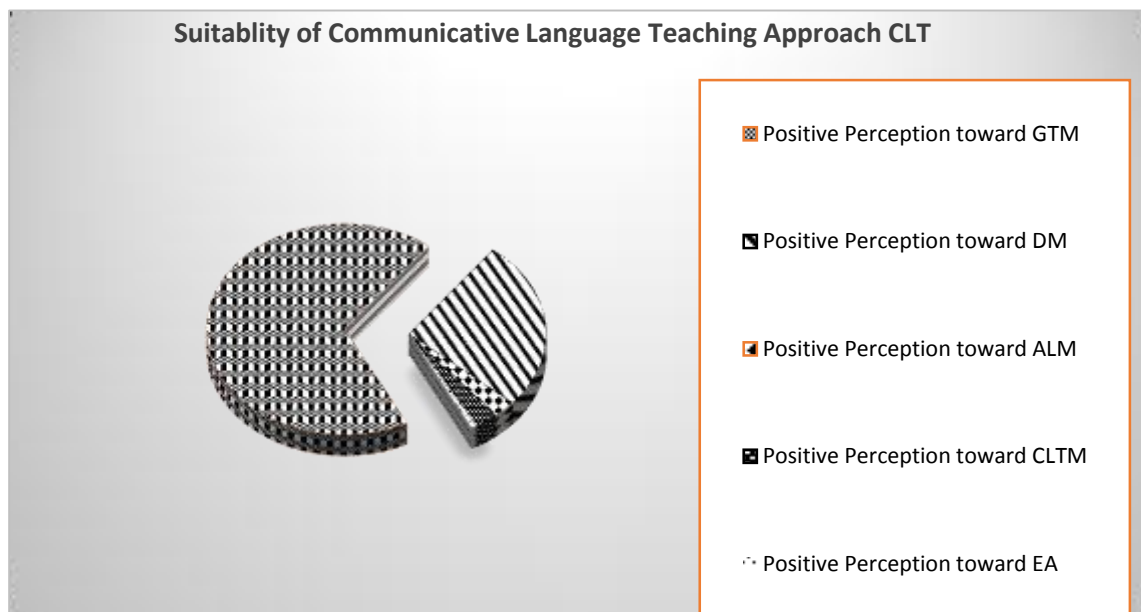


Figure-11. Percentage-wise teachers' analysis about teaching methods.

Table 1 indicates that mean value of female teachers is 2.61 and male teachers is 2.57. The p-value (0.58) is more than alpha (0.05) specifies that there is no significance difference of perception between male and female teachers. The computed value (0.55) is less than the charted value (1.96), with 0.05 level of significance. It means that male and female teachers have similar perception about teaching methodology.

Table-1. Judgment of the awareness of male and female teachers.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Z-cal.	P-value
Female	80	2.61	0.45	0.55	0.58
Male	70	2.57	0.43		

## 8. DISCUSSION

The results in figures and table show that there was lack of understanding among teachers about teaching methods and techniques which indicated the primary need of providing training to the language teachers. They are seen struggling in use of the language itself in the functional way. The study was though conducted in middle schools but high school teachers are also facing similar problems. The findings also conform with those of Han (2017) who found out that English language Teachers also need understanding and support from their family and institutions.

The teachers were also hesitant to fill the questionnaires that show their lack of confidence in responding how they teach in the class. The teachers qualification also reflect their responses, the qualified teachers were more confident and responsive while less qualified reflect hesitation. The researcher believes that a spate cadre and training for language teachers should be initiated at this level. Apart from professional training, their qualification needs to be improved by providing opportunity to get higher education.

The findings of the study also revealed the teachers' perception about teaching methods. For instance, respondents agreed that Audio Lingual Method (ALM) or the Direct Method should be preferred over Grammar translation method (GTM) while teaching a second or foreign language.

There was a general consensus that the process of acquiring language requires understanding its structure and syntax. The benefit of the Direct or the ALM method is that it makes the consistent use of the target language and emphasizes on all four basic skills.

The respondents understood the limited scope of the GTM in the process of second language (L2) or a foreign language acquisition. It was understood that the GTM reduced the intellectual and cognitive abilities of the learners. However, due to the limited opportunities of training, the teacher respondents were forced to use the GTM in their teaching.

## 9. CONCLUSION

To conclude, majority of Government middle school teachers are in the favor of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which depicts that it is most commonly used method of teaching English at middle school level in AJK. Very low percentage is found in favor of Direct Method, Eclectic Approach, Audio-Lingual Method and Communication Language Teaching Methods.

It can be inferred that these methods are less popular and likely not adopted at middle school level. It is further inferred that teachers have not proper understanding of these methods that is why they are unable to use these methods in the classroom at middle school level for teaching English. The outcomes of the study also revealed that there was significant difference between the perceptions of highly qualified and lowly qualified teachers. It is concluded that highly qualified teachers are more consistent in teaching than less qualified teachers. There was insignificant difference between the perception of male and female teachers about the use of different teaching methods.

The p-value is greater than alpha that confirms this there is insignificant difference of insights among male and female teachers. Overall it is concluded that the classroom instructions in the subject of English at middle school level are not aligned with National Curriculum 2006. The teachers in AJK are not aware about the spirit of curriculum 2006 as well as National Professional Standards of Teachers.

It concluded that the highly qualified teachers have higher mean and compact standard deviation as compared to less qualified teachers which suggests that highly qualified teachers are more consistent in teaching than less qualified teachers.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded on the findings obtained and conclusions drawn, the researcher proposes a few recommendations. In the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, more in-depth studies about English Language Teaching (ELT) similar to this study at middle school in other districts should be conducted. In-service training programs for teacher should be arranged, specifically focusing on ELT. There is a need draw a perfect alignment between curriculum instructions and assessment in general and more specifically in subject of English. It is also recommended that examination system must be revised to incorporate conceptual approach rather than memory recall. The recruitment policy for selection of teacher must be revised and a quota of ELT must be retained for selection of middle school teachers. The awareness of National Professional Standards of Teachers (NPST) is very poor. It is recommended that the specific problem should be addressed. Last, but not the least, English language cannot be taught by using one single method. There are several methods of teaching English, so middle school teachers should make use of a mixed method approach and employed diverse teaching methods by taking best techniques of all existing methods. One such approach is already existing in shape of Eclectic approach. These kinds of approaches are thought to yield best results as they combine best techniques of all methods.

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