

## TEACHING WRITING AND SPEAKING SKILLS FOR EFL STUDENTS WITH B2 LEVELS AT UNIVERSITY: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS THROUGH GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION AND STUDENT-CENTERED METHODS

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**Annotation:** *This study investigates the challenges in teaching writing and speaking skills to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at the B2 level in a university setting. The primary objective is to identify the limitations of conventional Grammar-Translation (GT) methods and evaluate the effectiveness of Student-Centered (SC) approaches in enhancing linguistic proficiency. Using a mixed-methods approach, questionnaires and surveys were administered to both students and instructors to gather data on their experiences, perceptions, and preferred instructional strategies. Results indicate that while GT remains essential for foundational grammar, SC methods foster greater engagement and communicative competence. Recommendations include hybrid instructional designs that address both grammatical accuracy and communicative proficiency.*

### INTRODUCTION

Developing effective pedagogical strategies for teaching B2-level university students to achieve fluency in writing and speaking has been an ongoing concern in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education. Traditionally, the Grammar-Translation (GT) method has emphasized grammatical knowledge and translation accuracy, contributing to foundational knowledge but often failing to promote communicative skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In contrast, Student-Centered (SC) approaches, which prioritize learner autonomy and interactive activities, have gained attention for their potential to enhance students' practical language use (Brown, 2014). This paper examines the challenges B2-level EFL students encounter in acquiring writing and speaking skills and assesses how a combination of GT and SC methods can address these challenges.

The study is grounded in mixed-method research, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collected through questionnaires and surveys

distributed among students and instructors. The findings aim to provide practical solutions to enhance teaching outcomes for EFL students, offering a framework that balances grammar instruction with communication practice.

### **METHODOLOGY**

A mixed-methods design combining quantitative and qualitative data was used, as it offers comprehensive insights into the instructional challenges and preferred methods among B2-level EFL students. This approach allows for the triangulation of data to cross-verify findings from various perspectives, thereby enhancing the reliability and depth of the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study involved 100 B2-level university students enrolled in EFL courses and 10 EFL instructors. Participants were selected from two universities with similar curricula, focusing on EFL writing and speaking skills. The selection criteria included students who had completed at least one semester in a B2-level EFL course and instructors with a minimum of two years of experience in teaching writing and speaking skills.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

1. Questionnaire for Students: The questionnaire comprised closed and open-ended questions to gather students' views on GT and SC methods, the challenges they encounter in writing and speaking, and their self-assessment of their language proficiency.

2. Survey for Instructors: The instructor survey included questions regarding the perceived effectiveness of GT and SC methods, challenges in teaching writing and speaking skills, and suggestions for improvement.

Both instruments were piloted with a small group of students and instructors to ensure clarity and relevance.

Quantitative data from closed-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative responses from open-ended questions were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This dual approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the attitudes and experiences of both students and instructors.

### **RESULTS**

1. Challenges in Teaching Writing and Speaking Skills. Student Perspectives: Most B2-level students reported difficulties in achieving fluency and accuracy in both writing and speaking. The primary challenges included limited vocabulary, lack of confidence in speaking, and difficulty organizing ideas in writing. Over 60% of students indicated that their primary struggle was translating their knowledge of grammar into coherent speech or written text, a finding consistent with previous research on the limitations of GT in fostering communicative competence (Ellis, 2015).

Instructor Perspectives: Instructors identified similar challenges, emphasizing that students often struggle with sentence structure, cohesion, and expression in both spoken and written forms. While GT provides a strong foundation for grammar, instructors noted its inadequacy in developing communicative skills. Approximately



70% of instructors expressed concern that GT alone does not equip students with the tools needed for spontaneous interaction.

2. Grammar-Translation Method (GT): Benefits and Limitations. GT has long been used in EFL settings for its emphasis on grammatical precision and translation practice. Findings from both students and instructors highlight GT's role in establishing foundational linguistic knowledge. For instance, one instructor noted, “GT is very effective for building grammar accuracy, which is crucial for students who lack a strong grammatical foundation.”

However, GT was also criticized for its limitations. Both students and instructors agreed that the lack of interactive elements in GT fails to engage students, reducing opportunities to practice speaking in natural contexts. Around 75% of students reported feeling disengaged during GT sessions, and 68% said they would prefer more interaction-oriented activities.

3. Student-Centered (SC) Methods: Advantages and Challenges. SC methods, particularly task-based learning and communicative language teaching, are widely recognized for their emphasis on real-life communication and student engagement (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The survey revealed that 80% of students felt more engaged during SC activities, which include role-plays, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks.

Instructors also observed notable improvements in students' communicative competence with SC approaches. One instructor shared, “SC methods enable students to use language actively, which is essential for developing speaking and writing skills.” However, SC methods were not without challenges. Some students struggled to adapt to SC activities due to their preference for structured, grammar-focused instruction. Additionally, large class sizes posed a barrier to implementing SC activities effectively.

#### 4. Questionnaire and Survey Findings: Implementation Preferences.

The questionnaire and survey results underscore a preference for a blended approach that combines GT and SC methods. Approximately 85% of students and 90% of instructors advocated for integrating grammar-focused instruction with interactive, student-centered activities. For example, a student suggested, “I would like to have grammar exercises followed by conversation practice, so I can apply what I learn immediately.”

### DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that while GT is valuable for teaching grammar, it should be complemented with SC methods to improve EFL students' writing and speaking skills. The traditional GT method, although foundational, does not address students' need for communicative practice. In contrast, SC approaches foster engagement, confidence, and fluency in speaking, which are essential for B2-level students aiming to advance to higher levels of proficiency.

Proposed Hybrid Model: A combination of GT and SC techniques could address these gaps. The hybrid model involves introducing grammar-focused exercises, followed by communicative tasks that allow students to apply grammatical rules in

practical contexts. This approach aligns with pedagogical theories that advocate for balance between form-focused and meaning-focused activities (Long, 2015).

#### Example Activity Structure

1. Grammar Session (GT): Instructors introduce a grammar topic, such as conditional clauses, with translation exercises to reinforce understanding.

2. Application Task (SC): Students participate in a role-play or discussion activity where they must use conditional clauses in conversation. For example, a debate on hypothetical scenarios can make grammar usage more dynamic and memorable.

#### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that a balanced approach combining Grammar-Translation and Student-Centered methods is effective for teaching writing and speaking skills to B2-level EFL students at the university level. The GT method builds essential grammatical knowledge, while SC approaches encourage active language use and communicative competence. Implementing this hybrid model can bridge the gap between linguistic accuracy and communicative proficiency, addressing the limitations inherent in using either method alone.

The questionnaire and survey responses from both students and instructors emphasize the importance of adapting instructional strategies to meet students' diverse needs. As EFL education evolves, further research could explore the integration of technology and individualized learning plans in hybrid models to better support students' development in writing and speaking skills.

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