



Effectiveness of Translation Method and Direct Method in Teaching English Writing Skill at Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the effectiveness of the Translation Method and the Direct Method in developing English writing skill among secondary school students. A quantitative approach employing a quasi- experimental research design was adopted. The study was conducted with a sample of 44 Grade IX students from a government secondary school in South Kolkata. Two intact sections of the class were selected as the control group and the experimental group. The control group was taught through the Translation Method using the mother tongue to teach English, while the experimental group was taught through the Direct Method using the target language as a medium of instruction. An achievement test measuring reading comprehension, grammar, situational writing, and creative writing was administered before and after the intervention. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples *t* tests, and an independent-samples *t* test. The findings revealed significant improvements in the post-test performance of both groups following intervention. However, students taught through the Translation Method obtained higher post-test scores and demonstrated greater grammatical accuracy, coherence, organisation, and overall writing quality than the students taught through the Direct Method. The findings suggest that although both

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methods were effective in improving students' English writing skill, the Translation Method was more effective than the Direct Method in developing English writing skill at the secondary level.

1. Background of the Study

In today's world, English is widely recognised as a global language due to its extensive use in international communication, education, commerce, research, and technological advancement (Rao, 2019b). Crystal (2003) argues that a language is considered global when it is widely accepted by different nations for official, educational or international communication purposes. For this reason, nowadays learning English is essential not only for effective communication but also for accessing global opportunities and adapting to diverse environments and workplaces (Putra, 2020). India is one of the many countries where English serves as a second language, as it enjoys a special status in education, administration, and public life (Crystal, 2003). Moreover, today English in India is "... a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life..." (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2006, p.1). Furthermore, English continues to hold an important position in higher education and administration in India, remaining an essential asset for students pursuing higher studies and professional careers (MOE, 1996, as cited in Meganathan, 2015). Hence, teaching and learning English is now an essential requirement in contemporary times for all nations, including India, to stay aligned with global developments (Sundari & Latha, 2015).

For effective English teaching, it is important for the teachers to set clear objectives and aims in advance. In the Indian context, the aims can be classified into different categories, including linguistic aim. The linguistic aim holds a special position for the students at the secondary level as it focuses on the four sub-skills of the English language: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Dey, 2017). Among the four skills, reading skill and listening skill are referred to as receiving skills. On the other hand, writing skill and speaking skill are referred to as productive skills, as they are used to express information to others (Qamili, 2023). Writing skill enables individuals to convey their thoughts, emotions, and information through both digital and physical formats (Ghosh et al., 2021). Richards and Renandya (2002) state that writing skill is said to be comprised of two latent skills within, referred to as higher-level skill and lower-level skill. The higher-level skills include structure, construction, and organization, whereas the lower-level skills include punctuation, word choice, and vocabulary. Therefore, among the four subskills, writing skill holds a crucial position in learning English as a second language due to its characteristics.

English writing skill has many advantages. It helps in developing critical thinking. The learners can record, organise, and reflect on their ideas, which helps them recall past experiences and previously learned information (Bora, 2023). According to Rao (2019a), the writing skill enhances both spoken and written communication by enabling English language learners to select suitable vocabulary and use correct grammatical structure effectively. It also supports the academic success of students through written assignments and reflects language proficiency. It plays a great role in future career needs. Hence, English writing skill plays a significant role in overall language development.

Despite its advantages, developing English writing skill is a challenging process. Learners often face language-related difficulties such as limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, spelling problems, and inadequate knowledge of sentence structure. In addition, learners also experience problems during the writing process, such as generating ideas, organising information, and maintaining motivation, which adversely affect the quality of their written work (Liu, 2023). These challenges are also evident in the Indian educational context. The findings of a study conducted by Mallampalli (2022) suggest that students struggle with English writing primarily due to a weak foundation in essential linguistic competence, such as insufficient vocabulary, spelling difficulties, punctuation, sentence construction, idea generation, and organisation. Moreover, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, and the students' level of English proficiency also make teaching English writing skill a difficult task for teachers. A study by Devi and Swain (2018) further indicates students' limited proficiency in basic grammar leads to writing anxiety. They often fail to produce even basic sentence-level compositions. These issues highlight the urgent need for effective teaching strategies and appropriate instructional methods to improve students' writing abilities, especially at the secondary level.

In India, the Translation Method and the Direct Method are among the most widely used teaching methods. In the Translation Method, English is taught using students' first language (L1) by translating English into L1. On the other hand, the Direct Method uses English as a medium of instruction. Most of the studies have explored the Translation Method and Direct Method in relation to grammar, listening skill and speaking skill. Despite the importance of English writing skill for second language learners in the development of linguistic skills, critical thinking, and effective communication (Pandya & Saiyad, 2025), mainly in the Indian context, very few studies have focused on the English writing skill of students using these two teaching methods, especially at the secondary level. This creates a gap in understanding which teaching method is more effective for developing students' English writing skill at the secondary level. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap. It examines the effectiveness of the Translation Method and the Direct Method in teaching English writing skill at the secondary level.

2. Review of Related Literature

The Grammar Translation Method (referred to as the Translation Method in the present study) was an adaptation of earlier classical techniques (Chang, 2011). Tracing its origins to the era of Erasmus, this method was originally established to facilitate the study of classical languages like Greek and Latin. Later, the Grammar Translation Method began to be used to teach English and other modern languages, spreading across Europe and the United States (Karakaş, 2019). According to Kumar & Sailaja (2015), this method is designed to foster literary competence in the second language. One of the major characteristics of this method is its focus on the development of reading and writing skills. Speaking skill and listening skill are not given proper attention. Students spend most of their time by memorizing complex grammar rules, studying long list of vocabulary words and translating sentences from one language to another because of this the main goal is to attain grammatical accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Vireak and Bunrosy (2024) states that the Grammar Translation Method utilises translation exercises as a tool to help learners acquire new vocabulary and gain clearer perspective on how to structure sentences. This view can also be understood through linguistic interdependence Hypothesis propounded by Cummins. The interdependence hypothesis suggests that ‘the cognitive / academic aspects of L1 and L2 are interdependent’ (Cummins, 1979, p. 199). Studies by Parveen et al. (2023), Gull et al. (2022), Izhar and Hashmi (2022), and Banerjee (2015) also support this view. The findings of the studies revealed that students taught in the Grammar Translation Method performed better than the students taught in the Direct Method. A study by Gull et al. (2022) found that both instructional methods significantly improved students' achievement. However, the Grammar Translation Method produced a greater improvement in learners' performance. Students taught in this method used correct verbs, spelling, and synonyms (Izhar & Hashmi, 2022). It is proposed that the use of the mother tongue and explicit grammar instruction facilitates students' understanding of English language structures, particularly in contexts where English functions as a foreign language (Gull et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the Direct Method originated in the 19th century in France and Germany and served as a deliberate challenge to the older teaching practices like the Grammar Translation Method. Termed the 'Natural Method', this approach focused on the natural acquisition of the second language by emphasizing oral communication skills, enhancement of listening skill, use of everyday vocabulary, correct pronunciation, and grammar (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This can be interpreted through Krashen's theory of the Input Hypothesis. It points out that gaining fluency in a new language happens mainly through processing meaningful input. This suggests that this natural method is more effective for developing internal language knowledge than relying on formal instruction or translation (VanPatten & Williams, 2015).

Findings of the studies by Farikha (2022), Frederick and Methuselah (2022), and Tidke and Sharma (2019) strongly support this view. The findings of the studies revealed that students who were taught in the Direct Method had better English listening and speaking competency. The Direct Method helped students acquire the English language by prohibiting them from using their mother tongue in the classroom students acquire the English language. As a result, they thought and responded in English, which built speaking and listening proficiency (Frederick & Methuselah, 2022).

Existing literature has mainly explored the Translation Method and the Direct Method in relation to grammar, listening skill or speaking skill. However, empirical studies comparing the Translation Method and the Direct Method in developing the English writing skill are limited, particularly in the Indian secondary school context. This lack of targeted research creates a gap in understanding which teaching method is more effective for developing writing competence at the secondary level. This study therefore sought to address this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of the Translation Method and the Direct Method on the English writing skill of secondary-level students, thereby contributing to evidence-based teaching practices.

3. Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach following a quasi-experimental research design. A pre-test post-test non-equivalent group design was employed to compare the effectiveness of the Translation Method and the Direct Method on the English writing skill of students. In this group design, two intact sections were selected as the control group and the experimental group following the non-randomization technique.

The population of the study included all Grade IX students studying in secondary schools affiliated with the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) in South Kolkata during the academic session 2025-2026. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selection of school. Accordingly, a Bengali-medium government secondary school Barisha Charan Kabi Siksha Niketan, located in south Kolkata, was selected finally to conduct the study. The sample size was 44. As the study adopted quasi-experimental design with intact classes, Section B ($n=22$) was assigned as the experimental group because it received instruction through the Direct Method during the intervention. On the other hand, Section A ($n=22$) continued with the school's regular Translation Method instruction and was assigned as the control group.

The study involved two types of variables: the independent variable and the dependent variable. The Instructional methods (the Translation Method and the Direct Method) functioned as the independent

variable. On the other hand, the English writing skill of class IX students was the dependent variable. The study aimed to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable by comparing the pre-test and post-test performance scores.

‘An Achievement Test in English Writing Skill’ was developed and used as the primary data collection tool. Following several revisions based on experts' suggestions and validation, the final test comprised four sections: Reading Comprehension (Group-A), Situation-Based Evaluation Response (Group-B), Grammar and Language (Group-C), and Writing Skill (Group-D). The writing section included tasks such as picture story writing, paragraph writing, and an editorial letter. The blueprint of the achievement test was prepared following a format proposed by Gowramma & Bhattacharya (2022), ensuring a balance across cognitive domains. The test comprised a variety of questions, including objective-type question, very short answer-type questions, short answer-type questions, and essay-type questions. The maximum marks of the test were 30, with a duration of one hour. The evaluation was carried out by a self-made evaluation rubric adapted from ELPA21 writing rubrics (the regents of the University of California, 2020) and the Michigan English Language Battery Trait categories (Brooks, 2012). The rubric was further aligned with the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education curriculum.

The data collection was carried out in three phases: pre-test, intervention, and post-test. Prior to the data collection, permission was obtained from the school authorities. The study adhered to ethical principles by ensuring institutional permission, informed consent from the participants, and the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. Afterwards, a pre-test was administered to both groups before the intervention started. The intervention was conducted from 19th August to 4th September 2025. Both the control group and the experimental group were taught the same content, including reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, evaluative writing, analytical writing and creative writing. The only difference between the groups was their instructional methods. After the intervention, the post-test was administered to assess improvements in the English writing skills of students. After data collection, the data were analysed by employing descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (paired samples *t* tests and independent samples *t* test).

4. Results

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was employed for quantitative data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysing the data. Descriptive statistics included mean, median and standard deviation to summarise the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental group and the control group.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for the Control Group and the Experimental Group

Group	Test	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental group	Pre-test	11.86	1.885
	Post test	17.32	2.191
Control group	Pre-test	12.68	2.626
	post-test	21.55	3.082

According to the pre-test performance as represented in Table 1, the control group ($M=12.68$, $SD=2.626$) and the experimental group ($M=11.86$, $SD=1.885$) demonstrated a comparable performance. Both groups had a similar level of English writing proficiency.

However, both the experimental group and the control group showed improvement in the post-test performance after the intervention. The control group achieved a higher post-test mean score ($M=21.55$, $SD=3.082$) compared to the experimental group ($M=17.32$, $SD=2.191$). The higher standard deviation in the control group also suggests slightly more variability in scores.

To determine whether these observed differences were statistically significant, paired samples t tests and an independent samples t test were conducted. Paired samples t tests were employed to find out the improvement within the two groups. Independent samples t test was used to find out the difference between the two groups.

Table 2

Paired Samples t test Results

Comparison	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Control group (pre-test vs post-test)	-31.495	21	< .001
Experimental Group (Pre-test vs post-test)	-24.208	21	< .001

The results, as represented in Table 2, revealed a statistically significant difference in the control group pre-test and post-test performances ($p < .001$). It indicates that the Translation method significantly improved the English writing skill of students. Similarly, a significant difference was found in the experimental group pre-test and post -test performances ($p < .001$). It suggests that the Direct Method also had a positive effect on the English writing skill performance.

An independent samples t test was conducted to compare the post-test scores of the control group and the experimental group.

Table 3

Independent Samples t test Results

Group	t	df	p
Experimental group post-test vs control group post-test	5.244	42	$< .001$

The result, as shown Table 3, revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p < .001$). This indicates a significant difference in the impact of the two teaching methods, the Translation Method and the Direct Method, on English writing skill.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study suggest that both methods positively influenced students' writing skill, but the Translation Method consistently produced higher achievement. Improvements were seen in the control group pre-test and post-test performances. The pre-test mean score was 12.68, and the post-test mean score was 21.55. All the components of writing skill such as vocabulary, content, sentence construction, organisation, grammar, and coherence demonstrated considerable progress. Writing skill of students became more detailed, structured, and analytical. The use of mother tongue (L1) facilitated logical sequencing, idea generation, and grammatical accuracy.

Improvement was seen in the experimental group pre-test and post-test performances. Students' mean scores increased from 11.86 in the pre-test to 17.32 in the post-test. Moderate improvement was observed in vocabulary, content, grammar, coherence, and sentence construction. Students relied only on English for learning. However, their writing showed comparatively weaker development and grammatical accuracy.

Differences were found between the writing performances of the control group and the experimental group. The post-test mean score of the control group was 21.55 while the post-test mean score of the Experimental Group was 17.32. This indicates that the Translation Method outperformed the Direct Method in overall writing skill improvement. Students taught through the Translation Method demonstrated clarity, sentence structure, and grammatical accuracy in their writing performance. On the other hand, students taught through the Direct Method improved moderately with less elaboration and precision.

The present findings are consistent with the findings of the studies by Gull et al. (2022), Parveen et al. (2023), Izhar and Hashmi (2022), and Banerjee (2015) who found that learners taught through the Translation Method demonstrated greater grammatical accuracy than those instructed through the Direct Method. The use of the mother tongue in the Translation Method facilitated logical sequencing, deeper idea development, and effective error correction contributing to better learning outcomes. This finding may also be explained through Cummins' linguistic interdependence as the use of mother tongue (L1) helped in the development of English writing skill of students.

The findings also suggest that the students taught in the Direct Method showed noticeable improvement. This improvement is consistent with Krashen's Input Hypothesis. It proposes that language acquisition occurs through meaningful and comprehensible input (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). Continuous exposure to English may therefore have promoted greater fluency and spontaneous written expression. These findings of the present study align with the findings of the studies by Farikha (2022), Frederick and Methuselah (2022), and Tidke and Sharma (2019). These studies reported that the Direct Method enhanced learners' confidence and communicative competence, both verbal and written, through continuous exposure to the target language. However, due to short duration of the intervention, the improvement was moderate and some weakness in structure, coherence, and grammatical precision persisted in the present study. The previous studies primarily emphasized speaking and listening skills, while the present study suggests that improvement in writing requires attention to grammatical accuracy.

While both instructional strategies support learning, the Translation Method demonstrated greater effectiveness in enhancing the English writing skill of students at the secondary level, particularly in producing coherent and grammatically accurate compositions

6. Limitations of the Study

The present study has the following limitations.

- i. **Limited Sample Size:** The number of participants included in the study were relatively small comprising only 44 students from a single government secondary school in south Kolkata. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all secondary school students in West Bengal or other educational context.
- ii. **Time Constraint:** The intervention lasted only two weeks. A longer duration might have provided students with greater opportunities to practice writing. Furthermore, it could have yielded a more comprehensive understanding of long-term effectiveness of the translation method and the direct method.
- iii. **Pilot Study:** A pilot test was not conducted due to time constraints. However, the research instrument was reviewed and validated by subject experts before their administration to ensure their content validity and stability for the study.

7. Conclusion

The present study examined the effectiveness of the Translation Method and the Direct Method in teaching English writing skill among secondary school students. The findings of the study suggest that both instructional methods significantly improved students' English writing performance. However, students taught through the Translation Method showed greater grammatical accuracy, coherence, organisation and overall writing quality than the students taught through the Direct Method. The findings indicates that the use of learners' mother tongue along with explicit grammar instruction can support the development of English writing skills in Indian secondary school classrooms. Therefore, the Translation Method is found more effective for improving writing skill among secondary students.

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