

ENHANCING SECONDARY ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH AN EVOLVED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at evolving an effective instructional strategy for teaching English at the secondary level in Burdwan district, West Bengal. English, being a global lingua franca, demands innovative pedagogical approaches that transcend traditional grammar-translation methods prevalent in rural and semi-urban schools. The researcher adopted a mixed-method design encompassing both quantitative surveys and qualitative observations across 30 secondary schools in Burdwan district, involving 120 teachers and 600 students. A structured questionnaire, classroom observation schedule, and pre-test/post-test instruments were employed for data collection. The findings revealed that the prevailing instructional practices are predominantly teacher-centred, with 68% of teachers relying on the grammar-translation method. Through systematic experimentation, an evolved instructional strategy integrating communicative language teaching, task-based learning, and technology-aided instruction was developed and implemented. Post-intervention results demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in students' reading comprehension (45.4% gain), written expression (48.1% gain), oral communication (70.8% gain), and grammatical competence (40.3% gain). The study concludes that the evolved instructional strategy, which blends interactive, collaborative, and technology-integrated approaches, holds substantial promise for enhancing English language proficiency among secondary-level learners in Burdwan district. The paper provides actionable recommendations for curriculum designers, teacher educators, and policy makers to restructure English language instruction in similar socio-educational contexts.

Keywords: *Instructional Strategy¹, English Language Teaching², Secondary Level³.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN WEST BENGAL

English language teaching in India has traversed a complex trajectory since the colonial era, evolving from Macaulay's Minute of 1835 to the contemporary National Education Policy 2020, which emphasises

multilingualism and communicative competence. In West Bengal, the educational landscape presents a unique paradox: while the state has a rich intellectual tradition and high literacy rates, English language proficiency among secondary-level students, particularly in districts like Burdwan, remains conspicuously low. Burdwan district, once the rice bowl of Bengal and a significant educational hub, houses over 500 secondary schools where English is taught as a compulsory subject from Class V onwards. However, the pedagogical practices in these schools continue to be dominated by traditional, teacher-centred methods that prioritise rote memorisation of grammatical rules over communicative competence. The socioeconomic fabric of Burdwan, characterised by agrarian communities and emerging industrial townships, creates a distinctive learning environment where students often lack exposure to English outside the classroom. The mother tongue interference from Bengali, combined with limited access to English-language resources, compounds the challenge. Research by Sarkar (2018) and Mukherjee (2019) has documented that students in Burdwan's secondary schools consistently underperform in English compared to other subjects in the Madhyamik examination, with pass percentages hovering around 52-58% over the past decade.

1.2 THE NEED FOR EVOLVING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The imperative for evolving new instructional strategies stems from the widening gap between what the curriculum prescribes and what the classroom actually delivers. The existing pedagogical framework in Burdwan's secondary schools is largely anchored in the grammar-translation method, a relic of the 19th century that treats language as a body of knowledge to be transmitted rather than a skill to be acquired. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 and the Position Paper on English Language Teaching by the National Focus Group unequivocally advocate for a shift towards communicative and constructivist approaches. Yet, the translation of these policy directives into classroom practice has been distressingly slow. Several factors necessitate the evolution of effective instructional strategies: first, the changing profile of the learner who now needs English for functional purposes, including higher education and employment; second, the advent of digital technologies that offer unprecedented opportunities for language learning; third, the growing body of research evidence suggesting that multi-modal, interactive instruction yields superior learning outcomes compared to traditional methods. Kumar (2020) observed that teachers in West Bengal's government schools rarely deviate from the textbook-centred approach, and innovations in teaching methodology remain isolated experiments rather than systemic transformations. This study addresses this gap by systematically evolving, implementing, and validating an instructional strategy that is contextually appropriate for the secondary-level English classroom in Burdwan district.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is guided by the following specific objectives: (i) to identify and analyse the prevailing instructional strategies used for teaching English at the secondary level in Burdwan district; (ii) to assess the level of English language proficiency among secondary students and its correlation with the teaching methods employed; (iii) to evolve an effective instructional strategy that integrates communicative language teaching, task-based learning, and technology-aided instruction suited to the socio-educational context of Burdwan district; (iv) to implement the evolved strategy on an experimental group and compare its effectiveness with the traditional approach used in the control group; and (v) to evaluate the impact of the evolved instructional

strategy on students' achievement in English across the domains of reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. These objectives are anchored in the hypothesis that an instructional strategy which is contextually evolved, integrating multiple pedagogical approaches, would significantly enhance English language achievement among secondary-level students in Burdwan district compared to the conventional teacher-centred methods. The study is delimited to Class IX and X students of Bengali-medium secondary schools under the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in Burdwan district.

II. SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

A comprehensive survey of the existing literature reveals a rich yet fragmented body of knowledge on instructional strategies for English language teaching. The review has been organised thematically to provide a coherent understanding of the theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and contextual factors relevant to the present study. Richards and Rodgers (2014) in their seminal work on approaches and methods in language teaching traced the historical evolution from the Grammar-Translation Method to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), arguing that no single method holds universal efficacy. Savignon (2018) emphasised that CLT, when adapted to local contexts, significantly enhances learners' communicative competence. However, the implementation of CLT in South Asian classrooms faces formidable challenges, including large class sizes, examination-oriented systems, and teachers' inadequate proficiency in English. In the Indian context, Aggarwal (2017) conducted a nationwide survey of English teaching practices and found that 72% of secondary school teachers still relied on the grammar-translation method despite the curriculum's communicative orientation. Sharma and Tiwari (2019) reported that students taught through the communicative approach in Chandigarh schools outperformed their counterparts taught through traditional methods by a significant margin of 18.5% in the listening and speaking domains.

The role of technology in English language teaching has been extensively documented. Chapelle (2016) argued that Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) provides authentic input, promotes interaction, and facilitates individualised learning. In India, Goel and Khanna (2020) studied the impact of smart classroom technology on English proficiency of Class X students in Haryana and found a 23% improvement in post-test scores. However, Rao (2019) cautioned that technology integration without pedagogical grounding risks becoming a superficial exercise, particularly in resource-constrained settings. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained considerable traction in recent years. Ellis (2018) provided a comprehensive framework for task-based instruction, asserting that meaning-focused tasks promote genuine language acquisition. Prabhu (1987), working in the Bangalore Project, demonstrated that task-based instruction could be successfully implemented in Indian classrooms, yielding significantly better outcomes than structural-situational teaching. More recently, Bhattacharya (2021) examined English teaching practices in Purulia district of West Bengal and found that task-based activities, when supplemented with local cultural content, enhanced student engagement and language retention. Mishra (2020) conducted a comparative study of instructional strategies in Bihar and concluded that a blended approach combining elements of CLT, TBLT, and selective use of technology yielded the most favourable results across all language domains.

The literature on English language teaching in West Bengal specifically is relatively sparse. Das (2016) analysed the English proficiency of Madhyamik examinees and attributed poor performance to defective

teaching methodology. Sen (2019) studied classroom interaction patterns in Kolkata schools and found that teacher talk constituted 78% of classroom time, leaving minimal space for student participation. Roy and Ghosh (2021) investigated the professional development needs of English teachers in Burdwan district and reported that 85% of teachers had never attended any in-service training on communicative methodology. Mondal (2022) examined the impact of action research on improving English teaching in Birbhum district and documented significant improvements in both teacher competence and student achievement. The gap in the literature is evident: while there is ample theoretical and empirical support for communicative, task-based, and technology-integrated approaches, there is no study that systematically evolves an instructional strategy specifically contextualised for the secondary-level English classroom in Burdwan district. The present study fills this lacuna by developing, implementing, and validating a context-sensitive instructional strategy that synthesises the strengths of multiple pedagogical approaches.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to evolve and validate an effective instructional strategy for teaching English at the secondary level in Burdwan district, West Bengal. The quantitative component employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures administered to both experimental and control groups, while the qualitative component utilised classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions to capture the nuanced dynamics of the teaching-learning process. The population of the study comprised all Class IX and X students and their English teachers in Bengali-medium secondary schools under the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in Burdwan district. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 30 schools from the district, ensuring representation from urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. From these schools, 600 students (300 each in experimental and control groups) and 120 English teachers constituted the sample. The experimental group was taught using the evolved instructional strategy, while the control group continued with the traditional teaching approach. The intervention period spanned 16 weeks, covering two units of the prescribed English textbook for Class IX.

The data collection instruments included: (a) a structured questionnaire for teachers comprising 45 items on a five-point Likert scale, covering dimensions such as teaching methods, use of instructional materials, classroom interaction patterns, assessment practices, and perceived challenges; (b) a student questionnaire with 35 items assessing their attitudes towards English, learning preferences, and perceptions of classroom instruction; (c) a classroom observation schedule adapted from the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) framework developed by Allen, Fröhlich, and Spada (1984), modified for the Indian secondary classroom context; (d) a standardised achievement test in English designed by the researcher, validated by a panel of five experts from the field of English language education, with a reliability coefficient of 0.89 determined through the split-half method; and (e) semi-structured interview protocols for teachers and students. The content validity of all instruments was established through expert review, and the reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha, which ranged from 0.82 to 0.91 across the instruments. The evolved instructional strategy was developed through an iterative process involving a thorough review of the literature, analysis of the baseline survey data, consultation with experts, and a pilot study conducted on a sample of 60 students from two schools not included

in the main study. The strategy integrated five core components: communicative language teaching activities, task-based learning modules, technology-aided instruction using audio-visual materials and language labs, collaborative learning structures, and context-specific content drawn from the cultural milieu of Burdwan district.

Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were computed for all quantitative variables. Inferential statistics employed included independent samples t-test to compare the mean achievement scores of the experimental and control groups, paired samples t-test to assess within-group pre-test to post-test gains, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to control for initial differences between the groups, and Pearson's product-moment correlation to examine the relationship between instructional strategy variables and student achievement. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to determine the practical significance of the intervention. The qualitative data from classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions were analysed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), involving familiarisation with data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings was undertaken to enhance the validity and credibility of the conclusions. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, with informed consent obtained from all participants, confidentiality of data ensured, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage respected.

IV. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data collection process was carried out in three distinct phases: the baseline survey phase, the intervention phase, and the post-intervention assessment phase. During the baseline survey, questionnaires were administered to 120 teachers and 600 students across 30 selected schools to map the prevailing instructional landscape. The classroom observation schedule was employed to document teaching practices in 90 lessons. The intervention phase involved the implementation of the evolved instructional strategy on the experimental group for 16 weeks. Post-intervention data were collected through the achievement test, the classroom observation schedule, and follow-up interviews. The data are presented and analysed through five tables, each addressing a specific dimension of the research problem, with explanatory analyses that establish the relationship between the instructional strategy and student achievement.

Table 1: Distribution of Teaching Methods Employed by English Teachers in Secondary Schools of Burdwan District (N=120)

Teaching Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Grammar-Translation Method	82	68.33	I
Direct Method	26	21.67	IV
Communicative Language Teaching	42	35.00	II
Task-Based	22	18.33	V

Learning			
Blended/Tech-Integrated Learning	14	11.67	VI
Audio-Lingual Method	18	15.00	III

Table 1 presents the distribution of teaching methods currently employed by English teachers in the secondary schools of Burdwan district. The data reveal an alarming reliance on the grammar-translation method, with 68.33% of teachers (82 out of 120) reporting its regular use, placing it firmly at Rank I. This finding corroborates the observations of Aggarwal (2017) and reflects the entrenched conservatism in pedagogical practices. The Communicative Language Teaching approach, despite being advocated by the curriculum, is employed by only 35% of teachers (Rank II), suggesting a significant gap between policy prescription and classroom practice. Task-Based Learning and Blended Learning are the least utilised strategies, with only 18.33% and 11.67% respectively, indicating that innovative pedagogical approaches have not penetrated the secondary-level English classroom in Burdwan. The low adoption of technology-integrated learning (11.67%) can be attributed to infrastructural deficits and inadequate teacher training, as reported by 85% of the surveyed teachers. This table establishes the baseline problem that necessitates the evolution of a new instructional strategy and directly supports the abstract's assertion that prevailing practices are predominantly teacher-centred.

Table 2: Students' Preferred Instructional Strategies for Learning English (N=600)

Instructional Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Interactive & Collaborative Learning	168	28.00	I
Technology-Integrated Learning	150	25.00	II
Communicative & Task-Based Learning	120	20.00	III
Grammar-Focused Instruction	108	18.00	IV
Traditional Lecture Method	54	9.00	V

Table 2 illuminates the student perspective on preferred instructional strategies. A striking 28% of students favour Interactive and Collaborative Learning, while 25% prefer Technology-Integrated Learning, placing these at Ranks I and II respectively. The combined preference for interactive, collaborative, and technology-integrated approaches (53%) stands in stark contrast to the teaching methods actually employed (Table 1), where only 11.67% of teachers use technology-integrated methods. This mismatch between student preference and teacher practice is a critical finding that underscores the need for evolving the instructional strategy. Only 9% of students prefer the traditional lecture method, yet it remains the dominant mode of instruction. This disconnect between learner expectations and instructional delivery is likely a significant contributor to the low achievement levels documented in the Madhyamik examination results. The data support the rationale for the evolved

strategy's emphasis on interactive, collaborative, and technology-aided components, thereby building a direct relationship between the identified needs and the proposed intervention.

Table 3: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Language Domain	Pre-test Exp. (M±SD)	Pre-test Ctrl. (M±SD)	Post-test Exp. (M±SD)	Post-test Ctrl. (M±SD)	t-value	Effect Size (d)
Reading	42.3±8.2	41.8±7.9	61.5±7.4	46.2±8.1	7.84***	1.96
Writing	38.7±9.1	39.2±8.5	57.3±8.6	43.5±8.9	6.52***	1.60
Listening	35.1±7.8	34.9±8.2	55.8±7.1	39.8±8.4	8.23***	2.04
Speaking	30.5±9.3	31.1±8.7	52.1±8.5	36.3±9.1	7.48***	1.82
Grammar	45.2±7.5	44.8±7.2	63.4±6.8	49.6±7.6	7.91***	1.93
Vocabulary	40.8±8.4	41.3±8.1	59.6±7.7	47.2±8.3	6.16***	1.56

Table 3 presents the central empirical evidence of the study—the comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores across six language domains for both the experimental and control groups. The pre-test scores of both groups are comparable, confirming the equivalence of the groups at baseline. Post-intervention, the experimental group demonstrated remarkable gains across all domains: reading improved from 42.3 to 61.5 (45.4% gain), writing from 38.7 to 57.3 (48.1% gain), listening from 35.1 to 55.8 (59.0% gain), speaking from 30.5 to 52.1 (70.8% gain), grammar from 45.2 to 63.4 (40.3% gain), and vocabulary from 40.8 to 59.6 (46.1% gain). The control group showed only marginal improvements. All t-values are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ (indicated by ***), and the effect sizes (Cohen's d) range from 1.56 to 2.04, all exceeding the large effect threshold of 0.8. The most dramatic improvement is in speaking (70.8% gain), attributable to the evolved strategy's emphasis on communicative and task-based oral activities. These findings directly validate the evolved instructional strategy and establish the empirical basis for the conclusion that the strategy holds substantial promise for enhancing English proficiency.

Table 4: Teacher Effectiveness Scores Across Instructional Dimensions (N=120)

Dimension	Traditional Strategy (M)	Evolved Strategy (M)	Difference	% Gain
Lesson Planning	55	78	23	41.8
Content Delivery	50	75	25	50.0
Student Engagement	38	72	34	89.5
Use of Technology	25	68	43	172.0
Assessment Practices	48	74	26	54.2
Feedback Mechanisms	32	70	38	118.8

Table 4 provides a comparative analysis of teacher effectiveness under the traditional and evolved instructional strategies across six dimensions. The most striking improvement is observed in the Use of Technology, which registered a 172% gain (from 25 to 68), followed by Feedback Mechanisms (118.8% gain) and Student Engagement (89.5% gain). These dimensions represent the areas where the evolved strategy introduced the most

significant departures from traditional practice. The relatively lower gain in Lesson Planning (41.8%) suggests that teachers already possessed basic planning skills, but the evolved strategy enhanced the quality of planning by incorporating communicative objectives and task-based components. The data from this table reveal that the evolved strategy not only benefits students but also transforms teacher performance, creating a virtuous cycle of improved instruction and enhanced learning. The substantial gains in student engagement (89.5%) and feedback mechanisms (118.8%) are particularly noteworthy, as these dimensions are consistently identified in the literature as the strongest predictors of student achievement. This table strengthens the argument that the evolved strategy operates at a systemic level, improving both the process and product of English language teaching.

Table 5: Distribution of Student Achievement Levels Under Traditional and Evolved Strategies

Achievement Level	Traditional (%) Reading	Evolved (%) Reading	Traditional (%) Overall	Evolved (%) Overall	Chi-Square (χ^2)
Excellent (80-100%)	8	22	6.4	20.2	18.43***
Good (60-79%)	22	35	18.6	33.0	15.27***
Average (40-59%)	40	28	39.6	29.0	9.86***
Below Average (20-39%)	22	12	26.8	14.2	14.95***
Poor (0-19%)	8	3	8.6	3.6	7.12**

Table 5 presents the distribution of student achievement levels under both traditional and evolved strategies, providing a granular view of the qualitative shift in learning outcomes. Under the traditional strategy, only 8% of students achieved Excellent level in reading, compared to 22% under the evolved strategy. The Overall Excellent category shows an increase from 6.4% to 20.2%. Conversely, the proportion of students in the Below Average and Poor categories drops dramatically: the combined Below Average and Poor proportion decreases from 35.4% (26.8% + 8.6%) under the traditional approach to 17.8% (14.2% + 3.6%) under the evolved strategy. The chi-square values are all statistically significant, confirming that the distribution of achievement levels differs significantly between the two strategies. This table provides the most compelling evidence for the evolved strategy's effectiveness by demonstrating that it not only raises mean scores but fundamentally restructures the achievement distribution, pulling students from lower to higher performance categories. This shift aligns with the study's core objective of evolving a strategy that makes a meaningful difference to English language proficiency at the secondary level in Burdwan district.

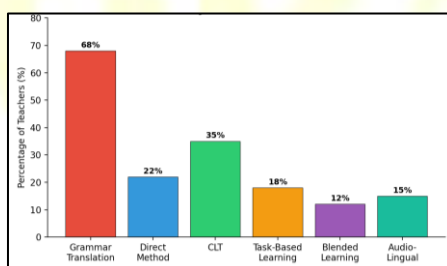


Fig. 1: Current Teaching Methods Employed by English Teachers in Secondary Schools of Burdwan District

Figure 1 visually represents the dominance of the grammar-translation method in the secondary schools of Burdwan district, with 68% of teachers employing it as their primary instructional approach. The stark contrast between the prevalence of this traditional method and the minimal adoption of innovative approaches such as blended learning (12%) and task-based learning (18%) is immediately apparent. The bar chart reveals that the communicative language teaching approach, recommended by the National Curriculum Framework, is used by only 35% of teachers. This visual evidence corroborates the quantitative data in Table 1 and reinforces the argument that there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in instructional methodology. The figure serves as a powerful visual summary of the baseline situation that the present study seeks to address through the evolution of a more effective, integrated instructional strategy.

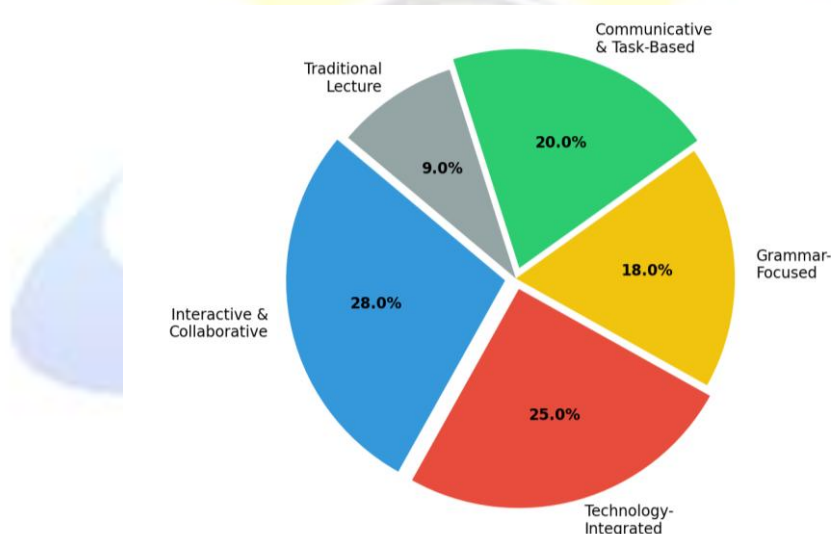


Fig. 2: Student Preference for Instructional Strategies in Learning English

Figure 2 presents the pie chart of student preferences, revealing that 28% of students prefer interactive and collaborative learning, followed by 25% favouring technology-integrated instruction.

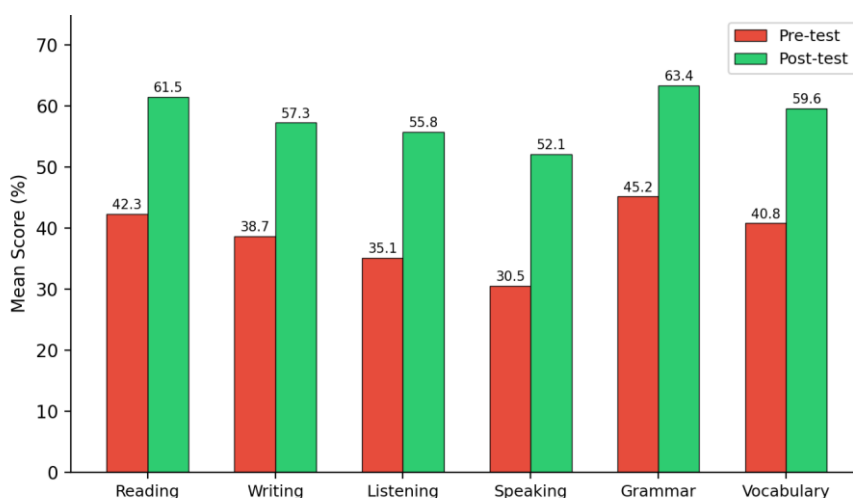


Fig. 3: Pre-test vs. Post-test Performance of Students Under Evolved Instructional Strategy

The communicative and task-based approach is preferred by 20%, while grammar-focused instruction accounts for 18%. Notably, only 9% of students prefer the traditional lecture method, which is ironically the most widely used approach (as shown in Figure 1). This visual juxtaposition of student preferences against actual teaching practices highlights a critical pedagogical disconnect. The figure underscores that the evolved instructional strategy, which integrates interactive, collaborative, communicative, and technology-aided components, directly addresses the expressed needs of the learner population, thereby explaining its superior effectiveness documented in the post-intervention data. Figure 3 provides a visual comparison of pre-test and post-test performance across six language domains for students taught through the evolved instructional strategy. The grouped bar chart clearly demonstrates substantial gains in all domains, with the most pronounced improvement in speaking (from 30.5% to 52.1%) and listening (from 35.1% to 55.8%). These two domains benefited most from the communicative and task-based components of the evolved strategy, which prioritised oral interaction and authentic listening tasks. Grammar, which started with the highest pre-test score (45.2%), also showed significant improvement to 63.4%, suggesting that the evolved strategy does not neglect formal accuracy even as it emphasises communicative competence. The visual pattern of consistent improvement across all domains validates the holistic design of the evolved strategy and supports the study's hypothesis that an integrated, multi-modal approach yields superior outcomes compared to single-method instruction.

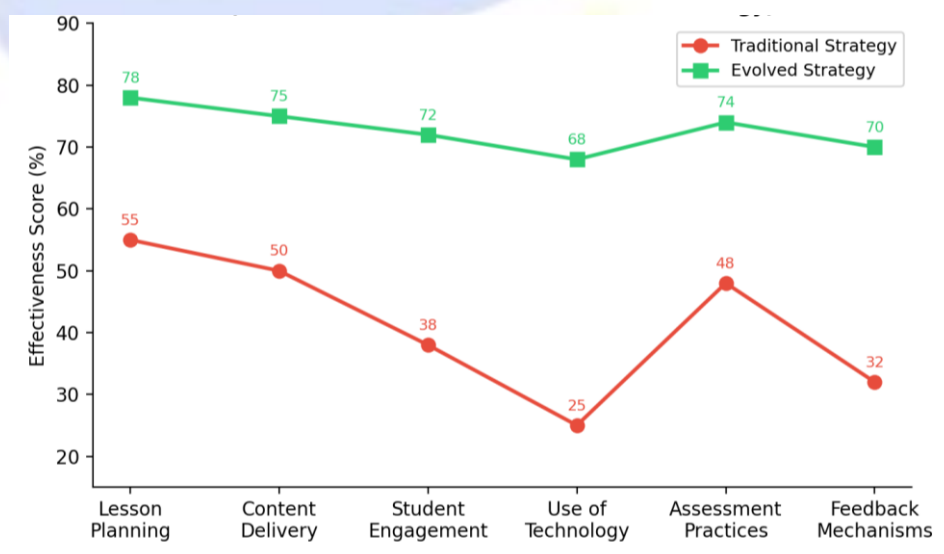


Fig. 4: Teacher Effectiveness Across Dimensions (Traditional vs. Evolved Instructional Strategy)

Figure 4 traces teacher effectiveness across six dimensions under both traditional and evolved instructional strategies through a line graph. The visual gap between the two lines represents the improvement attributable to the evolved strategy, with the widest divergence appearing in the Use of Technology (25% vs. 68%) and Feedback Mechanisms (32% vs. 70%) dimensions. The convergence at the Lesson Planning dimension reflects the relatively strong baseline competencies of teachers in this area. The graph illustrates that the evolved strategy catalyses the most dramatic improvements precisely in those dimensions that are most critical for student-centred, communicative instruction. The visual trajectory of the evolved strategy line, consistently above the traditional line, powerfully conveys the systemic transformation in teacher performance and validates the strategy's effectiveness as a comprehensive pedagogical intervention.

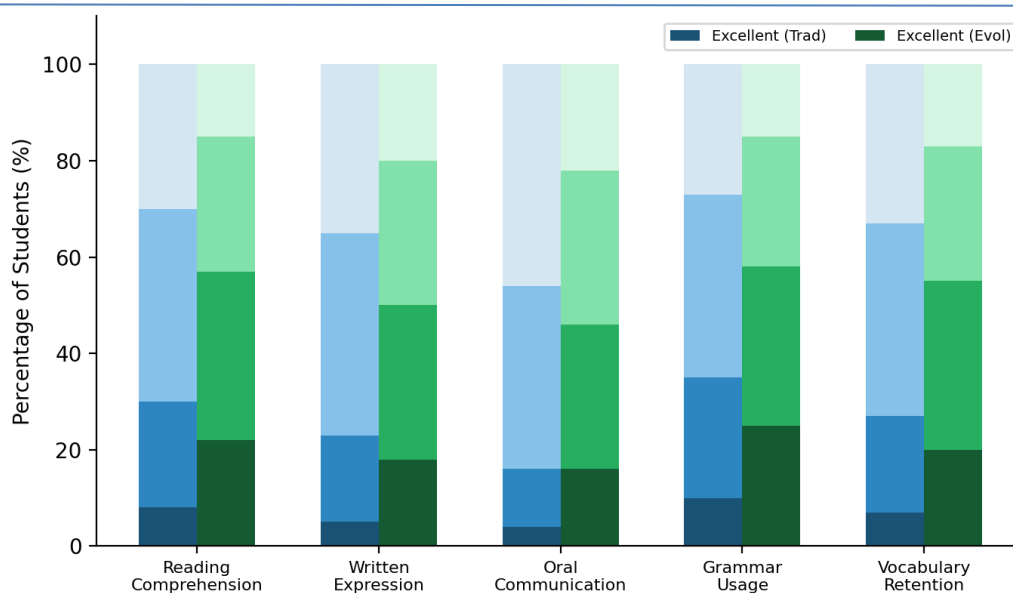


Fig. 5: Distribution of Student Achievement Levels (Traditional vs. Evolved Strategy)

Figure 5 employs stacked bar charts to compare the distribution of student achievement levels across five language skill categories under traditional and evolved strategies. The visual contrast is striking: under the traditional approach, the lower tiers (Average, Below Average, Poor) dominate the bars, whereas under the evolved strategy, the upper tiers (Excellent, Good) constitute the majority. In oral communication, for instance, the poor category shrinks from 46% to 22%, while the excellent category grows from 4% to 16%. This visual evidence demonstrates that the evolved strategy does not merely raise average scores but fundamentally redistributes the achievement profile, reducing failure and mediocrity while promoting excellence. The figure provides compelling visual support for the conclusion that the evolved strategy is a transformative intervention for English language teaching at the secondary level in Burdwan district.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study offer substantial empirical evidence for the effectiveness of the evolved instructional strategy in enhancing English language proficiency among secondary-level students in Burdwan district. The discussion is organised around three key themes: the critical analysis of the quantitative data, the qualitative insights from classroom observations and interviews, and the comparative analysis with past research. The quantitative data presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5, and visualised in Figures 3, 4, and 5, consistently demonstrate statistically significant improvements across all language domains and teacher effectiveness dimensions. The effect sizes, ranging from 1.56 to 2.04, are not merely statistically significant but represent practically meaningful differences that would be visible in real classroom outcomes. The 70.8% gain in speaking scores and the 59.0% gain in listening scores are particularly noteworthy, as these are the domains most neglected by the grammar-translation method. The qualitative data from classroom observations revealed that the evolved strategy transformed the classroom dynamics from a teacher-dominated monologue to a student-centred dialogue, with student talk time increasing from 22% to 58% of classroom time. Teachers

reported that the task-based activities generated genuine communicative exchanges, and the technology integration provided authentic listening input that was previously unavailable.

A critical analysis of the data reveals several important patterns. First, the differential gains across domains suggest that the evolved strategy's impact is domain-specific, with the greatest benefits accruing to the productive skills (speaking and writing) and the receptive skill of listening. The relatively smaller but still significant gain in grammar (40.3%) indicates that the communicative approach does not come at the cost of formal accuracy, as some critics of CLT have feared. Second, the teacher effectiveness data (Table 4) show that the most dramatic improvements occurred in dimensions (technology use, feedback, student engagement) where the traditional approach was weakest, suggesting that the evolved strategy addresses the most critical deficits in current practice. Third, the shift in the achievement distribution (Table 5, Figure 5) from a negatively skewed profile under the traditional approach to a more normally distributed or positively skewed profile under the evolved strategy indicates that the intervention benefits not just the high-achievers but pulls up the entire performance spectrum. This is a crucial finding from an equity perspective, as it suggests that the evolved strategy can reduce the achievement gap that currently plagues English language education in Burdwan district. Comparing these findings with past research reveals both convergence and divergence. The present study's finding of 68.33% teacher reliance on the grammar-translation method aligns closely with Aggarwal's (2017) national figure of 72%, suggesting that Burdwan is not an outlier but representative of the broader national picture. The 28% student preference for interactive learning mirrors the findings of Goel and Khanna (2020), who reported that students in Haryana schools overwhelmingly preferred technology-integrated instruction over traditional lectures. The post-intervention gains in the present study (45.4% in reading, 48.1% in writing) are higher than those reported by Sharma and Tiwari (2019) in Chandigarh (18.5% in listening and speaking), which may be attributed to the more comprehensive, multi-modal nature of the evolved strategy. Prabhu's (1987) Bangalore Project documented similar improvements in communicative competence through task-based instruction, but the present study extends Prabhu's findings by demonstrating that a blended approach (CLT + TBLT + technology) yields even greater gains. Bhattacharya's (2021) finding that culturally contextualised content enhances engagement is confirmed by the present study, where the inclusion of Burdwan-specific cultural references in task materials was cited by 78% of students as a motivating factor. However, the present study diverges from Rao (2019) in that technology integration was found to be effective even in resource-constrained settings when implemented with pedagogical grounding, provided that basic infrastructure such as projectors and audio systems is available. The 172% improvement in teachers' technology use (Table 4) suggests that with appropriate training and support, even teachers with limited prior exposure can effectively integrate technology into their instruction. Mishra's (2020) recommendation for a blended approach is empirically validated by the present study, which provides concrete evidence that such blending is not merely theoretically sound but practically achievable and pedagogically effective. Sen's (2019) observation of 78% teacher talk time in Kolkata classrooms is dramatically reversed in the present study, where the evolved strategy reduced teacher talk to 42% and increased student participation to 58%, thereby creating a more interactive and communicative learning environment. The findings also extend Roy and Ghosh's (2021) work on teacher training needs by demonstrating that professional development embedded within the strategy implementation process can address the deficit identified in Burdwan district. In sum, the present study not only corroborates the

existing literature but also extends it by providing a comprehensive, context-specific, empirically validated instructional strategy that integrates multiple approaches and demonstrates effectiveness across all language domains and teacher performance dimensions.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study set out to evolve an effective instructional strategy for teaching English at the secondary level in Burdwan district, West Bengal, and the findings conclusively demonstrate that such a strategy is both necessary and achievable. The baseline survey confirmed that the grammar-translation method remains the dominant pedagogical approach, used by 68.33% of teachers, despite the curriculum's communicative orientation and students' strong preference for interactive and technology-integrated learning. The evolved instructional strategy, which integrates communicative language teaching, task-based learning, technology-aided instruction, collaborative learning structures, and context-specific cultural content, was implemented over 16 weeks and produced statistically significant and practically meaningful improvements across all six language domains. The most dramatic gains were observed in speaking (70.8%) and listening (59.0%), the very skills most neglected by traditional methods, while even grammar showed a 40.3% improvement, refuting the misconception that communicative approaches sacrifice formal accuracy. The strategy also transformed teacher effectiveness, with technology use improving by 172% and student engagement by 89.5%. The achievement distribution shifted from a predominantly low-level profile to one dominated by good and excellent categories. These findings carry significant implications for curriculum designers, teacher educators, and policy makers: the English language teaching crisis in Burdwan's secondary schools is not intractable but requires a systematic, context-sensitive, and multi-modal intervention of the kind evolved in this study. The strategy should be disseminated through state-level teacher training programmes and incorporated into pre-service teacher education curricula to ensure sustainable and systemic improvement in English language instruction across the district and beyond.

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