

Grammar Translation Method as an Indispensable Approach in Semi-Urban and Rural Areas as Teaching Method

Dinesh Kumar

Asstt. Prof. of English

Dyal Singh College, Karnal

Dineshkarnal1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In this age of globalization when English has become an International language, we need to adopt a right methodology. At present also, The Grammar - Translation Method is one of the most effective methods in dealing with a foreign language like English. The act of translation involves the understanding of two distinct factors-a meaning, or reference to some slice of reality and the difference between the source language and the target language in referring to that reality. E.M. Forster points to the same process when he defines translation as transference of content of a text from one language into another, bearing in mind that we cannot always dissociate the content from the form. Grammar Translation Method owes its existence to the teaching of Latin as a dominant language of education in the Western world in fifteenth century. It focuses on the rigorous study of grammar and translation through the practice in bilingual texts and dialogues. This method prescribes learning of vocabulary through reading texts. This is facilitated further by teaching through bilingual word-list,

dictionary use, and memorization. This method focuses on sentence as a unit of teaching/learning the foreign language. Concomitant to the principle mentioned above, another distinctive feature of Grammar-Translation Method is the use of learner's native tongue as a medium of instruction all new items of vocabulary are presented and explained through comparisons and equivalents. Accuracy, rather than fluency, is the point of focus in the present method. In Grammar-Translation Method, the native language of the speaker plays a vital and indispensable role.

PAPER

In the twentieth century, there is more and more emphasis on the right methodology to be adopted in teaching any language, particularly a modern language like French, German and English. The methodology of teaching is determined by the general educational ambience and within it the actual classroom conditions. That is why,



the broad outline of any teaching method does undergo particular changes when taken to the actual classrooms. The general environment and the classroom situation together constitute the content for a teaching method. Besides, the attitudes of the teachers and students, as also administrative like the size of the class, the nature of the learner's ability, numbers of periods allotted to the subject etc. are some other relevant matters that need to be considered for any method to succeed. Briefly, on the whole, the ELT situation till date would leave no doubt that passing the examination in English has been the main motivation of the students. Consequently, the entire line of teaching methods has been directed towards this end, to the utter neglect of development of communication skills. Evidently, achieving such a short-term goal has been deemed inadequate as it fails to taken care of the pragmatic needs of the students in later life. Furthermore, the entire teaching or learning English hitherto has been characterized by a lack of co-ordination among the three cardinal factors-the teacher, the method, and the materials. At present, we need to review and restructure the variables involved. There is no doubt in denying the fact that of all the teaching methods Grammar-Translation Method is one of the oldest methods of teaching English in India. It followed Greek, Latin and Sanskrit teaching which required most memorizing of grammatical forms.

Grammar-Translation

method owes its existence to the teaching of Latin as the dominant language of education in the Western world in fifteenth century. However, in the sixteenth century, as French, Italian and English gained in importance as languages of communication, the status of Latin declined to that of foreign language .And in the teaching of Latin in grammar schools in the following centuries, focus was laid on the rigorous study of grammar and translation through the practice in bilingual texts and dialogues.

Later, in the eighteenth century, the modern European languages began to be taught on the same model. The focus continued to be on learning abstract grammatical rules, vocabulary, and sentences for translation. This model of studying Latin and later, modern European languages, 'had become the standard way of studying foreign language teaching method in schools' And this approach to foreign language teaching became known as the Grammar-Translation Method' In America, this method was, for sometimes, known as The Prussian Methods . Its chief exponents, including Johann Seidenstucker, Karl, Plottz, and Johann Meidinger. All these scholars as the name suggests, were German in origin, and the present method in a large way had its origin in the German scholarship. This method dominated foreign language teaching from 1840s to 1940s,though till date it is regarded as the



viable method of learning a foreign language in situations where understanding literary text is the primary focus of foreign language study....'.

As the name of method signifies, it aims at teaching English through mother tongue, involving word to word translation. The logic behind this method was that the foreign phraseology can best be interpreted through translation. This method was, and still remains, one of the most popular methods of teaching English. Though there have been many improvements in the way of teaching English as foreign language. The teachers have not entirely given up this method. The reason behind this is that the majority of old teachers were themselves taught by this method. Most of the teachers of the present generation have received instruction through this method. Grammar-Translation has some advantages and disadvantages over other methods. In their book, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, Richards and Rogers have worked out some of the advantages of this method. The first and the foremost is that Grammar-Translation Method focuses on the rigorous study of grammar rules, followed by application of these rules to the task of translation of source language texts into the target language texts and vice-versa. The goal of foreign language

study through the method is to be able to read its literature or profit from the mental discipline that accrues from foreign language study. Here the focus is laid on memorizing endless lists of rules and foreign phraseology. The first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language.

Although in Grammar-Translation Method, there is no provision for systematic development of communication skills, yet the main focus is laid on reading and writing. The skill of listening and speaking are paid little or no systematic attention. There is no doubt that Grammar-Translation Method prescribes learning of vocabulary through reading texts. This is facilitated further by teaching through bilingual word-list, dictionary use, and memorization. This learning of foreign phraseology is reinforced by translation exercises. One of the distinctive features of the Grammar-Translation Method is that it focuses on sentence as a basic unit of teaching or learning the foreign language. Sentences are translated from and into the target language. This, it was believed, made of learning of the language easier, because the native language equivalents of the foreign language took away a lot of resistance on the part of the learners.

Concomitant to the principle mentioned above, one of the characteristics



of the Grammar-Translation Method mentioned above is the use of learners' native language as medium of instruction. All new items of vocabulary are presented and explained through comparison and equivalents. Same strategy is adopted in explaining the structure of both the languages-the source and the target. Accuracy, rather than, fluency is the point of focus. Since, both grammar and translation demanded conformity to high standards of accuracy, no liberty could be granted in the foreign language usage. This also became the prerequisite at the end of the course. The presentation of grammar and vocabulary is by deductive method. It is through rigorous study of rules followed by extensive practice in usage through translation. The teaching of grammar, therefore, followed a systematic and organized manner. The syllabuses were designed accordingly-a sequence of grammar points throughout a text.

Apart from all these merits, the Grammar-Translation Method is not without pitfalls. The first and the foremost drawback of the present method is that it neglects the natural way of learning a language; listening, speaking, reading, writing etc. are all not given equal importance. In the present method reading and writing come first which is totally the unnatural way of

learning grammatical rules or dictionary meanings. In addition to it, English is learnt through the medium of the native language. The pupils lose free expression in English, First think in their mother tongue and then translate their ideas into English. Consequently, this method aims and results in passive mastery of English. Exact meaning of foreign words in the mother tongue is very often impossible. But, apart from all these limitations and pitfalls of Grammar-Translation Method its indispensability in the semi-urban and rural areas cannot be underestimated because in these areas the English learners cannot gain competence in English without the help of their native tongue. It is all because of their background that makes them unable to acquire proficiency in target language. It is because of their accent of their regional language that is a big problem in gaining competence in English.

However, it was increasingly felt that the Grammar-Translation Method failed to take of the much needed skill development. The focus in this method is on memorizing a long list of rules words and using those producing accurate translations. That is not the end of language learning, not at least of foreign language. The use of language did not reflect real life situations, nor did the texts prescribed have authenticity. Gradually, the method had fewer and fewer advocates. Furthermore, it met with a lot of opposition in the mid and



late nineteenth century when increased opportunities for communication among Europeans actually created a need for oral proficiency in the use of foreign languages. Linguists like Henry Sweet in England, Wilhelm Victor in Germany, and Paul Pessey in France advocated the cause of promoting alternate approaches. Phonetics and IPA in 1886, gave new insights, establishing the primacy of speech over the written word. All such developments and reformist movements paved the way for a more principled approach, called Direct Method

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