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Grammar Translation Method

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Introduction

The Grammar-Translation Method is not new. It has had different names, but it has been used by language teachers for many years. At one time it was called the Classical Method since it was first used in the teaching of the classical languages, Latin and Greek. Earlier in the 20th century, this method was used for the purpose of helping students to read and appreciate foreign language literature. It was also hoped that through the study of the grammar of the target language students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and write their native language better. Finally, it was thought that foreign language learning would help students grow intellectually; it was recognized that students would probably never use the target language, but the mental exercise of learning it would be beneficial anyway.

Grammar-Translation Method

It is a traditional language teaching method that was widely used in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for teaching foreign languages, especially Latin and classical Greek. The method emphasizes the study of grammar rules and vocabulary lists, with the primary focus on reading and writing, rather than speaking and listening. Translation exercises are a key component of this method, where students translate sentences or passages from the target language into their native language and vice versa.

This method is often criticized for being too focused on memorization and not providing enough opportunities for communicative language use. However, it is still used in some language classes, especially in a supplementary role, to help students gain a deeper understanding of the grammar and syntax of the target language.

Principles of Grammar-Translation Method

1. A fundamental purpose of learning a language is to be able to read literature written in it. Literary language is superior to spoken language. Students' study of the target culture is limited to its literature and fine arts.
2. An important goal is for students to be able to translate each language into the other. If students can translate from one language into another, they are considered successful language learners.
3. The ability to communicate in the target language is not a goal of language instruction.
4. The primary skills to be developed are reading and writing. Little attention is given to speaking and listening, and almost none to pronunciation.
5. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. It is very important that students get the correct answer.
6. It is possible to find native language equivalents for all target language words.
7. Learning is facilitated through attention to similarities between the target language and the native language.
8. It is important for students to learn about the grammar or form of the target language.
9. Deductive application of an explicit grammar rule is a useful pedagogical technique.
10. Language learning provides good mental exercise.
11. Students should be conscious of the grammatical rules of the target language.
12. Wherever possible, verb conjugations and other grammatical paradigms should be committed to memory.

The Goals of Teachers Who Use the Grammar-Translation Method

According to the teachers who use the Grammar-Translation Method, a fundamental purpose of learning a language is to be able to read literature written in the target language. To do this, students need to learn about the grammar rules and vocabulary of the target language. In addition, it is believed that studying another language provides students with good mental exercise, which helps develop their minds.

The Role of the Teacher and Learner

In the case of the teacher, he is the authority in the classroom. The students do as the teacher says so they can learn what she/he knows. Another important role is that teachers use the mother tongue to teach the foreign language to learners with little oral production of the target language. The teacher just asks and gives instructions to students to state the grammar rules. The primary goal of the teacher who uses this method is to make students able to read literature in target language. The teacher also plays a role of initiator of interaction in the language classroom. The role of teacher also seems like a facilitator and give practices to students focus on translating texts from the mother tongue to the target language and vice versa.

Finally, in this method teachers do not tolerate mistakes. In the other hand, the students acquire the knowledge that the teacher instructs them to do. However, they have to memorize vocabulary lists, grammar rules required for reading, writing and translation skills actively. Students have to learn about the target language. They have to translate literary texts form target language to their native language and sometimes vice-versa. In a nutshell, students do not concentrate on listening and speaking, and the role of learners becomes such as, reader, writer, rote-learner, and translator.

Characteristics of Grammar-Translation Method

This method is created with the main purpose of making learners to be able to read literature written in the target language, and to translate from one language to another. Language learning is consisting of little more than memorizing rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language. In the other hand, accuracy is emphasized, and grammar is taught deductively, i.e. by presentation and study of grammar rules, which are then practised through translation exercises given by the teacher. Nevertheless, students' native language is used by the teacher to present the vocabulary target, and give them

instructions about new items and to enable comparison that can be made between the foreign language and their native language.

Vocabulary and grammar are emphasized. Reading and writing are the primary skills that the students work on. There is much less attention given to speaking and listening. Pronunciation receives little, if any, attention. Most of the interaction in the classroom is from the teacher to the students. There is little student initiation and little student–student interaction. Many techniques that appeared appropriate in this method, these are: translation of a literary passage, reading comprehension questions, antonyms/synonyms, cognate, deductive application of rules, fill-in-the-blanks exercise, memorization, use words in sentences, and composition.

Techniques of Grammar Translation Method

Many techniques that appeared appropriate in this method, as follows:

- Translation of a Literary Passage: Students translate a reading passage from the target language into their native language. The reading passage then provides the focus for several classes: vocabulary and grammatical structures in the passage are studied in subsequent lessons. The passage may be excerpted from some work from the target language literature, or a teacher may write a passage carefully designed to include particular grammar rules and vocabulary. The translation may be written or spoken or both. Students should not translate idioms and the like literally, but rather in a way that shows that they understand their meaning.
- Reading Comprehension Questions: Students answer questions in the target language based on their understanding of the reading passage. Often the questions are sequenced so that the first group of questions ask for information contained within the reading passage. In order to answer the second group of questions, students will have to make inferences based on their understanding of the passage. This means they will have to answer questions about the passage even though the

answers are not contained in the passage itself. The third group of questions requires students to relate the passage to their own experience.

- **Antonyms/Synonyms:** Students are given one set of words and are asked to find antonyms in the reading passage. A similar exercise could be done by asking students to find synonyms for a particular set of words. Or students might be asked to define a set of words based on their understanding of them as they occur in the reading passage. Other exercises that ask students to work with the vocabulary of the passage are also possible.
- **Cognates:** Students are taught to recognize cognates by learning the spelling or sound patterns that correspond between the languages. Students are also asked to memorize words that look like cognates but have meanings in the target language that are different from those in the native language. This technique, of course, would only be useful in languages that share cognates.
- **Deductive Application of Rules:** Grammar rules are presented with examples. Exceptions to each rule are also noted. Once students understand a rule, they are asked to apply it to some different examples.
- **Fill in the blanks exercise:** Students are given a series of sentences with words missing. They fill in the blanks with new vocabulary items or with items of a particular grammar type, such as prepositions or verbs with different tenses.
- **Memorization:** Students are given lists of target language vocabulary words and their native language equivalents and are asked to memorize them. Students are also required to memorize grammatical rules and grammatical paradigms such as verb conjugations.
- **Use Words in Sentences:** In order to show that students understand the meaning and use of a new vocabulary item, they make up sentences in which they use the new words.
- **Composition:** The teacher gives the students a topic to write about in the target language. The topic is based upon some aspect of the reading passage of the lesson. Sometimes, instead of creating a composition, students are asked to prepare a *précis* of the reading passage.