

# From GTM to TBM: An Overview

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**Abstract** – The present paper aims at reviewing the pros and cons of some of the methods of language teaching which are currently employed in one way or another. In the same line, various methods which fall between grammar translation method to task based method will be considered. However, the point should be underscored that the present paper does not aim at favoring one method over the other one. Learner's variables are important factors that make it very difficult to transcript one particular method for a given population of language learners. Accordingly, it is suggested that teachers should always be ready to divert from one method to another one when necessary.

**Keywords** – Methods; Language teaching; Overview

## 1. Grammar-Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation Method is considered to be one of the oldest methods and approaches in foreign language teaching. Many teachers believe that this method is not used so frequently. However, this is not the case. I think the GTM is still being widely used nowadays particularly in many EFL contexts although many teachers consider the GTM imperfect although they use it much.

I personally try to avoid using this method in my teaching practice but I must admit that this avoidance is sometimes very difficult; moreover, it seems to be very practical to use the GTM from time to time, e.g. it is very quick when checking the learners' knowledge of vocabulary. This is one of the few occasions when the GTM may be suitable and effective. However, it is much more helpful to have the students say a particular sentence in other words because once they manage this it is clear to me that they understand the meaning of the sentence, not just individual words.

The GTM became popular as the principal practice technique in the late eighteenth century. In this regard, Stern (1983) highlighted the point that there is evidence that the GTM was the regular combination of grammar rules with translation into the target language. At that time it was called Classical Method and its aim was reading literature in the target language (Stern 1983). Now it is more commonly known as the GTM. It should be mentioned that unlike new methods, its focus is on accuracy and not fluency. In fact, the focus is on learning the rules of grammar and their application in translations from mother tongue into the target language and vice-versa so that the skills to be practiced are only reading and writing. This is not in line with the objectives of some of the new methods such as communicative method in which the focus is in practicing all four skills.

Following are some of the salient features of GTM:

- Its focus is on learning the rules of grammar and their application in translations from one language into the other.

- Vocabulary in the target language is learned through direct translation of isolated words from the native language.
- Classes are taught in the mother tongue, there are very little active use and teaching done in the target language.
- Readings in the target language are translated directly and then discussed in the native language.
- Grammar is taught with long explanations in the native language and later applied in the production of sentences.
- No class time is allocated to allow students to produce their own sentences; less time is spent on oral practice.
- Testing of the students is done almost through translation.

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## 2. Direct Method

The Direct Method is characterized by the use of the target language as a means of instruction and communication in the language classroom, and by the avoidance of the use of the first language and of translation as a technique (Stern, 1983). Its aims are only speaking, reading, understanding and having good pronunciation. The learners are encouraged to speak, yet not forced and such freedom of speech appeals to me very much. Writing is postponed as much as possible, but this may not be considered to be a good idea because all four skills should be practiced in balance if we wish students to be competent part of today's foreign language speaking society. We think that the DM is an appropriate

method for the practice of communication but it should not be used throughout the whole course. Following are some of the features of DM:

- Classroom instructions are given in the target language and mother tongue has no place in classes.
- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught.
- Grammar is taught inductively, the learning of grammar and translating skills should be avoided because they involve the application of the mother tongue.
- Primacy is given to spoken word and great stress is put on correct pronunciation.
- Printed word must be kept away as long as possible.
- Writing should be delayed until after the printed word has been introduced.
- Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstrations, objects and pictures, and abstract vocabulary is taught through association of ideas.

One of the negative aspects of employing the direct method is that books are not much important during teaching. However, knowing the structure of a lesson in advance may be useful for both the learners and the teachers. The use of the direct method faded in the early 1900s as it was not practical in classroom settings. As a result, Audio-Lingual Method emerged after World War II.

### 3. Audio-Lingual method

This method developed during the Second World War in the United States as a real scientific method when there was a need to teach people the language quickly and effectively. The results of this program are generally regarded to have been very successful. The learners were in small groups and were highly motivated, which undoubtedly contributed to the success of the approach. Audio-Lingual Method has probably had a greater impact on second and foreign language teaching than any other method (Nunan, 2000). It was, in fact, the first approach which could be said to have developed and utilized a technology of teaching.

In audio-lingual method, the dominant emphasis is placed on listening and speaking. While reading and writing are not neglected, they are given priority and in the teaching sequence precede reading and writing. The audiolingualism tries to develop target language skills without reference to the mother tongue. As a matter of fact, it could be concluded that the ALM enhanced using only the target language in the classroom in order to reach its overall goal which is to create communicative competence in learners. The ALM seems to be a suitable method for beginners to become acquaintance with the target language and to listen to how the new language sounds. Therefore, there is a need for a wide use of language laboratories, tapes and visual aids which have a

positive influence on the process of picking up a foreign language.

The main features of ALM are:

- It's based on drills and dialogues.
- Grammar is not taught in direct way.
- Its objectives are accurate pronunciation and grammar, ability to respond quickly and accurately in speech situations and knowledge of sufficient vocabulary to use the grammar patterns.
- Emphasis is laid on building blocks of language and learning the rules for combining them.
- The meaning of words should be learned only in context, no translations to the mother tongue.
- Only everyday English and vocabulary connected to the topic are used.
- The teacher should speak only the target language, the work is based on listening and responding to the teacher.

### 4. Total Physical Response

The Total Physical Response is based on Asher's (1979) idea that the more active the learning the more effective it is. Asher tried to recreate the conditions in foreign language classrooms and the children received their initial input in the form of instructions in the imperative which required them to make physical responses. This method may best suit the type of learners who need to be active in the class. The TPR helps them pay attention, listen to the teacher and behave in appropriate way. Besides, in every group of learners there are always some shy students and this method can improve their courage.

However, there are several negatives to this method. For example, it requires much of practice, vocabulary is limited, only imperatives are used and students who are not used to that might feel embarrassed. In the same line, Asher's comparison of the TPR and a conversation between the parent and infant is worth considering. According to Asher, this is the secret of this method. He calls it a language-body conversation in which the parent speaks to the infant and it answers by a physical response, e.g. looking, smiling, laughing, turning, walking, reaching, holding, sitting, running, and so on. These conversations take place far before the child says his/hers first word – "mommy" or "daddy". Although the infant is not speaking, s/he is imprinting a linguistic map of how the language works. Asher also presents a few myths about the TPR and explains why these are only myths and not the reality. Following are some of the myths that Asher put forth:

- TPR will only works for children.
- TPR is limited to the imperative.
- TPR is limited to beginning students

In view of the above, the main features of TPR can be summarized as:

- Mother tongue is rarely used; students are allowed to use it when necessary.
- Acting, performing and listening are very important.
- At the beginning the students are just listening to what the teacher says, then they repeat after him and then they start to speak.
- Only concrete vocabulary connected with actions, not abstract, is taught.
- Tenses and continuous aspects, classroom language, imperatives and instructions, and story-telling are used.
- No grammar is taught; just commands and imperatives are used, and then drill.

## 6. Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is defined by Welford as a teaching method which is “based on a modern understanding of how the human brain works and how we learn most effectively. According to Lozanov (1978), there is a hidden potential of the mind which gets students to learn in a state of deep relaxation bordering on hypnosis. This hypnotic state is brought about through yogic techniques of relaxation, rhythmic breathing, and listening to reading by the teacher which are synchronised to music. The use of music is supposed to activate the left hemisphere of the brain, which, in consequence is designed to facilitate ‘holistic’ learning.

Harmer (1995) described Suggestopedia as a methodology, which was developed by Lozanov and in which students must be comfortably relaxed. This means comfortable furniture and the use of music. Students are given new names and listen to extended dialogues. According to Harmer, this new identity can help students in the process of learning.

A typical Suggestopedia course is described as follows: it lasts 30 days and consists of ten units of study. Classes are held 4 hours a day, 6 days a week. Groups of learners are ideally socially homogeneous, twelve in number, and divided equally between men and women. However, it is almost impossible to reach this ideal class. They are mainly the socially homogenous groups and the groups divided equally between men and women that are almost impossible to be achieved. The most important characteristics of this method are stress on decoration, furniture and arrangement of the classroom, use of music, dramatization, emotionality, relaxation and positive atmosphere, and the authoritative behavior of the teacher yet kind of a parent-childlike relationship between the teacher and the student. In other words, the classroom looks different and unusual. There are, for example, armchairs, carpets, music, and a lot of posters, pictures and maps on the walls. The learners learn from both the direct instructions as well as the environment in which the instruction takes place. The most conspicuous feature in Suggestopedia is the centrality of music and musical rhythm to learning. The use of music both in the background and as an accompaniment to certain activities can perhaps be motivating and relaxing. The group of

ESL/EFL teachers considers “the dim lighting, large comfortable chairs and music selections to be not available to the majority of schools, and these ‘environmental factors’ to be certainly close to impossible for very large classes. It is hard to imagine that every school would be equipped with such a classroom with specific decorations - carpets, armchairs, curtains, lights etc. as they are very costly.

Suggestopedia can be summarized as a method in which:

- Music and musical rhythm to learning are the center of focus.
- The learner learns not only from the effect of direct instruction but from the environment in which the instruction takes place.
- The aim for student is to relax, have fun and have no barriers in mind when studying.
- Grammar is not explained directly, it’s so-called peripheral learning (grammar patterns are on posters on the walls).
- Emphasis is on memorization of vocabulary pairs – a target-language item and its native language translation.
- Only everyday English is used in dialogues, students have handouts half in mother tongue and half in the target language. They learn the blocks of language.

## 7. Communicative Approach

Communicative approach has been used over the last decade. As far as the CA is concerned, it is the most complex approach to the foreign language teaching because it focuses on the use of language and meaningful communication which is one of the key ability of a person in today’s world. The syllabus of the CA lessons is not based on structural development. In contrast, it focuses on functional development. As a result, students are given tasks to accomplish using language instead of studying the language. The abilities to use the language functions are essential skills of a person who intends to be an adequate part of today’s society. Its goal is a communicative competence which requires a correct use of the language appropriate to the given situation, complete and fluent speaking in a foreign language, and finally an ability to explain, express and describe ideas (Widdowson, 1990).

Harmer (1995) further added that because of the focus on communicative activities and the concentration on language as a means of communication such an approach has been called the communicative approach. Besides, CA is a set of principles about teaching including recommendations about method where the focus is on meaningful communication not structure, use not usage. In fact, emphasis in CA lessons is put on using the language in communication with other people and on learning to communicate through interaction with other learners in the target language. These reasons stand behind the necessity of all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and as such they ought to be

practiced in balance. This approach focuses on language as a medium of communication.

In short, it may be concluded that many teachers think that the CA is the best method and that they use it in their teaching practice a lot but they think that the other teachers use the GTM. This fact seems to suggest that they use it frequently themselves but they are afraid to admit it. Bowen (2005) highlighted that most teachers would probably like to think that their classes are communicative in the widest sense of the word and their lessons probably contain activities where learners communicate and where tasks are completed by means of interaction with other learners. However, they usually employ other methods and approaches in their teaching process and he does not consider it to be correct.

In view of the above, CA is summarized as:

- This method focuses on language as a medium of communication.
- The goal is communicative competence which means ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to the situation, ability to communicate completely, not the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker.
- The teacher should facilitate the communication between all participants but act as an independent participant.
- The emphasis is on practice of oral and listening skills in pair work and group work as a way of developing communicative skills.
- Grammar is taught, but less systematically, the use of idiomatic and everyday English.
- Materials must relate to pupils' own lives and must be authentic, real and fresh.

## 8. Task-Based Method

Many scholars believe that applying Task-Based Method is very stimulating and refreshing to avoid boredom, break stereotypes and prevent fatigue. Generally, the learners find this method amusing and interesting, and can easily retain gained knowledge in their mind rather than working it out themselves. In this relation, the point should be mentioned that language has to be acquired as a result of some deeper experience than the concentration on a grammar point (Harmer, 1995).

The TBM can be utilized in various lessons to show the learners how the process of learning can be interesting, amusing, refreshing and taken from a different point of view. Following are some of the features of TBM:

- The primary focus of classroom activity is a task.
- Language is an instrument which the students use to complete the task.
- The task is an activity in which students use language to achieve a specific outcome.
- The activity reflects real life and learners focus on meaning.
- Language learners are free to use any language they want.

- The aim is exploring, listening and speaking.
- TBM is based on self-teaching.
- Grammar is explained afterwards.
- The teacher is advisor and initiator; the students are explorers and investigators.

## 9. Conclusion

Up to date, many methods of language teaching have been developed to enhance language learning. As a matter of fact, whatever method is introduced, the aim is on enhancing the process of language learning. Accordingly, the present paper tried to review the advantages and disadvantages of some of the famous methods.

In a nutshell, the point should be highlighted that whatever method is utilized by the teachers, the focus should be the same. That is enhancing optimal language learning. As a result, teachers should put into consideration the language learners variables before making decision about which method to use to teach a particular skill.

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