

**Tikrit University / College of Education for Women**  
**English Department**  
**Methods of Language Teaching / 3rd. class**  
**Instructor Afraa' Husam Sami**  
**Lecture 1.**

## **The Grammar Translation Method**

### **Introduction**

There are many methods that are usually used by teachers to teach a foreign language. One of them is the Grammar Translation Method. 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 language, Latin and Greek. Earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 probably never use the target language, but the mental exercise of learning it would be beneficial anyway.

### **Objectives of GTM**

- 1) To be able to read literature written in the target language
- 2) To be able to translate from one language to another
- 3) To develop reading and writing skill

### **Features of the Grammar Translation Method**

- 1) Reading and writing are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking and listening.
- 2) Vocabulary selection is based solely on the reading text used, and words are taught through bilingual words lists, dictionary study, and memorization.
- 3) The sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice. Much of the lesson is devoted to translating sentences into and out of the target language.
- 4) High standards of accuracy are emphasized.

- 5) Grammar is taught deductively, that is by presentation and study of systematically presented grammar rules, which are then practised through translation exercises.
- 6) The students' native language is the medium of instruction. It is used to explain new items and to enable comparison to be made between the foreign language and the students' native language.

## **Techniques of the Grammar Translation Method.**

### **1) Translation of a literary passage**

Students translate a reading passage from the target language into their native language. The reading passage focuses on several classes: vocabulary and grammatical structures in the passage. 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.

### **2) 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 asks 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.

### **3) Antonyms/synonyms**

Students are given one set of words and are asked to find antonyms in the reading passage. Students could also be asked to find synonyms for a particular set of words. 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.

#### 4) 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 would only be useful in languages that share cognates

#### 5) Deductive application of the rule

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.

#### 6) Fill-in-the-blanks

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.

#### 7) 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.

#### 8) 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.

#### 9) 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.

## **The Advantages**

The grammar translation method has been practised so widely and has survived so long for its main advantage. First, as many schools still have classes with a large number of students, GTM with its focus on teacher centeredness is cost effective and appropriate. Next, its main technique, translation into the learners' L1, along with some sort of accuracy in understanding synonyms helps to mean to be clarified and the possibility of any misinterpretation or misunderstanding removed. Further, this method saves a lot of time because via translation from one language into another the meanings, words and phrases of the target language would quickly be explained. So, even teachers who are not fluent in L2 can teach through this method. Finally, teachers are less challenged because the students understand, and will not have any problems in responding to the comprehension questions asked in the first language. This helps teachers to understand whether the students have learned what they were taught or not.

## **Disadvantages**

- 1) It neglects the natural order of learning (listening, speaking, reading and writing), so it is thought to be an unnatural method.
- 2) It neglects communicative skills, so students fail to learn how to communicate in real life even after completing the programme with all its tedious requirements.
- 3) Its emphasis on word translation disregards the fact that exact translation is not always possible or correct.
- 4) Interaction is teacher initiated rather than of students to student type.
- 5) Students strictly follow the textbook and have no active role in the classroom.
- 6) Students' feeling receives little or no attention to this method.