



University Ziane Achour, Djelfa

Master Two

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Language Approaches and Teaching Methods

Department of Foreign Languages

First Term

English Division

Didactics Students

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Introduction

Language teaching has a long, fascinating but rather tortuous history, in which a debate on teaching methods has evolved particularly over the last hundred years. The names of many of the methods (Grammar-translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method, Communicative Teaching Method, etc) are familiar enough, yet the methods are not easy to grasp in practice because a method, however ill-defined it may be, is more than a single strategy or a particular technique. As a part of language teaching theories, these methods derived partly from social, economic, political, or educational circumstances, partly from theoretical consideration (new changes in language theories and in new psychological perspective on language learning), partly from practical experience, intuition, and inventiveness. Therefore, to some degree, they represent a combination of language teaching beliefs, but it is evident that they are characterized by the over-emphasis on single aspects as the central issue of language teaching and learning.

1. The Grammar Translation Method

The Grammar Translation Method has had different names but it has been used by language teachers for a long time. It was called *Classical Method* as it was first used in the teaching of the classical languages, Latin and Greek. Its aim was to help students read foreign language literature and it was also hoped that through studying the grammar of the target language students would become familiar with the grammar of their native language and that of the target language. In the 19th century the Classical Method was known as the Grammar Translation Method. According to the Grammar Translation Method the fundamental purpose of learning a foreign language is:

- to be able to read literature written in the target language;
- to provide students with good mental exercise which helps develop their minds;
- to give the learners grammatical rules and examples to memorize them;
- to make them apply the rules to other examples;
- to teach the students to write in both their native and the target languages through translation. (Bárdos 2005: 46)

The method itself belongs to the cognitive way of language teaching.

The basic principles of the method:

- characteristic interaction in the teaching process is a Student – Teacher interaction;
- teacher’s roles are very traditional, the teacher is the authority in the classroom;
- literary language is considered superior to spoken language, culture is considered as consisting of literature and the fine arts, behaviour culture is ignored;
- passive vocabulary and grammar are emphasized at cost of pronunciation
- reading and writing are the primary skills much less attention is given to speaking and listening;
- the language that is used in class is mostly the students native language, the meanings of new words are made clear by translating them into the students native language;
- evaluation is accomplished on the basis of written tests in which students are expected to translate from their native language to the target one or vice versa, questions about the foreign culture have to be answered as well;
- culture is viewed as consisting of literature and the fine arts;
- error correction is very important, the teacher always supplies the students with the correct answer
- the syllabus is structure-based.

Activities characteristic of the method:

- translation of a literary passage
- reading comprehension
- finding antonyms and synonyms
- gap-filling exercises
- memorization
- using words in sentences
- compositions. (Larsen-Freeman 1986: 4-15)