

English Teachers' Attitude Towards Grammar-Translation Method at Secondary Education: Bangladeshi Context

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Abstract: This paper discusses the attitudes English teachers have towards grammar-translation method at secondary studies. For this purpose the present study makes a questionnaire and side by side interview system which has been implemented on the secondary level English teachers. Fifty seven teachers have been taken as research sample. This study is served in the southern part of the country where Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira and Jessore are included. Through the findings teachers' positive attitudes are disclosed that teachers were generally comfortable with this language teaching method offered in secondary level education in Bangladesh and they agreed that this method is very much important in Bangladeshi perspective for learning English in the present era. The respondents in the present study, who were just English teachers, reported that this method in secondary school syllabus helped the students obtaining the perfect knowledge of grammar and translation by which the students can learn English well for career and personal growth.

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1. Introduction

In this country, under control of British people, English language is enrolled in different perspectives of life even different syllabuses of the textbooks used in the country. From then a number of teaching methods like- grammar-translation method, audio-lingual method, translation method, communicative language teaching, situational language teaching, silent way, suggestopedia, competency-based language teaching, natural approach and task-based language teaching are used in various courses in different levels of education. Among them grammar-translation method is used especially secondary level education in Bangladesh where many methods are included and reduced, but this method is used from the very beginning to till today with its full prestige. At present, in the name of communicative language teaching (CLT), grammar-translation method is used in the secondary level education in Bangladesh. So it is needed to justify the English Teachers' attitude towards Grammar-Translation method at Secondary Education.

2. Background

In the Western countries, "foreign" language learning was similar to the learning of Latin or Greek especially in school level education. Latin was taught focusing on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations translation of texts, doing written exercises which have been called the

Classical Method. Brown (1994) would like to say that as other languages began to be taught in educational institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Classical Method was adopted as the chief means for teaching foreign languages. In the nineteenth century, the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method. Grammar-Translation Method began in Germany naming Prussia, at the end of the eighteenth century and established in the early years of the nineteenth century. The origins of the method lie in an attempt to teach languages by grammar and translation where the learners have to gather knowledge of foreign languages by studying a number of grammatical rules and applying these knowledge to the interpretation of texts with the use of a dictionary. The principal aim of The Grammar-Translation Method was to make language learning easier and the central feature was the replacement of traditional texts by exemplary sentences.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the study were-

1. To know the English teachers' attitude towards this method especially secondary level education
2. To know the characteristics (merits and demerits) of this method and
3. To evaluate the suggestions (Come from the teachers) towards the method at secondary level education.

4. Literature Review

The related researches are as follows:

Holmes (1991) recommended “a secure environment” where learners were involved, using the target language more freely.

Stern (1992) in his book “Issues and Options in Language Teaching” indicates “a contrastive analysis, just as the comparative linguistics studies, is indeed very important for the second language learner. Therefore translation in one form or another can play a certain part in language learning”.

Brown (1994), in his *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, states “It does virtually nothing to enhance a student’s communicative ability in the language.”

Cunningham (2000) in his paper “Translation in the Classroom- a Useful Tool for Second Language Acquisition” indicates “while there may indeed be some negative effects from using translation, there is a place in the learning environment for translation. Translation can contribute to the students’ acquisition of the target language, at all levels”.

Larsen-Freeman (2000), in one of his Writings on language teaching, defined teaching approaches that were usually applied in language classrooms, one of which was the grammar-translation method, or the classical method. He indicated that the authority in such a class was the instructor not the students, who learned by “studying the grammar of the target language and translating from the target language to their native language.”

Linder (2002) also confirmed the importance and effectiveness of this teaching approach, which was applied in an instructor-centered class.

Austin (2003) in his paper “The Grammar Translation Method of Language Teaching” states “As a teacher, I liked using the grammar translation method because I could assume the intelligence of my students; I could talk to them like the intelligent people that they are, and we could talk about the grammar and vocabulary that I was teaching. In another method, I would have had to use simple language and familiar phrases to communicate in the target language, and even then, I could not be sure that my students knew and understood what it was that they were saying.”

Takanashi (2004) found in his study that being conscious of grammar-translation skills prevented students from acquiring communicative skills, and in a survey most students from all of the eleven countries questioned the traditional authority-based approach, wishing to participate actively in exploring knowledge.

Mondal (2012) in his paper “Assessment of English Teaching Methodologies at Secondary Level in Bangladesh” states that Though a number of

teaching methods were used at secondary level, the present method named “Communicative Language Teaching” used on the Secondary education in Bangladesh which was not suitable for the current text book of English, where interaction between the teachers and the students were lacked of and two skills like reading and writing were applied only.

Chang (2011) in his thesis paper “A Contrastive Study of Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Approach in Teaching English Grammar” would like to say that without grammar, words hang together without any real meaning or sense. In order to be able to speak a language to some degree of proficiency and to be able to say what people really want to say, some grammatical knowledge must be grasped. By teaching grammar the teachers not only give the students the means to express themselves, but also fulfill their expectations of what learning a foreign language involves. There are no miracles on the way to learn a language. No matter how students are taught grammatical concepts, syntactic constructions and stylistic devices, or language conventions and editing concepts, they will not automatically make use of these in their talking. What this thesis intends to focus on is how to improve college students’ grammatical competence and linguistic competence through the Grammar Translation Method.

5. Significance of the research

For decades, English grammar teaching in Bangladesh has been greatly influenced by some traditional teaching methods, such as the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method and The Communicative Language Teaching or Communicative Approach. Through this research both the teachers and learners would be able to know the perfect idea about grammar and translation by which they could go to the textbook thoroughly, write and speak transparently without hesitation and learn second language easily like non-natives English people (Whose mother tongue is not English).

6. Grammar-Translation Method

Grammar Translation Method was first introduced in Germany especially in Prussia. Hence it was also called Prussian Method. This method is the oldest method of foreign language teaching, having existed for more than 2000 years which dominated European and foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s and is being modified and used in different countries of the world today. But this method was immigrated for teaching language in Bangladesh during colonial period which is being used till today. It is a very traditional method

which does not have any theoretical framework. Richards and Rodgers (1986) state “It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it that attempts to relate it to issue in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory”. Howatt (1984) depicts in his article that the high priority attached to meticulous students of accuracy which, as well as having an intrinsic moral value, was a prerequisite for passing the increasing number of formal written examinations that grew up during the century. This method is still common in many countries, even popular. Brown (1994) attempts to explain why the method is still employed by pointing out “It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations and rote exercises”.

7. Characteristics of this method

The principal characteristics of this method are:

- (i) It is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language.
- (ii) Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.
- (iii) Classes are continued through mother tongue with a little use of the target language.
- (iv) A number of vocabularies are taught in the lists of isolated words.
- (v) Long hair-explanting explanation of grammar is presented and illustrate.
- (vi) Reading of difficult classical text is started early.
- (vii) Very little attention is paid to the context of text rather than focus on the grammatical issues of text and
- (viii) Reading and writing is emphasized than speaking and listening.

8. Methodology

In order to know the teacher’s attitude towards the grammar translation method, a survey was conducted to 57 teachers through the questionnaire survey where all of the teachers were school level. As this research is descriptive and non- experimental, the research was based on primary data through questionnaire. The questionnaires, all the questionnaires in the study were originally in

English, were printed and sent to the respondents by the author. The survey evaluates their opinions. It also requests for their personal comments, both positive and negative. The results of the survey were made percentage and presented in figure to represent the attitudes of the teachers’ about this method.

9. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is made for getting the authentic data from the respondents which will help the research to be perfect or not, including seven questions where all the questions were structured. These questions were prepared through English language.

10. Data Analysis

Data collected were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted and presented in Figure 1. Where Percentage was calculated by using statistical technique for analysis and the data obtained were tabulated in term of frequency. Side by side a pie chart is drawn on the basis of the highest percentages through the respondents’ opinion by questionnaire.

Table 1. Questions

Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. This Method is used at secondary education.	34 59.6%	12 21.1%	2 3.5%	5 8.8%	4 7.0
2. This Method is appropriate.	28 49.1%	11 19.3	4 7.0	9 15.8%	5 8.8%
3. This Method should be changed.	13 22.8%	8 14.0%	6 10.5%	10 17.5%	20 35.1%
4. Students have idea to this Method	7 12.3%	9 15.8%	11 19.3%	13 22.8%	17 29.8%
5. Students can use this Method well.	8 14.0%	11 19.3%	9 15.8%	16 28.0%	13 22.8%
6. This Method is traditional.	42 73.7%	11 19.3%	0 0.0%	3 5.3%	1 1.8%
7. Teachers have well trained in it.	31 54.4%	14 24.6%	4 7.0%	5 8.8%	3 5.3%

Frequency and Percentage of Participants’ Responses toward the Grammar-Translation Method (N = 57)

11. Findings

From the above results of Figure 1, the major findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

1. Grammar-Translation Method is used in secondary level education in Bangladesh at present where 59.6% teachers are strongly agreed for this purpose.
2. This Method is appropriate for the learners which is included in the current text book of Bangladesh that is known through respondents' opinion through questionnaire where 49.1% respondents are in favor of this.
3. The Grammar Translation Method should not be changed where 35.1% respondents are strongly disagreed for this purpose.
4. The students of Bangladesh at secondary level have less idea about this method which is known through 29.8% opinions of questionnaire.
5. The students of this level can not use this method well which has been represented through 28.0% respondents answer of questionnaire.
6. The respondents are strongly agreed that this method is traditional (Very old) has been expressed through the answers of 73.7% respondents.
7. The 54.4% respondents are strongly agreed that they have well trained in it.

On the basis of the seven structured questions (Taking the highest percentages) a pie chart can be drawn in the following way-

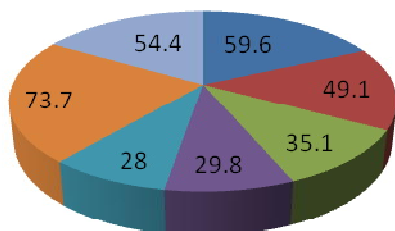


Figure 1. Seven structured questions

12. Results and discussion

Out of the 57 teachers who participated in the study through questionnaire survey, 34 of them said that the grammar-translation method is used at secondary level education in Bangladesh now and 28 teachers are very much appreciating that this method is appropriate for the current text book of Bangladesh. Where 20 teachers are not in favor of changing this method, though the students have poor knowledge about this method and they can use this method casually. There can be no denying the fact

that this method is traditional enough but the teachers have well trained on this method.

13. Conclusion

Without grammar, the real meaning of any language is impossible where mother language to target language and vice versa are involved. In order to be able to write and speak a language transparently, some grammatical knowledge must be needed. By teaching grammar the teachers not only give the students the means to express themselves, but also fulfill their expectations of what learning a foreign language involves. No matter how students are taught grammatical concepts, they will automatically make use of these in their talking. What this paper intends to focus on the teachers attitude towards the Grammar Translation Method. Based on the theory of the Grammar Translation Method, this paper introduces the Grammar Translation Method well. In order to prove the effect of the Grammar Translation Method, the author of the paper makes a questionnaire and observation on school level teachers. After that, the Grammar Translation Method, concerned with accuracy; fluency and accuracy is the target for English learning, is proved to be a suitable and successful teaching approach at secondary level education in Bangladesh.

To sum up, through the teachers positive attitudes towards the Grammar Translation Method it proves that it is a suitable approach for teaching grammar to school students. The students in the class became more interested in grammar lessons. The result of the questionnaire indicates that the Grammar Translation Method is a suitable teaching approach that can meet students' needs.

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