

GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD AND STRUCTURAL SITUATIONAL APPROACH

Prepared by

Dr. Riyaz Ahmad Kumar

Coordinator

PG (English)

DDE

University of Kashmir

&

Mr. Showkat Rashid Wani

Coordinator

Bed DDE

University of Kashmir

The grammar translation method is also called as the classical method of teaching English. This method came to India with the Britishers or with the advent of English language in India. It is the oldest method and is still most prevalent in most of the states.

Translation method means teaching the target language by translating it into mother tongue or regional language. Each word, sentence or phrase of English is taught by translating it into mother tongue or regional language.

The method has no psychological basis but is based on the philosophy that:

1. Preparing the students to read only the content prescribed in the syllabus. Teacher reads and translates it or vice-versa.
2. Reading and writing skills are emphasized and to some extent developed. It is quite unnatural of language teaching because listening and speaking skills are totally neglected.
3. It is teacher centered.
4. Vocabulary forms are selected from textbooks only. No situational learning takes place.

The teaching is not systematic. The exercises done revolve round the words, phrases and sentences. The teacher translates words, phrases and sentences and the learner is also asked to do this translation.

Principles of Translation Method.

The Grammar-Translation method is based on the following principles:

1. Teaching and learning foreign phraseology is best achieved by translation which is easy, quick as well as economical.
2. While comparing some patterns in two languages, the learning becomes more clear and firm and easily assimilated.
3. The knowledge of set rules of grammar help the learners to avoid any type of mistakes.
4. The principle of proceeding from known to unknown is followed throughout which makes language teaching-learning more easier.

Merits of Grammar-Translation Method

1. It saves time and is economical.
2. It is very successful and applicable in present day classroom where a large number of students can be taught by a single teacher.
3. It helps in having better and clear understanding of words, phrases and sentences.
4. It is very reliable for giving the students practice of reading while understanding also.
5. It enhances students' vocabulary.
6. It obviously gives correct knowledge of English as it explains grammatical rules.
7. The teacher as well as the learner aid the teaching-learning process and is thus quite convenient method for teacher.
8. It brings about clear distinctions between structures of sentences in English and vernaculars and this develops the act of translation in students.
9. It helps in testing comprehension of the students quite
10. This method can be used in all situations.

Drawbacks of Grammar-Translation Method

1. This method lays no emphasis on speaking. It completely ignores the practice of oral work which is the basic skill of learning any language.
2. This method fails to teach correct articulation, intonation and pronunciation.
3. This method develops the habit of translation.
4. In doing translation all the time, this method wastes a lot of time of students.
5. Translation hinders the students from thinking freely in the English language.
6. This method encourages word to word translation but this translation work is always approximate. Sometimes literal translation becomes ridiculous. It not only leads to errors but blunders in translations.
7. This method neglects silent reading, model reading and rapid reading.
8. This method tries to teach English by grammatical rules and not by use. This is not very sound in teaching-learning of a language.
9. It is dull and uninteresting method, the students being passive listeners busy in cramming and mimicry all the time.
10. This method does not even test the pupils correctly at the examinations because all the basic and necessary skills are never ever taught completely and hence never tested even.

❖ STRUCTURAL SITUATIONAL APPROACH

In teaching English as a foreign language, two approaches recently evolved are

1. Structural approach
2. Situational approach.

Structural Approach.

Structural approach developed as a result of extensive researches held in the area of language teaching by those structuralists who were predominantly interested in foreign language teaching methods. The approach is a direct outcome of the efforts and researches done by the British Council in Institute of Education, University of London et al.

Structural approach means the arrangement of words in such a way as to form a suitable pattern of sentences.

The structure approach thus advocates methods which would include practice in the speech skills, not because reading and writing should be neglected but that the teaching of the grade structures can be better undertaken through aural-oral work.

What is a Structure?

C. S. Bhadari Says, “The different arrangements or patterns of words are called structures”. We can say that structures are the different arrangements, may be complete patterns or they may form a part of a large pattern in one accepted style or the other. Each and every language has its own set pattern of structures – its own tools. Structure and sentences are two different things. The structures are tools of a language. The structure do not need any grammatical background whereas sentences are grammatical order of words.

Types of structures. In the structural approach, we have four kinds of structures namely sentence patterns, phrase patterns, formulas and idioms.

1. ***Sentence Patterns.*** As defined by French, “The word pattern means a model from which many things of the same kind and shape can be made like houses which look the same or shoes made alike or a number of lorries all of the same size and shape though perhaps of different colors.

A sentence pattern is therefore a model for a sentence which will be of the same shape and construction although made up of different words.” The sentence may be of different designs. E.g., I am his brother. Is he a boy? She is my friend. Leela was not my neighbor.

2. ***Phrase Pattern.*** Phrase is a word or a group of words which express an idea. Some of the phrase patterns are being out of sight, in the bag, in the school, on the table, under the bed etc.
3. ***Formulas.*** Formulas mean a group of words used regularly on certain occasions. For example, How do you do; Good morning; Thank you; my pleasure; Good bye etc.
4. ***Idioms.*** There are a large number of structures in every language and all the structures cannot be learnt in one go. So there arises a need as to which things be kept in mind while selecting structures. The teacher, the textbook writer, the syllabus framer and even the learner select structures at their respective levels. The proper selection of structures is made keeping in mind the following points:

- a. ***Usefulness.*** Those structures, which frequently occur both in spoken and written form of a language, are useful. The learner finds the structures occurring frequently in their textbooks and also using them most of the time while speaking.

- b. Teachability.** The structures which are easy to be demonstrated in the real life situations have maximum teachability. The teachable structures should be taught in the beginning. For example, what are you eating?
- c. Simplicity.** Always the simple structures should be taken up first followed by complicated ones later on. For example, I am walking.
- d. Productivity.** The productivity of a structure means that by teaching just one structure, a lot many structures can be derived from it. For example, May I come in? May I sit down? May I open my book? May I write it down?
- e. Learnability.** Learnability means that the items/structures which are easier for students to learn first should be taken up first. Structures should be up to the level of learner's age and learner's capacity to learn.

Aims of Structural Approach.

Menon and Patel group the aims of structural approach as:

1. To lay the foundation of English by establishing through skill and reception of about 275 graded structures.
2. To enable the children to attain mastery over an essential vocabulary of about 3000 root words for active use.
3. To correlate the teaching of grammar and composition with the reading lessons.
4. To teach the four fundamental skills namely understanding, speaking, reading, and writing in the order named.
5. To lay proper emphasis on the aural-oral approach, active methods and their condemnation of formal grammar for its own sake.

The Basic Principles of Structural Approach

1. Language as reality is structure may be predicted and expressed as a set of elements holding a fixed set of relationships. One structure should be taken up and taught at one time.
2. Language is primarily speech; the speech habits of the community rather than writing alone can yield insights into the structure of language.
3. The learning of a language is a habit formation process which requires a lot of drill and practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing till then structure get fixed up in the minds of the learners.
4. The child's activity is more important rather than the activity of the teacher.
5. The teacher should be in a position to grade the structures in the content and create meaningful situations to make teaching of structures more teachable and learnable.

Steps in Teaching (Structural Approach)

In the structural approach every structure is taught separately. Usually following five steps are involved:

1. Presentation of items in an appropriate situation by the teacher.
2. Oral drill by the students in the situations created.
3. Presentation of items in some new situations.
4. Oral drill by the students in the new situations.
5. Over all drill.

While teaching structures, the teacher should take the pupils through four stages, listening, recognition, imitation and reproduction.

Various methods of Teaching Structures

1. **Oral Teaching.** Aural-oral method is the most suitable for teaching structures. The teacher may give oral drill to the class in chorus, groups and then to individuals. It will involve speaking both by the teacher and the students. Then reading or writing of the same may be taken up. Pointing out the importance of oral work in teaching structures, C. C Fries in his book 'Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language' rightly says, "The speech is the language. The written record is a secondary representation of the language. To master a language, it is necessary to read it, but it is extremely doubtful whether one can really read the language without mastering it orally."
2. **Creating Meaningful Situations.** Situational teaching means teaching by creating situations. Anything taught or learnt in a situation is more meaningful than otherwise. It makes teaching or learning more realistic. Moreover, the learner is able to retain the matter for a longer time. Situational teaching is therefore of great value in the teaching of any language. The best way of teaching structures is by creating situations. The situation makes the structure easily understandable. It establishes a closer and more direct relation between and expression and its meaning. It is very important here that the situation should be appropriate to the structure in hand. Otherwise it will lead to confusion. The teacher should use a particular situation in order.
 - a. To practice the structure and to relate it to its meaning.
 - b. To build up a vocabulary of content words.
 - c. Situations can be created as
 - i. Using actual objects.
 - ii. Through gestures and actions.
 - iii. Using models, charts and pictures.
 - iv. Verbal situations.
 - v. Action chains.

- 3. Situation Table.** A substitution table is an important aid in the hands of the teacher. The teacher can prepare the substitution table by taking up one structure at a time. He can also involve the students for its preparation.

1. Example

He	is	drawing writing	a	tree. banana.
She				
The boy				
My friend				
My neighbour				
The girl				
Rita				
Ashish				

With the help of the above substitution table, the structure 'He is drawing a tree' can be taught. The learner can be enabled to speak as many as 32 different sentences which are basically of same structural pattern.

1. Suppose the teacher wants to teach the negative form of past indefinite tense. He will write one sentence of this type and then prepare the substitution table. For instance

He	did not	draw colour erase	the picture
We			
She			
They			
The boy			
The girl			

By using the above situation table 18 sentences can be spoken or written. Thus the different structures are taught to the learners of a foreign language in an interesting and catchy way.

To conclude the structural approach makes the young learners keen and active. It has opened up their lips and justified the truth of the famous Chinese proverb, 'Nothing can be taught, and everything can be learnt'.

Merits of Structural Approach

1. It lays much stress on the oral aspect i.e., speech. The students are constantly busy practicing structures orally and thus develop good communication fluency and intonation.
2. The students remain active, alert and involved all the time thereby assimilating the language themselves.
3. It can be adopted at all stages of education. Even the slow learners get a chance to learn something.

4. The learners are able to retain the subject matter for a longer time due to much oral drilling. Whatever
5. It is child centered as it provides enough opportunities to the students to express their ideas and feelings.
6. It creates appropriate environment for learning the language.
7. It stresses habit formation through intensive drills. The student cultivates the habit of speaking the English language.
8. It is based on scientific principle of 'Learning by Doing'
9. The different skills of the teaching-learning language are equally emphasized enabling the students to be good in the fourfold skills of language learning.
10. The teacher can attend to more or almost all the students of the class making use of this approach.

Demerits of Structural Approach.

1. It is out rightly overlooks the linguistic habit already formed while learning the mother-tongue.
2. It is possible to teach only well-selected sentence patterns with the help of this approach.
3. Teaching by approach requires the most competent and hardworking teachers. Those teachers who are trained to teach grammar translation method find the difficulty to teach by this approach.
4. Teaching by structural approach needs structurally graded syllabus. Thus, it is not possible to teach the prescribed textbook by this method.
5. This approach may seem dull and uninteresting for some learners for too much mechanical drill is the backbone of this method.
6. The teaching of prose, poetry, grammar, pronunciation etc in a systematic manner is quite impossible through this approach.
7. It is a time consuming approach and it becomes difficult to complete the syllabus in time if structural syllabus is strictly followed.
8. It is most suitable for lower classes but is quite unrealistic to apply this approach all the time for higher classes.
9. This approach demands a lot of work from teachers. A teacher has himself to think about the best possible way for presentation of matter and carrying out of drill.

Situational Approach

This approach basically makes best use of the already learnt and developed skills while learning the mother tongue. Here English is taught in the same way in which child learns his own mother tongue. The basic assumptions underlying situational approach are:

1. Every item of mother tongue is learnt in a real situation.
2. Whatever the child is able to understand, comprehend or express is connected with his life.
3. The situations in which mother tongue is learnt are repetitive in nature.

We can conclude that English should be taught by forming a link between new words/situations to the real life situations. This makes learning easier, faster and retainable for longer periods. The situational approach indicates how a teacher can create real situation in the classroom.

Main Characteristics of Situational Approach.

1. The new word is incidentally introduced in the class by the teacher by creating some situation.
2. Teacher makes best possible efforts to provide ample opportunities to the students to correlate the meaning of new words with the situation created.
3. Aids, materials, whatever possible are used to create situations.
4. Repetition is stressed.
5. A lesson is planned full of example to make its understanding easier.
6. The teacher puts a large number of relevant questions about the created situation. He either help students to answer or he answers them.
7. Revision is done again and again.
8. Action chains are followed continuously.
9. Teacher actually performs in the situation created by him and is fully involved in delivering his lessons.
10. The students are actively involved in the real life situations, which thereby facilitates the learning procedure.

Categories of Situations.

1. Situations which the child can see, hear or touch directly in the classroom, the windows, the door, the school compound etc.
2. Situations which the pupil knows out of his own experiences like daily routines, family members, social circle etc.
3. Situations which are brought into mind through spoken or printed words alone like making sound of some animals or writing words like bang, thump, thud etc.
4. Situations that can be recalled to mind through imagination with the help of charts, pictures, flashcards, models etc.

Procedure of the Approach.

The situations can be created in the following ways:

1. ***By Using the Actual Objects.*** By showing actual objects inside and outside the classroom, the teacher can teach new vocabulary and syntax successfully. For instance,

This is a blackboard.

That is a chalk.

Where is the duster?

Open the window.

Here is the table.

There is the tree. etc etc

2. **Through Actions and Gestures.** Certain situations demand certain actions. The actions should be performed so well by the teacher that the purpose of the situation is fulfilled in the first attempt. For instance:

I am writing on the blackboard.

You are writing in your notebook.

I am sitting.

Raj is sitting.

3. **Making use of Audio-Visual Aids/other Aids.** By making use of audio visual aids, flash cards, charts, pictures, models, those situations can be created which would otherwise have been impossible in real life context. For example, to teach about a lion, we cannot bring the lion to classroom but we can create the situation by bringing a good picture of the lion in the classroom and making roaring sounds behind. It can really fulfill the purpose of teaching.

4. **Verbal Situations.** Sometimes it is not possible to create physical situation in the classroom to teach some ideas that are abstract and uncountable.

The school opens at 7.00 am.

Joshi came at 7.15 am yesterday.

5. **Action Chains.** Action chains can be best applied to teach structures. Here, the teacher performs certain actions and then asks the children about those actions. After this the pupils are also made to perform those actions till they understand what they are actually doing and learning. For example

I am writing on the blackboard.

I am writing on your notebook.

Please, open the window.

Merits of situational approach.

1. It develops interest in learning.
2. Action chains makes the class lively, full of enthusiasm and participation.
3. There is variety and simplicity because situations created are real life like.
4. It emphasizes learning by playing.
5. Learning takes place by listening – the first basic skill among the fourfold skills of language learning.
6. Lot of teaching aids is made use of.

Demerits.

1. This method can be used only to teach selected and graded sentence patterns.
2. It can be mostly applied for lower classes only.
3. Over-drilling may sometimes bore the children.

4. It is not possible to teach prose, poetry and other literary reading through this approach.
5. Prescribed textbooks cannot be completed and wholly taught by this method.
6. A lot of effort needs to be put in and that too by highly qualified and trained teachers.