

Comparative Study of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Language Teaching Methodology

OPEN ACCESS

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Volume: 6

Issue: 1

Month: July

Year: 2018

ISSN: 2321-788X

Received: 23.07.2018

Accepted: 28.07.2018

Published: 30.07.2018

Citation:

P. Chithra. "Comparative Study of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Language Teaching Methodology." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2018, pp. 13–18.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1323547>

Abstract

English language teaching has become very important because of the global status of English and people all over the world are learning this language. Nowadays, teachers can choose their textbooks and other supplementary materials; they can also choose methods or activities they want to use in their lessons. It is a big advantages but also a big challenge. In my opinion, it is very difficult to find an approach suitable for all learners. The aim of the present article is to compare grammar translation method and communicative language teaching. I have chosen these two approaches because, in my view, these are two main streams in language teaching nowadays. Although grammar translation method is said to be outdated, it is still used very often at our schools. On the other hand, communicative approach is highly recommended but not many teachers really use it. In my opinion, it is very difficult to say which method or approach is the best. Some activities might be suitable for one person and wrong for someone else. The central factor in the choice of method is the learner and his or her needs. This paper tries to analyze their effectiveness and weakness of most influential teaching approaches and methods: Grammar Translation Method, Communicative Teaching Method, in order to have a better understanding and application in the future teaching practice.

Keywords: Teaching approaches and methods, CLT, GTM, Characteristics, advantages, disadvantages.

Introduction

About four decades ago Edward Anthony (1963) identified three levels of conceptualization and organization, which he termed approach, method, and technique. An approach, according to Anthony was a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning and teaching. Method was described as an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based upon a selected approach. Techniques were the specific activities manifested in the classroom that were consistent with a method and therefore were in harmony with an approach as well. A couple of decades later, Richards and Rodgers (1982, 1986) proposed a reformulation of the concept of "method". Anthony's approach, method, and technique were renamed, respectively, approach, design, and procedure, with a super ordinate term to describe this three-step process, now called "method".

A method, according to Richards and Rodgers, was “an umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice”. An approach defines assumption, beliefs, and theories about the nature of language and language learning. Designs specify the relationship of those theories to classroom materials and activities. Procedures are the techniques and practices that are derived from one’s approach and design. English language learning and teaching has undergone a tremendous change over the period of time, particularly during the twentieth century it has witnessed novelty in this field.

The grammar translation method is a foreign language teaching methodology derived from classical methods (sometimes called traditional) method in teaching Greek and Latin. The method requires that students translate whole texts word for word and memorize numerous grammatical rules and exceptions as well as enormous vocabulary lists. The goal of this method is to enable students to read and translate literary master pieces and classics. Under the influence of British applied linguists (such as John Firth, M.A.K.Halliday, who stressed the functional and communicative potential of language), sociolinguistics works (Dell Hymes, and W.Labov) and some philosophy work (J. Austin and J. Searle), the communicative method was advocated in language teaching. It saw the need to focus on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastering of structures. Thus, this article will go through a comparative analysis of two known methods popularly used by most language teachers: the traditional Grammar Translation Method and the modern Communicative Language Teaching Method.

Historical method of GTM

The Grammar Translation Method of foreign language teaching is one of the most traditional methods, dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. At that time, it was believed that the body and mind were separated and the mind consisted of three parts: the will, emotions, and intellect. They supposed that if the intellect is sharpened enough, it can control the will and emotions. It was believed that learning classical literature of the Greeks and Romans, as well as

mathematics, is necessary for the development of mental discipline. In other words, the aim of teaching Latin and Greek was not the learners’ ability to speak them. The aims were rather to develop logical thinking and intellectual capacities, to have a generally educational and civilizing effect and also to improve the standard of learners’ mother tongue.

Techniques in GTM

Larsen-Freeman provides typical techniques associated with the Grammar Translation Method:

1. Translation of a literary passage (from target language to mother tongue)
2. Reading comprehension questions (finding information in a text)
3. Antonyms, synonyms (finding antonyms and synonyms for words or sets of words)
4. Fill in the gaps (filling in gaps in sentences with new words or items of a particular grammar)
5. Memorization (memorizing vocabulary lists or grammatical rules)
6. Use words in sentences (students create sentences to illustrate that they know the Meaning and use of new words) (Larsen-Freeman 1986, 130).

Principles and characteristics of GTM

Richards and Rodgers (1986, 3-4) sum up the principal characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method:

1. The goal of foreign language learning through the Grammar Translation Method was to read its literature and also to benefit from the ‘mental discipline’ and also to benefit from the ‘mental discipline’ and ‘intellectual development’ that are the direct results and ‘intellectual development’ that are the direct results at this point, emphasize that the language could be learnt through its grammar rules, and further, an application of these rules in translation. This in turn automatically leads one to the conclusion that language learning is nothing but simple memorization of rules and facts.
2. Reading and writing (which eventually means translation) skills were given the major role to

play whereas the speaking skill was paid little or no attention.

3. Memorization and translation were used as means of learning a language. Words, however, were taught through bilingual word lists.
4. The sentence as a unit was taken into consideration as a distinguishing part, in this method the reason was a distinguishing part, in this method. The reason was simply because the grammar was illustrated through the sentence which later on was translated.
5. Accuracy was emphasized throughout the method and a high standard was demanded.
6. In this method grammar was taught through a deductive method. Rules were presented and learners were given a chance to study and practice the rules and the practice as we know was dependent more on translation exercises.
7. The mother tongue of the learner was used as a medium of instruction.

According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1991), the key features of the Grammar Translation Method are as follows:

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
7. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

Advantages of GTM

The Grammar Translation Method has been practiced so widely and has survived so long for its

main advantages. First, as many schools still have classes with large number of students, GTM with its focus on teacher centeredness is cost-effective and appropriate. Next, its main technique, translation into learner's L1, along with some sort of accuracy in understanding synonyms helps meaning 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 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 of GTM

There have been various disadvantages of the use of the grammar translation method for the teaching of modern languages. Marks provide a few objections:

1. Speaking and understanding are more important for learners of modern languages than reading and writing. However, the grammar translation method prefers written language to spoken language.
2. This method uses a graded grammatical syllabus and learners must gradually accumulate and accurate command of each item in the syllabus. This may be a big disadvantage for learners who want to start using the language straight away.
3. Learning through exposure, experience and use is preferred nowadays. But grammar translation method uses conscious memorization of grammar rules or vocabulary instead.
4. In grammar translation method the teacher and the learners speak mainly in their mother tongue. But the last experience shows that the target language should be used as much as possible.
5. In the grammar translation method the teacher plays a very prominent role and learners interact with the teacher, not with

each other. Nowadays it is recommended that learners should make their own discoveries independently. They should be able to cooperate as well.

6. At present it is believed that translation, a basic technique in the Grammar Translation Method, is not the best way how to learn a new language. It is better to think in that language instead.
7. The Grammar Translation Method insists on accuracy. However, nowadays it is believed that fluency is more important. (Marks, 2008).

Historical Background of CLT

The Communicative Language Teaching could be said to be a reaction to Audio-lingual Method and Grammar Translation Method. The linguists felt that students did not know how to communicate; they were not learning realistic language. This approach was developed by Robert Lang in the early 1970s. It became quite popular and it has been adapted to the elementary, middle, secondary, and post-secondary levels. The emergence of CLT occurred at the time when language teaching was looking for a change (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Due to the unsatisfactory traditional syllabus that failed to facilitate learners' ability to use language for communication, linguists attempted to design a syllabus to achieve the communicative goals of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Wilkins's (1976) notional syllabus had a significant impact on the development of CLT. To support the learners' communicative needs, Wilkins (1976) included communication function in a notional syllabus. Notions refer to concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, and frequency. Communicative functions refer to language functions such as requests, denials, offers, and complaints. Based on the notional syllabus, a communication language syllabus consisting of situations, language activities, language functions, notions, and language form was developed. As a result, the design of foreign language syllabus focused on a learner-centered and a result, the design of foreign language syllabus focused on a learner-centered and communication oriented language instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

Principles and Characteristics of CLT

Five basic features of communicative language teaching were listed by Nunan:

1. "An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on the language but also on the learning process of itself.
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom"

According to Hymes (1972) some of the main characteristics of this communicative view of language are:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

To sum up, communication language teaching helps learners to use the target language as much as possible. The recommended amount of learners' mother tongue in classroom is about 5% of a lesson. This approach places great emphasis on helping learners create meaning rather than helping them develop perfectly grammatical structures. In the classroom pair work and group work it is very common as it requires cooperation between learners. It is very important to develop students' confidence and thus the teacher should use a lot of fluency-based activities. The most common classroom activities used in this approach are role play, interviews, information gap, and games, pair work, learning by teaching or surveys. The communicative methodology is a learner-centered approach to

language learning. It does not mean that there is no role played by the teacher in this approach. On the contrary, a highly competent and imaginative teacher is a major requirement for the successful application of the approach (Majid Al-Humaidi, 2007). Very important are the materials used in the classroom. They have to be authentic and relate to pupils' own lives; otherwise it cannot be interesting and motivating. Errors are a natural part of learning language. Constant correction is unnecessary and even counter-productive ("Communicative approach").

Techniques in CLT

1. **Role Play:** It involves giving the learner roles and assigning an objective to be accomplished. For example, student A may play the role of a writer in a restaurant and student B may order food and drink.
2. **Simulation:** Simulation usually involves a large group. For example, the group may be involved in the production of a plan for a new town. This is a more complex task than role-play. Each learner will be given a different role. For example they will be responsible for housing, traffic, communication, etc. This requires background information and the creation of a new way of living.
3. **Drama:** Drama is another activity that is similar to role-play or simulation. The group members may write the script and perform it.
4. **Projects:** Members in groups may prepare newsletters, fact sheets, etc. for the school.
5. **Interview:** Interviews can be used for pair work (e.g. employer and a prospective employee) or group work. For example one learner pretends to be a well-known politician/university chancellor/ minister or mayor and the group pretend to be journalists.
6. **Problem Solving:** In problem solving activities the group is given a problem to solve. The problems may be simple, such as giving directions on a map or quite complex, such as solving a mystery in a crime story. All activities mentioned have three features of communication: information gap, choice, and feedback.

Advantages of CLT

CLT has made major contributions to modern foreign language teaching for its obvious advantages. For instance, passing the responsibility of learning on to the learners and acquiring those to speak more will increase their fluency, as well as their confidence in the target language. Besides, their communicative competence develops and this sense of achievement helps them to enjoy the class more.

Disadvantages of CLT

CLT has been criticized for the challenge it has for the teachers. The teacher alone should prepare motivating and creative material so that every learner gets involved in the process of learning. Besides, she/he has to decide about the right time to provide feedback, which is really demanding, especially in a big class. Communicative language teaching is considered the best approach nowadays, so it is rarely criticized. However, Brown warns that there are certain caveats. He claims that a teacher should not overdo certain features of this approach; they have to combine it with common sense and balance the approach moderately. Brown further claims that teachers need to be aware that there are numerous interpretations of communicative language teaching.

Conclusion

Grammar-Translation Method, just as the name suggests, emphasizes the teaching of the second language grammar, its principle techniques is translation from and into the target language. In practice, reading and writing are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening. The student's native language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language. Language learners are passive in language learning and teachers are regarded as an authority, i.e. it is a teacher-centered model. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). As such, CLT reflects a certain model or research paradigm, or a theory (Celce- Murcia, 2001). It is based on the theory that the primary function of language use is communication. Its primary goal is for learners to develop communicative competence (Hymes, 1971),

or simply put, communicative ability. In other words, its goal is to make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. Wong, Kwok and Choi in Xerri (2012, 43) stated that it is very beneficial for students because at the end of the learning process they will join with the social life and they need the real context to be one of the social member lives. But in this side the teacher has to filter the material carefully so the inappropriate thing does not enter to the students' mind or attitude.

The last but not least is the purpose of the study. In GTM method the students are not forced to communicate in the target language but in CLT method the students are emphasized to communicate in target language for the daily and teaching learning activities. On the other hand, GTM method gets the students to analyze the language rather than to use the language (Celce Murcia, 2001, 6). In contrast in the CLT method has the students use the language rather than analyze the language (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, 115). Additionally, the goal of our language learning process is to enhance the students' ability to communicate in the target language. Each of the different methods has contributed new elements and has attempted to deal with some issues of language learning. However, they derived in different historical context, stressed different social and educational needs and have different theoretical consideration. Therefore, in teaching practice, in order to apply these methods effectively and efficiently, practitioners should take these questions in mind: who the learners are, what their current level of language proficiency is, what sort of communicative needs they have, and the circumstances in which they will be using English in the future, and so on. In a word, no single method could guarantee successful results.

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