

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE USE OF THE GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD AMONG TEACHERS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ABEOKUTA

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Abstract

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is acknowledged to be an effective method used to teach learners of the English Language as a Second Language. However, it has been criticized over the years for its dependence on memorization of grammatical rules and translation from one language to another Abdul and Hafiza (2016). This study investigated teachers' perspective towards the use of the grammar translation method in teaching aspects of the English language. Sample for this study were made up of fifty (50) teachers consisting of twenty-five (25) teachers each from the private and public primary schools in Abeokuta. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. The findings revealed that both the teachers in the private and public schools still use aspects of the grammar translation method to teach the pupils however, the method is mostly used by teachers in the public schools. This is because learners in the public schools do not acquire English and Yoruba Languages simultaneously and the public schools do not have the resource materials needed to upgrade their teaching methodology to accommodate modern teaching methods. It was recommended that while the government provides the necessary resource materials needed for the adoption of the modern teaching methodologies, the grammar translation method should not be totally discarded because of its immense contribution to second language learning.

Keywords: *Teaching, Learning, Methodology, English as a second language (ESL), Second Language, Perspective, Private and public schools*

Introduction

According to Zhou and Niu (2015), the historical foundations of the grammar-translation method has provided valuable insights to situate and understand the current practices in language instruction, though many new methodologies have been developed and employed. Teaching English as second language (ESL) requires the adoption of an approach, a method and a technique in presenting a lesson in classroom teaching. According to Brown (2007:14) a method in language teaching is a set of procedures or the overall plan for systemic presentation of a lesson. Methods are a set of teaching procedures to follow in delivering our lessons. Language teaching methods involves a special selection of materials, presentation of materials and evaluation of what has been presented to determine if the stated goals were achieved. Most teachers make use of the modern methods in presenting their lessons directly to the learners. These new methods involve the use of all the five senses rather than memorization as emphasized in the use of the Grammar translation method (GTM henceforth). In most private schools, there is availability of resource materials for pupils such as the audio, visual and audio-visual resources. These resources are effectively utilized to achieve the stated objectives. Most learners in urban areas acquire English as their first language. Others acquire the first and second language simultaneously, hence there is little or no need for translation since they are not really proficient in the use of their first languages.

The problem associated with language learning which is as a result of the use of ineffective methods of teaching, has prompted many teachers to focus on the use some more effective teaching methods while they rarely use or totally abandon others. According to Larsen (2000), the GTM is an old method involving the translation of words, sentences and passages into the learner's mother tongue to enhance the learners understanding. It involves memorization of vocabulary, tenses, verbs and grammar. However, in recent times, teachers do not use the method effectively because of its numerous shortcomings. It is assumed to be an ineffective method which involves principles that do not assist learners in communicative competence since the aim of language learning is to be able to communicate effectively. Also, the method involves the description and analysis of the linguistic rules governing the structure of the target language rather than its actual use. It is also observed that recently learners acquire the first language and second language simultaneously. These learners have not learnt the first language creditably well, hence, translation becomes difficult. Some learners even acquire English as the first language depending on the learner's environment. These and many more are reasons why teachers prefer to use modern language teaching methods thereby giving the GTM less recognition. However, the GTM is not totally discarded because teachers still use some of the techniques in teaching the grammatical rules of the English language. In view of this, this paper will investigate teacher's perspective towards the use of the grammar translation

method in teaching the English language by comparing its use in the public and private primary schools.

Aim and Objectives

This paper aims at investigating teacher's perspectives towards the use of the Grammar Translation method in teaching the English language in the public and private primary schools. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the statistical proportion describes the awareness of Public and Private Primary school teachers on GTM?
2. To determine the techniques of the GTM employed by teachers in the public and private primary schools
3. To ascertain the extent to which teachers in the Public and Private Primary schools use the GTM in class activities?

Research Questions

1. What statistical proportion describes the awareness of Public and Private Primary school teachers on GTM?
2. Do teachers in the public and private primary schools use uniform techniques of the GTM?
3. To what extent do teachers in the Public and Private Primary schools use the GTM in class activities?

Literature Review

According to Larsen (2000), the GTM is an old method used by language teachers. It was initially called the classical method used in teaching classical languages such as Latin and Greek. The purpose of using this method at that time was to help students to read and appreciate foreign language literature. It has contributed positively to the study of the grammar of the target language. Students become acquainted with the grammar of their native languages and are able to read and write in their native languages. Therefore, as students learn a foreign/second language, they are also learning their native languages simultaneously. The use of the method will help learners develop their intellectual skills through the mental exercise of learning. Larsen (2000) conducted a research using the GTM, and he made some observations which could be regarded as the characteristics of the method. In the research, students are asked to read a passage, then they translate the passage into Spanish language. The teacher extracts some difficult words and translates them in Spanish as well. The teacher gives further

explanations in Spanish. Questions are asked in English for evaluation and answers are given by students in English as well. From the research it was concluded that the principles of GTM are:

1. The purpose of GTM is to be able to read and write in the foreign language. According to Larsen (2000), literary language is superior to spoken language. Students' study of the target culture is limited to its literature and fine arts.
2. The aim of using the GTM is for learners to be able to translate from their native languages to the target language and vice versa. It is assumed that once a learner can translate from one language to another, such a student is considered a successful language learner
3. The ability to communicate in the target language is not the goal of the GTM
4. The primary skills to be developed are reading and writing. Little attention is given to listening and speaking, while almost no attention is given to pronunciation.
5. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. It is important that students get the correct answers.
6. Students translate new words from the English language to their native languages hence all new words can be translated into the native language.
7. Learning is facilitated through the attention to the similarities between the target language and the native language
8. It is important for students to learn about the form of the target language
9. Deductive application of an explicit grammar rule is a useful pedagogical technique.
10. Language learning provides good mental exercise whereby students memorize vocabulary
11. Students should be conscious of the grammatical rules of the target language
12. Students memorize present tense, past tense, and past participle forms of one set of irregular verbs. Wherever possible, verb conjugations and other grammatical paradigms should be committed to memory.

A Review of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

According to Larsen (2000), the main purpose of using the GTM is to ensure that learners are to be able to read literature written in the target language. To do this, learners need to learn about the grammatical rules and vocabulary of the target

language. In addition, it is believed that studying a foreign language provides students with good mental exercise which helps develop their minds. The roles are very traditional. The teacher is the authority in the classroom.

The students do as she says so they can learn what she knows. This means that learning is teacher-centered and not learner-centered. Students are encouraged to translate from one language to another. Often what they translate are readings in the target language about some aspect of the culture of the target language community. Students study grammar deductively; that is, they are given the grammar rules and examples, are told to memorize them, and then are asked to apply the rules to other examples. They also learn grammatical paradigms such as verb conjugations. They memorize native-language equivalents for target-language vocabulary words. Most of the interaction in the classroom is from the teacher to the students. There is little student initiation and little student-to-student interaction. There are no principles of the method which relate to the students' feelings. Literary language is considered superior to spoken language and is therefore the language that the students mostly study. Culture is viewed as consisting of literature and the fine arts. Vocabulary and grammar are emphasized. Reading and writing are the primary skills that the students work on. There is much less attention given to speaking and listening. Pronunciation receives little or no attention at all. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translating it into the students' native language. The language that is used in class is mostly the students' native language. Written tests in which students are asked to translate from their native language to the target language or vice versa are often used. Questions about the target culture or questions that ask students to apply grammar rules are also common. Having the students get the correct answer is considered very important. If students make errors or do not know an answer, the teacher supplies them with the correct answer. However, from these principles there are some shortcomings.

1. GTM emphasizes translation into the native language. This will not encourage communicative competence because of the over reliance on the native language as an instrument for better understanding.
2. GTM emphasizes memorization. Learners are expected to learn naturally rather than memorize all they learn.
3. GTM emphasizes the written aspect of language rather than the spoken aspect. A learner is expected to acquire the speaking skills before reading and writing skills
4. Using the GTM, the teacher is the authority and learning is teacher-centered rather than learner-centered.

5. Through the GTM, learners are expected to be able to translate into the native language equivalent of the target language. This is no longer a reality now because many pupils do not have adequate knowledge of their native languages/mother tongues.

Abdul and Hafiza (2016) highlighted the advantages of the grammar translation method in their paper titled "the effectiveness of teaching and learning the grammar translation method at the intermediate level. They asserted that GTM enhances the Students understanding of abstract words and complicated sentences. This is because learners are aware of grammatical rules and they can comprehend the message through reading text which helps them to produce grammatically correct sentences. Also, the knowledge of morphology and syntax will make students to analyze and solve problems. They observed that GTM demands fewer efforts from teachers. They highlighted as an advantage that the GTM enables teachers who are not fluent in speaking English to teach English language because the focus of the method is on reading and writing rather than speaking. In their paper, they identified some disadvantages of using the method. The first disadvantage is that the use of the method makes a lesson teacher-centered because there is little interaction between students and teachers. Students are not able to communicate fluently in the target language because the method does not focus on speaking skills. The focus is on reading rather than listening/speaking. Lastly she identified the translation from English to the native language as a major flaw. This is because it is impossible to translate exactly from one language to another.

Methodology

A mixed method involving both the qualitative and quantitative approach was adopted for the study. Sample for this study were made up of fifty (50) teachers consisting of twenty-five (25) English language teachers each from the private and public primary schools in Abeokuta. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section contains information about the age, sex and educational background of the respondents. The second section covers information concerning their perspective towards the use of the GTM. Table "A" hold information for the Public Schools while table "B" holds information for the Private Schools. Data was analysed through the simple percentage and frequency counts for a quantitative analysis of data.

Analysis/Result

Frequency Table 1

This section contains information on the respondents' personal data such as Educational qualification, and the sector they belong (Either private or public school)

(A)

Public School			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Degree holder (Highest Qualification), NCE (Lowest Qualification)	25	100.0

(B)

Private School			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Degree holder (Highest Qualification), NCE (Lowest Qualification)	20	80.0
	Secondary School Leaving Certificate	5	20.0
	Total	25	100.0

Frequency Table 2

Research Question 1

Are teachers aware of the grammar translation method in the public and private primary schools?

(A)

Public Schools			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Accurate description of the GTM by teachers in Public and Private Schools	80	33.3
	The need to use GTM by teachers in Public and Private Schools	70	29.2
	Workshop/Seminar organized for teachers on the use of GTM	90	37.5
	Total	240	100.0

(B)

Private Schools		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Accurate description of the GTM by teachers in Public and Private Schools	20	8.3
	The need to use GTM by teachers in Public and Private Schools	30	12.5
	Workshop/Seminar organized for teachers on the use of GTM	10	4.2
	Total	60	25.0
Missing	System	180	75.0
Total		240	100.0

Frequency Table 3

Research Question 2

Do teachers make use of relevant techniques for effective use of the grammar translation method in the public and private primary schools?

(A)

Public Schools		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Focus of GTM is on reading rather than speaking	70	9.9
	Teachers often translate to learners' mother tongue	100	14.1
	Teachers ask questions and respond in the learners native language	100	14.1
	Students are often encouraged to write out the answers of the reading comprehension passages	50	7.0
	The teachers give the corrects answers to all questions	50	7.0
	Students are often encouraged to translate words in their native languages	100	14.1
	Teachers facilitate meaning by comparing the meaning of words in the target and native languages	90	12.7
	Teachers explain grammatical rules/forms to learners in the target language	50	7.0
	Teachers encourage rote memorization of the grammatical rules in the target language	50	7.0
	Students are asked to state the grammatical rules learnt	50	7.0
	Total	710	100.0

(B)

Private Schools		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Focus is on reading rather than speaking	30	4.2
	Students are often encouraged to write out the answers of the reading comprehension passages	50	7.0
	The teachers give the corrects answers to all questions	50	7.0
	Teachers facilitate meaning by comparing the meaning of words in the target and native languages	10	1.4
	Teachers explain grammatical rules/forms to learners in the target language	50	7.0
	Teachers encourage rote memorization of the grammatical rules in the target language	50	7.0
	Students are asked to state the grammatical rules learnt	50	7.0
	Total	290	40.8
Missing	System	420	59.2
Total		710	100.0

Frequency Table 4

Research Question 3

How effective is the use of the grammar translation method?

(A)

Public Schools		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Teachers encourage reading and writing more than speaking skills	70	9.2
	Teachers are authorities in the classroom.	50	6.6
	Teachers and learners translate from the target language to the native language and vice versa	90	11.8
	Teachers encourage learners to memorize grammatical rules	50	6.6
	Interaction is mostly from teacher to student rather than student to teacher in the classroom	70	9.2
	Teachers consider the learners feelings	20	2.6
	Teachers consider literacy superior to speaking	80	10.5
	Teachers focus on reading/writing, grammar/vocabulary rather than pronunciation	80	10.5

Public Schools		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Teachers communicate to learners mostly/freely in their native languages	100	13.2
	Learners are allowed to translate written test from their native languages into the target language	100	13.2
	Teachers ensure correction of the wrong answers in classroom work	50	6.6
	Total	760	100.0

(B)

Private Schools		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Teachers encourage reading and writing more than speaking skills	30	3.9
	Teachers are authorities in the classroom.	50	6.6
	Teachers and learners translate from the target language to the native language and vice versa	10	1.3
	Teachers encourage learners to memorize grammatical rules	50	6.6
	Interaction is mostly from teacher to student rather than student to teacher in the classroom	30	3.9
	Teachers consider the learners feelings	80	10.5
	Teachers consider literacy superior to speaking	20	2.6
	Teachers focus on reading/writing, grammar/vocabulary rather than pronunciation	20	2.6
	Teachers ensure correction of the wrong answers in classroom work	50	6.6
	Total	340	44.7
Missing	System	420	55.3
Total		760	100.0

Findings

From the analysis, it was discovered that 100% of the teachers in the public schools have the minimum NCE while only 80% of the teachers in the private schools have the minimum NCE qualification for teaching. The remaining 20% have only the Secondary School leaving certificates. This implies that they are well trained and educationally qualified than most teachers in the private primary schools. Hence, they have adequate knowledge about the GTM. This is because most proprietors of the private schools employ few qualified teachers and, in most

cases, the non-qualified teachers are asked to teach the English language. The implication of this is that many teachers in the private schools may not have adequate knowledge of the use of grammar translation method. It was revealed from the findings that the teachers in public schools are aware of the use and advantages of the grammar translation method than the teachers in the private schools. The need to use a method which involves translation or interpretation in the learner's Mother Tongue becomes imperative for teachers in the public schools because the learners do not have adequate knowledge of the target language. Learners in the public schools are competent in their various native languages but they do not have the opportunity to learn the English language until they came to school hence it becomes necessary to translate for better understanding. On the other hand, learners in the private schools have the opportunity to learn and speak the English language before coming to schools hence there is no need for translating in their native languages as most of them are not even competent in their native languages too. From the analysis on table 3, it can be concluded that both teachers in the public and private schools make use of the relevant techniques such as memorization, reading of literary text, dictation, interactions like spelling, teaching grammatical components/rules etc. They do not encourage translation in the learner's mother tongue or native languages. This is because the objective of learning a language is to be able to communicate fluently in the target language. The GTM does not quite encourage the development of speaking skills hence many private schools adopt the modern teaching methods which will enhance communicative competence in the target language. However, other aspects involving rote memorization, reading and writing are adopted for use in both public and private primary schools. Table 3 revealed that the grammar translation method is effectively used in the public schools than the private schools. The reason for this is that second language learners of English in the public schools find it convenient to communicate in their native languages. This is as a result of the lack of proper exposure to the target language at an early stage. The socio-economic background of the learners has an important role to play here. Parents of learners in the public schools are mostly illiterates hence the learners were not adequately exposed to the target language at an early age unlike their counterpart in the private schools. Finally, the core aspect of the GTM which is translation is not encouraged in the public schools at all.

Conclusion

Having considered the use of the grammar translation method in both public and private schools, it can be concluded that English teachers in the Public and private schools still make use of aspects of the GTM till today however, teachers in the public schools use the method comprehensively while teachers in the private schools focus on selected aspects. Despite the fact that the GTM is a classical and old

method as stated by Abdul and Hafiza (2016), it is still relevant up till today and despite its flaws, it cannot be totally ignored. Agreeing with Zhou and Niu (2015) in their conclusion that no one method is perfect for every teaching situation, GTM still remains one of the most relevant and reliable method often used to teach grammar and structural patterns of the target language. It also helps in vocabulary development through exposure to some lexical items as observed by Brown & Lee (2015). Therefore, the GTM is still relevant in both the public and private primary schools in Abeokuta.

Recommendation

It is recommend that teachers should ensure the use of the of the GTM techniques to facilitate teaching and learning. Teachers in both public and private schools should ensure that the aspect of translating into the learners' native languages is not totally avoided. Kelly and Bruen (2014) advocated that teachers should regard it as a useful teaching and learning tool which can complement existing pedagogical approaches as one component of an eclectic approach to language teaching and learning. Considering individual differences, there might be the need to translate into the native languages for better understanding. Also, translation into the native languages could also promote the learning and status of our indigenous languages in Nigeria. At this crucial time in Nigeria, our indigenous languages should be promoted in other to enhance national development. Finally, workshops and seminars on the effective use of the GTM should be organized by the school in conjunction with language associations such as ELTAN and the Language Educators. This is to enlighten and sensitize teachers on the need to use the method for effective teaching and learning.

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