

GHAZAL LOTFI
Ph.D. Student (TEFL)
Islamic Azad University,
Science & Research Campus
ghazallot@yahoo.com

Grammar Translation Method Revisited

چکیده

روش گرامر-ترجمه^۱ که در سده های ۱۸۰۰ و ۱۹۰۰ مهم ترین روش تدریس زبان خارجی محسوب می شد، هنوز هم در اشکال گوناگون، یکی از رایج ترین روش های تدریس زبان در بسیاری از نقاط جهان، از جمله ایران است. علی رغم تمام انتقادهایی که به روش گرامر-ترجمه وارد شده، امروزه مشخص شده است که این روش نکات مثبتی نیز دارد. در حقیقت به نظر می رسد که قوت یا ضعف یک روش، بیش از آن که به اجزای تشکیل دهنده ی آن وابسته باشد، به شیوه ی استفاده و کاربرد آن بستگی دارد. بدین معنا که اگر روشی برای یک محیط آموزشی مناسب تشخیص داده شود، شیوه ی کاربرد آن در نتایج به دست آمده تأثیر بسزایی خواهد داشت. استفاده ی نادرست از روش مورد نظر به سادگی می تواند به عدم موفقیت آن بینجامد و در نتیجه، نه تنها نکات مثبت روش مورد غفلت قرار بگیرد، بلکه انتقادهای شدیدی بر آن وارد شود. در حالی که اگر روش مورد نظر را با توجه به نیازهای دانش آموزان و شرایط محیط آموزشی به درستی در تدریس زبان خارجی به کار گیریم، نتایج حاصل کاملاً موفقیت آمیز خواهد بود.

با در نظر گرفتن این موارد، در مقاله ی حاضر سعی شده است تا با بیان نکات منفی و مثبت روش گرامر-ترجمه و بررسی شیوه ی کاربرد آن در ایران، دلیل موفق نبودن روش گرامر-ترجمه را بیابیم. شاید بتوان گفت، علت اصلی عدم موفقیت این شیوه، نحوه ی به کارگیری آن است. زیرا در ایران، از ترجمه که تکنیک اصلی به کار رفته در این روش محسوب می شود، برای آموزش دستور زبان استفاده می شود. در حالی که این روش در ابتدا به این منظور طراحی شده بود که دانش آموزان با آموختن دستور زبان خارجی و آگاهی از قواعد دستوری بتوانند، به ترجمه ی جملات و در نهایت متون زبان مادری به زبان خارجی و یا برعکس بپردازند (میر حسینی ۲۰۰۳). در واقع، هدف اصلی از این روش توانمند ساختن دانش آموزان در امر ترجمه بود؛ چرا که ترجمه یکی از روش های مؤثر در یادگیری زبان خارجی و نیز بالا بردن توانایی های ذهنی افراد به شمار می رود.

APPENDIX A

Sample Checklist for Textbook Evaluation

source: Daoud, A.-M., and Celce-Murcia, M. 1979. Selecting and evaluating a textbook. In M. Celce-Murcia and L. Mc Intosh, eds. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (pp. 302-307). New York: Newbury House.

The Checklist

The Textbook

a. Subject matter

1. Does the subject matter cover a variety of topics appropriate to the interests of the learners for whom the textbook is intended (urban or rural environment; child or adult learners; male and/or female students)?
2. Is the ordering of materials done by topics or themes that are arranged in a logical fashion?
3. Is the content graded according to the needs of the students or the requirements of the existing syllabus (if there is one)?
4. Is the material accurate and up-to-date?

b. Vocabulary and structures

1. Does the vocabulary load (i.e., the number of new words introduced every lesson) seem to be reasonable for the students of that level?
2. Are the vocabulary items controlled to ensure systematic gradation from simple to complex items?
3. Is the new vocabulary repeated in subsequent lessons for reinforcement?
4. Does the sentence length seem reasonable for the students of that level?
5. Is the number of grammatical points as well as their sequence appropriate?
6. Do the structures gradually increase in complexity to suit the growing reading ability of the students?
7. Does the writer use current everyday language, and sentence structures that follow normal word order?
8. Do the sentences and paragraphs follow one another in a logical sequence?
9. Are linguistic items introduced in meaningful situations

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Weak	Totally lacking
4	3	2	1	0



authors of the textbook, we can get effective EFL textbooks.

Finally the researcher believes a skillful EFL teacher can use creative techniques such as using pictures, telling stories, playing educational games, ... to come over the shortcomings of the textbook.

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questions out of twenty five in the University Entrance Examination are on vocabulary. This is also emphasized by Jahangard (2007) who argues that it would be more useful to include some more vocabulary exercises in each lesson so that students could integrate the new words into their mental lexicon.

The same problem can be seen in the grammar part. The number of grammar exercises for some lessons seems insufficient, for example in lesson two a grammatical point is presented while there is no one single exercise for it (help + object + infinitive/bare infinitive). Also in lesson eight, a grammatical point like (modals + have + past participle) which is conceptually difficult for the students, has only two sets of exercises. On the whole, it seems that the number of grammar exercises is not enough, although those included in the textbook are of high quality. They contain the same vocabulary introduced in the reading part which can reinforce vocabulary learning.

There are a variety of exercises that can help students get an understanding of the grammatical point; however, it would be better to include a short paragraph, poem, or a dialog in the form of a cloze passage so that the students can see the use of what they have been taught in a real meaningful context that can promote meaningful communication to some extent.

Unfortunately, there are no review exercises in the textbook. It is better to include one review exercise for each four lessons.

D. Illustrations

Illustrations can be very helpful in making things clear to the students. However, in this textbook, the use of pictures is limited to the reading text. Of course the pictures are expressive and can help the teacher to convey the meaning. Also they are clear and free of unnecessary details. However, in lesson one, it would be better to use a picture depicting different types of physical

exercises or a picture showing aerobic exercise.

E. Physical Makeup

The cover of the book is not durable enough for a year so students should encase their books. However, the page layout is attractive because different colors have been used for different sections which might make the students pay attention to the important points. The binding is quite good and the font size is appropriate for the students.

Discussion and Implications

After so many years, a fairly attractive book has been introduced to Iranian English teachers and students. congratulations! The objective of the book is to make the students familiar with reading skills and as the authors have mentioned it in the introduction of the textbook, the goal of the course and the exercises match to a great extent.

However good a textbook, it will never be perfect for every teacher's teaching situation. In some cases it will always need adaptation, modification supplementation. This textbook is not an exception. Unfortunately, there are not enough supplementary materials for the teacher, no teacher's manual, no tapes, no CDs. A sign of a headphone is seen in each reading text but no tape or CD exists to be used. Since there is no teacher's manual or any clear guideline to help the teachers choose the appropriate techniques while teaching, many teachers still use translation to teach instead of helping the learner to practice their reading skills. On the whole it is a good book; however, some kind of modification seems to be necessary. Also the action of changing the textbook is better to be started from the first levels, junior high school, rather than the last one.

As Jahangard (2007) suggests, textbooks will be improved if the teachers evaluate and assess them systematically based on standard criteria. When such reports are shared among teachers and



is Important", "Global Warming, Global Concern", "Space Exploration", and "IT and its Services" are too difficult for some urban and most rural students as a basis for reading activities. Of course, the topics seem not to favour either the males or the females and the textbook is not culture bound. Although most topics are interesting, it seems there is no logic behind the the sequence of the reading texts; all in all the topics seem to be interesting for the students.

B. Vocabulary and Structure

The new words introduced in the margin do not cover all the unknown words in the reading text; however, this may not be a problem since the students are being taught how to glean meaning from context. contrary to Jahangard (2007) who is in favor of keeping the New Words Section in the textbook, I believe that the absence of the "New words" section can be considered as a good point, since most students at this level are supposed to be proficient enough to guess the meaning of new words from the context.

The vocabulary items do not seem to have been controlled to ensure systematic gradation from simple to complex items. Moreover, there has been no attempt to repeat the new vocabulary in

subsequent lessons for the sake of reinforcement and every reading section has its own special words. The length of the sentences seems to be reasonable for the proficiency level of the students.

The number of grammatical points differ form one lesson to the next, for example, in lessons one, four, six, and eight, the teacher has to teach three grammatical points in each lesson , while in lessons three, five, and seven only one grammatical point is introduced. Therefore, some kind of modification seems to be necessary to balance the grammatical points.

One really positive aspect of this textbook is that the grammatical points are all introduced based on the reading section which helps the students to see the use of what they are taught in a real context.

C. Exercises

Most exercises prepared for each lesson are intended to help students comprehend what is taught. The order of exercises in each lesson seems reasonable since it starts with simple exercises and moves to complex ones, this is especially true in the case of reading comprehension exercises. However, the vocabulary exercises seem not to be enough, considering the fact that about ten

better than the previous textbooks, it has its own shortages and needs some modifications. The researcher has borrowed the checklist for textbook evaluation from Celce-Murcia (2001) to evaluate the mentioned textbook.

Key Words: textbook, textbook evaluation, reading comprehension, planning and preparing books

Introduction

Student, teacher, materials, teaching method and evaluation are the five important elements in language instruction. Since 1970s, there has been a movement to make learners the center of language learning, so curriculum, materials, teaching methods, and evaluation are all designed based on learners' needs. Though students should be considered as the center of instruction, teachers and students rely on materials and in fact materials have become the center of instruction (Kitao & Kitao, 1997) and few teachers enter the classroom without a textbook which provides the content and the teaching-learning activities and most of the things that teachers and students need in and out of the classroom (Rivers, 1981; Kitao and Kitao, 1997; Byrd, 2001; Brown, 2001).

In some cases teachers have no role in selecting the textbook because a unified series of textbooks is developed for use throughout the country through an administrative process at the ministerial level (Byrd, 2001; Brown, 2001). Although the material reflects the writers' views of language and learning, we should have it in our mind that it is the teacher who adopts the materials to the context where learning takes place (Crawford, 2002). Thus, these teachers should try to find creative techniques to teach the textbook provided for them in the real-life situations. Their challenge would be to make the very best use of the textbooks; however, they should take care not to neglect that textbooks are not the only main source of the teaching-learning process (Brown, 2001).

Textbooks which are published by the Ministry of Education may purport to adhere to curriculum

outlines, but they may not fulfill the set objectives (Lamie, 1999). Therefore, teachers are supposed to evaluate the textbooks because they alongside the students are the consumers of textbooks and as consumers, they might have different views on their quality (Ansari and Babaii, 2002). Thus, through evaluation and feedback, teachers can have influence on the decision-making process (Byrd, 2001; Harmer, 2001).

Ellis (1997) suggests that there are three different types of material evaluation. One is probably the 'predictive' evaluation designed to examine the future or potential performance of a textbook. The other types of textbook evaluation are the 'in-use' evaluation designed to examine material that is currently being used and the 'retrospective' evaluation of a textbook that has been used for some time in an institution.

The present article intends to do the second type of evaluation, that is the researcher aims at evaluating the "Pre-University English Textbooks 1 and 2" published by the Iranian Ministry of Education based on a checklist borrowed from Celce-Murcia (2001).

Textbook Evaluation

A. Subject Matter

Like any other General English courses, the writers of this textbook offer a judicious blend of different topics basing their selection of content more on students' interest and engagement. Thus, the textbook covers a variety of topics which seem to be appropriate for the proficiency level of some students, not all. The researcher's experience indicates that some topics such as "Why Exercise