

## **Comparative Study of the Direct Method and Grammar Translation Method in Language Teaching**

**Dr. Ali J. Alwan**

*Imam Jafar Al- Sadiq University, Dhi – Qar branch, Iraq*

**Abstract:** Two famous methods in language instruction are differentiated in this study. They are the direct technique (DM) and Grammar Translation technique (GTM). English language teachers used them widely in their classrooms. Describing the characteristics of each method, including teaching techniques, classroom practices, and their impact on language acquisition are examined in this paper. It underlines the benefits of integrating elements from each to enhance language teaching value through investigating the strengths and limitations of both methods. This paper shows real insights into the application of DM and GTM through a comparison centering on skill urgencies.

**Key words:** Direct Method, Grammar Translation Method, Language Teaching, Teaching Techniques, EFL.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Acquisition of a foreign language has to be approached actively through attractive process of learning. Improving language proficiency and academic performance can be succeeded by applying Direct Method (DM) and the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) within educational contexts. The language learning process may be developed by using various techniques of both methods that offering benefits to align them with instructional purposes. English language teachers can receive valued insights into operative instructional design by exploring the two procedures.

Larsen-Freeman (2000) declared that a deep understanding of teaching strategies is crucial for developing learner-centered education and promotes both academic growth and language competency. Students' academic success and their future career prospects would be influenced by ability of using the language accurately in their daily life. In non-native English speaking nations, teachers evaluate learning plans that may influence learning process. This study aims to discover and match the Direct Method with the Grammar Translation Method in order to highlight their theoretical foundations and classroom practices. The goal is to improve English language teachers efficiency to analyze and specify their students' need for learning the language.

As Larsen-Freeman (2000) advises, a great awareness of teaching strategies is necessary for the evolution of successful, learner-centered education that supports both academic development and language skill.

#### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Most teachers don't believe that (DM) direct method and (GTM) grammar translation method support complete language competency, but they used them in language learning. In fact, grammar and reading comprehension take front stage, GTM sometimes overlooks conversational ability. In fact, these methods give grammar and reading comprehension a good attention, but they overlook conversational activities. Direct method depend on the principle that speaking and listening skills

have to be improved through continuous training while GTM adopts using organized grammar during the process of learning. English language teachers try to give a lot of attention to both communicative confidence and linguistic precision to face the challenge of differences between the two methods. Therefore, it is essential for English language teachers to consider the benefits and limits of both approaches.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

This research intends:

1. To specify which method is perfect.
2. To evaluate advantages and disadvantages of DM and GTM.
3. To offer instructional guidelines for maximizing the benefits of both strategies.

## **1.3. Limits of the study**

The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM) in English language instruction are theoretically and practically compared in this work. Rather than empirical classroom data or statistical assessment, the approach is grounded on recorded literature, historical practices, and educational systems. Although the study mostly addresses EFL environments, it might not be entirely pertinent to ESL situations or multilingual classrooms.

## **1.4. Review of Literature**

Over the years, researchers have methodically examined language teaching strategies to identify which best improve linguistic skills. Emphasizing translation, grammar instruction, and vocabulary retention, Richards and Rodgers (2014) define GTM as a traditional approach rooted in classical education. Usually at a disadvantage, it is related to the competency in reading and writing skills. Brown (2007) claims that GTM offers little help for practical language application and condemns it for its limited impact on speaking and listening abilities.

Based on Larsen-Freeman (2000), the Direct Method stresses immersion in the target language and models the natural language learning process to assist GTM's inadequacies be corrected. It promotes active involvement through the acquisition of inductive grammar, attentive listening, and discourse. Although Celce-Murcia (2001) admits that DM improves fluency and speaking ability, she notes that it has limits in encouraging grammatical precision.

Verbes (2010) contends that a hybrid or eclectic method can serve to balance the shortcomings inherent in utilizing either strategy alone, hence defining the argument over communicative aptitude against formal language education. Emphasizing the importance of flexibility in educational approaches, Setiyadi (2006) and Prator & Murcia (1991) counsel teachers to examine learner needs, classroom dynamics, and curricular goals while choosing tactics.

Researchers have conducted systematic analyses of language instruction techniques throughout the years to identify which are most effective in improving linguistic ability. Richards and Rodgers (2014) define GTM as a traditional technique based on classical education that emphasizes translation, grammatical instruction, and vocabulary retention. It is associated with proficiency in reading and writing, sometimes at the expense of verbal communication skills. Brown (2007) criticizes GTM for having a limited impact on speaking and listening skills, claiming that it offers little aid for practical language application.

The Direct Method, as articulated by Larsen-Freeman (2000), addresses the deficiencies of GTM by prioritizing immersion in the target language and emulating the natural language learning process. It promotes active engagement via dialogue, attentive listening, and inductive grammar acquisition. Celce-Murcia (2001) asserts that DM improves fluency and oral competency, while recognizing its constraints in fostering grammatical precision.

Vermes (2010) delineates the discourse around communicative competency vs formal language training, contending that a hybrid or eclectic methodology can mitigate the shortcomings inherent in employing either technique independently. Setiyadi (2006) and Prator & Murcia (1991) emphasize

the necessity for adaptation in pedagogical approaches, advocating that educators take into account learner requirements, classroom dynamics, and curricular objectives while choosing procedures.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

The Grammar Translation Method is a method of learning any foreign language by the practice of translating or converting the sentences of the native language into the target language or vice versa (Rajput, et al., 2023). It is a traditional and old method used in the process of learning. It focuses on teaching grammar and vocabulary through translation exercises. Historically, GTM was used in teaching classical languages, such as Latin and Greek. It is also applied and used for teaching modern languages. GTM emphasize learning grammatical rules and using translation between native and foreign languages (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

### 2.2. Direct Method (DM):

Direct method, sometimes called the natural process and used in teaching foreign languages, stops using the learners' native language (NL) and uses only the target language (TL) (Dakhalan et al., 2024). The Direct Method is not new. Language teachers have applied their principles for many years. Most recently, it was refreshed as a method when the goal of teaching became learning "how to use another language to communicate". Therefore, DM emphasizes the natural way of learning a language, similar to how children learn their first language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

### 2.3. DM and GRM Teaching Techniques

English Language Teaching (ELT) utilizes several approaches to meet the varying requirements of learners. Among the most employed methods for teaching English as a foreign language are DM and GTM.

Linguistic competency, translation of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and written texts are preferred to be learned firstly. Linguistic performance, active conversation and engagement by speaking and listening in authentic situations are highlighted by DM. Different techniques are used by the two methods. Despite that GTM ignore speaking skill, it promote analytical thinking and understanding grammatical rules. Speaking and pronunciation are given a lot of attention in the process of learning by DM. on the hand; grammar and writing are not given perfect attention.

Thus, teachers have to distinguish the advantages and disadvantages of both DM and GTM to improve the process of learning.

**Table 1. Teaching Techniques Used in GTM and DM**

Aspect	Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	Direct Method (DM)
<b>Teaching Techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Focuses on written exercises and translation.</li><li>Emphasizes grammar rules and vocabulary.</li><li>Minimal focus on speaking and listening.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Focuses on oral communication and real-life interaction.</li><li>Uses visuals and interactive activities.</li><li>Avoids translation.</li></ul>

GTM supports students in creating a good basis in grammar and vocabulary. This approach does not emphasize auditory and verbal competencies are not emphasized by this method. Conversely, DM emphasizes vocal communication and genuine connection through the utilization of visuals and diverse actions to instruct the language. The Direct Method seeks to enhance fluency, although it overlooks the methodical instruction of grammar (Brown, 2007).

### 2.4. Roles of Teachers and Students

The instructor assumes a central role as the primary source of knowledge inside the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). The instructor, an authority in the topic, typically conveys knowledge to

the students in a top-down manner, guiding them via exercises in translation, grammatical rules, and vocabulary enhancement. To facilitate students' comprehension of the language, the instructor dedicates time to address their inquiries by providing comprehensive explanations and clarifications.

Students remain engaged, despite the teacher predominantly assuming control. In an effective classroom, the educator and the students collaborate as equals. Collaborative translation tasks, peer discussions, and collective grammatical analysis exemplify the interactions among learners in effectively organized GTM classrooms. This balance ensures that, under the teacher's leadership, students are not only absorbing knowledge; they are actively developing their linguistic ability.

**Table 2. Roles of Teachers and Students in GTM and DM**

Aspect	Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	Direct Method (DM)
Teachers' Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act as the primary source of knowledge.</li> <li>Explain grammatical rules and correct translations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act as facilitators of learning.</li> <li>Guide students through interactive speaking activities.</li> </ul>
Students' Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passive recipients of information.</li> <li>Memorize grammar rules and vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active participants.</li> <li>Engage in discussions, conversations, and role-plays.</li> </ul>

Educators employing GTM are crucial to the learning process. They provide lectures and instruct students in translation exercises. Foreign language learners assume a passive role, absorbing information.

In DM, educators support learning by directing their pupils via discussions and diverse activities. They are active participants who enhance involvement and improve their communication abilities (Stern, 1938).

## 2.5. Differentiating Skill Priorities in GTM and DM

GTM predominantly concentrates on reading and writing competencies, facilitating students' mastery of grammatical accuracy. However, speaking and listening abilities are not prioritized. Conversely, DM prioritizes the enhancement of speaking and listening skills to improve fluency, while neglecting the instruction of grammatical rules (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

**Table 3. Focus on Skills in GTM and DM**

Aspect	Grammar Translation Method (GTM)	Direct Method (DM)
Focus on Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concentrates on literacy skills, namely reading and writing.</li> <li>Offers a robust foundation in grammar.</li> <li>Overlooks speaking and listening skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizes verbal communication and auditory comprehension.</li> <li>Enhances fluency and verbal competence.</li> <li>Neglects grammatical conventions.</li> </ul>

## 3. RESULTS:

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Direct Method (DM) are both influential in language teaching, with GTM focusing on comprehensive grammar instruction and vocabulary retention to improve reading and writing proficiency. It is beneficial for academic environments that prioritize formal literacy skills and accuracy. However, it has limitations in enhancing communication skills, especially speaking and hearing. The Direct Method emphasizes continuous use of the target language in class, improving fluency, auditory comprehension, and self-assurance in real-world interactions. However, it may result in a lack of grammatical accuracy due to minimizing the need for formal grammar education. The roles of teachers in GTM and DM differ, with GTM requiring the teacher to

impart knowledge and correct errors, while DM involves teachers as facilitators directing students towards interactive projects and communication exercises.

#### **4. DISCUSSION:**

This research contrasts the GTM and DM methodologies in relation to their effectiveness in facilitating teaching and learning, drawing on actual evidence from both approaches. GTM provides a method for acquiring grammatical rules and meanings, which are essential for learners to establish a robust foundation. Neglecting to emphasize listening and speaking might restrict learners' capacity to utilize language productively in authentic contexts.

Conversely, DM emphasizes auditory and verbal abilities that foster practical language proficiency; yet, its deficiency in structured grammar education may result in deficiencies in students' linguistic understanding (Krishan, 1982).

##### **1. Strengths and Weaknesses**

###### ***A. The Advantages of the Grammar-Translation Method:***

The principal benefit of this approach is in its understanding of phraseology, encompassing abstract concepts, idioms, phrases, metaphors, and similes, since translation is achievable within this framework. As a result, pupils may get a deeper understanding of complex topics. This may be one reason this treatment persists and is conducted in some locations globally. The language employed by students and educators does not hinder communication. Instruction in one's native tongue enhances understanding. This method is beneficial as students are taught grammatical principles deductively.

As a result, the student's comprehension and ability to formulate precise sentences improve. Students educated in their native language may demonstrate enhanced competence relative to their counterparts. Minimal competencies are required for educators, enabling nearly anybody to teach.

###### ***B. Disadvantages of Grammar Translation Method:***

- Students exhibit minimal active participation in the classroom.
- Communication lacks significant concentration.
- Insufficient attention is devoted to subject.

Translation is emphasized, which can sometimes be misleading. Brown (1994), in his *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, contends that it markedly fails to enhance a student's communicative competence in the language.

The grammar-translation technique is a conventional approach employed in foreign language instruction. It was typically utilized in Western European nations throughout the 18th and 19th centuries (Corvo Sánchez, 2021). The target language was rendered into the native language. Grammar instruction and translation activities were predominantly utilized to teach a foreign language. The primary concept is that when acquiring a foreign language, one must learn, memorize, and apply its grammatical rules when translating literary works and phrases from the target language to the native language. During the time from the 1980s to the early 1990s in China, the grammar-translation technique was regarded as the exclusive approach to foreign language instruction. Educators utilized grammar as the foundation and translation as the primary technique for instruction, with the objective of enhancing pupils' proficiency in reading foreign texts and emulating them in their own writing (Vireak, & Bunrosy, 2024). This approach has several advantages at its proposal. Translation enables students to deeply comprehend the abstract meanings of foreign vocabulary and intricate sentence structures; systematic grammatical knowledge fosters precise grammatical concepts, accurate word comprehension, and translation proficiency; extensive reading and recitation of original texts enhance students' reading and writing skills (Ymeri, & Vula, 2025).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Conclusions

This study explores the strengths and limitations of the Direct Method (DM) in comparison to the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), sometimes referred to as the German Translation Method. While the DM emphasizes oral fluency and prioritizes speaking and listening skills, it often lacks explicit instruction in grammatical structures. Conversely, the GTM focuses on reading comprehension and grammatical accuracy but tends to neglect the development of communicative competence.

The findings suggest that neither method, in isolation, adequately supports comprehensive language proficiency. Therefore, this study proposes the adoption of a hybrid approach that integrates elements of both GTM and DM. Such a combined methodology would cater to diverse learner needs and promote a more balanced and inclusive model of language acquisition.

### 5.2. Recommendations

The study suggests integrating GTM's grammar focus with DM's oral communication emphasis to create a balanced language learning approach, aiding students in developing grammatical knowledge and practical speaking skills, thus enhancing their language learning experience.

### References

1. Broughton, G., Brumfit, C., Flavell, R., Hill, P., & Pincas, A. (1994). *Teaching English as a foreign language* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
2. Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Prentice Hall Regents.
3. Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed.). (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3rd ed.). Heinle & Heinle.
4. Freeman, L. D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
5. Howatt, R. P. A., & Smith, R. (2014). *The history of teaching English as a foreign language, from a British and European perspective*. Oxford University Press.
6. Krishan, R. (1982). *Language and communication: Essays in applied linguistics*. Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL).
7. Prator, C. H., & Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). An outline of language teaching approaches. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 3–10). Heinle & Heinle.
8. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2006). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
9. Setiyadi, B. (2006). *Teaching English as a foreign language*. Graha Ilmu.
10. Stern, H. H. (1983). *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
11. Vermes, A. (2010). Translation in foreign language teaching: A brief overview of pros and cons. *Eger Journal of English Studies*, 10, 83–93.
12. Rajput, Z., Junejo, S., & Ghouri, Z. (2023). The effectiveness of the grammar translation method (GTM) in improving English language skills at an intermediate level. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 7(3), 127–137.
13. Dakhalan, A. M., & Tanucan, J. C. M. (2024). The direct method in language teaching: A literature review of its effectiveness. *Lingeduka: Journal of Language and Education Studies*, 3(2), 130–143.

14. Vireak, K., & Bunrosy, L. (2024). Exploring language teaching methods: An in-depth analysis of grammar translation, direct method, and audiolingual method: A literature review. *International Journal of Advance Social Sciences and Education (IJASSE)*, 2(2), 151–168.
15. Ymeri, M., & Vula, E. (2025). Investigating translation strategies: EFL students' approaches to idiomatic expressions. *Sapienza: International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 6(1), e25010–e25010.