THE USE OF GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD (GTM) IN TEACHING BAHASA INDONESIA TO FOREIGN LEARNER

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Abstract

Grammar Translation Method (GTM) has been regarded as traditional method of teaching language. Many teachers might recommend other communicative method. However, in this paper, the writer shares her experience in teaching Bahasa Indonesia to foreign learners by using GTM. The writer provides the activities that can be used in this method and describes the characteristics of the learner. After all, just like other methods, it is important for the teachers to pay attention to the characteristics of the learners before applying certain methods.

Keywords: Grammar Translation Method, BIPA, teaching method

Introduction

Introducing new language to non-native speaker of the language has never been easy. There are many things that should be taken into consideration before teaching a foreign language, such as the characteristics of the learner, the environment of the learner, and not to mention the different cultural background between the learner's and the language being learned. Those things will, then, should be taken into consideration when the teachers choose the teaching method and material that could fit the learners.

Bahasa Indonesia has been learned by many foreign learners in many different countries outside Indonesia through formal classes. It is taught in Indonesian embassies as well as universities/courses. At least there are 19 Indonesian embassies and 176 universities/courses in 45 countries offer classes on Bahasa Indonesia (Wiedarti, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, there are some points that deserve special attention in teaching Bahasa Indonesia to foreign learners (BIPA). Wojowasito (1976:38) mentioned that there are some issues in teaching Bahasa Indonesia, especially outside Indonesia; (1) the learning of BIPA is not integrated into the student environment, (2) BIPA is usually learned in adulthood or when the students has fully mastered their first languages, and (3) BIPA is processed outside the system itself. Thus, BIPA learning program needs to be well designed.

The selection of teaching materials and the teaching techniques in presenting the teaching materials is surely essential. Like any other language learning process, it is important to incorporate aspects of culture and language into the learning program and present it to the foreign students. Grammar Translation Method is one of the teaching methods in teaching language. This method, however, is regarded as traditional by many experts and practitioners. It is not a popular method due to the nature of GTM.

This article is intended to describe the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) used by the writer in teaching Bahasa Indonesia to foreign learner. This method has been widely used in English language learning and reviewed by many English teachers and experts. Pros and cons always come along the application of this method in English language classroom. This study is aimed to describe the use of GTM in teaching Bahasa Indonesia to foreign learner. The researcher believes that this method is not only intended for English language classroom but any other language classroom. Despite the fact that GTM is considered as traditional method and gives little room to the learner's independency, this method can still be applied in teaching foreign language. However, there are some points that a teacher should be paid attention to before applying this method.

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Theoretical Framework

The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is a foreign language teaching methodology derived from classical methods (sometimes called traditional) method in teaching Greek and Latin. In this method, the teachers usually have the students to translate whole texts word for word and memorize grammatical rules and exceptions as well as sets of words. This method relies on the activity of reading and translating text.

Larsen-Freeman (1986) provides some typical techniques associated with the Grammar Translation Method:

1. Translation. The students are instructed to translate a text on target language to their native language.
2. Reading comprehension. The students need to answer some questions and find some information based on the text they are learning.
3. Antonyms and synonyms. The students are instructed to find the antonyms or synonyms of a set of words.
4. Fill in the gaps. The teacher provides incomplete sentences and the students are instructed to fill in the gaps with the words or terms they have just learnt.
5. Memorization. The students memorize a set of new vocabularies or grammatical rules.
6. Use words in sentences. Students need to create sentences to define or describe the words or terms they have just learnt.

The Grammar Translation Method has been practiced so widely and has survived so long for its main advantages. First, many schools still have classes with large number of students. GTM is one of the most effective method in teaching large class is it is a teacher-center method. Next, the translating of the text into the first language (L1) technique helps learners to fully understand the texts and avoid any misunderstanding.

Further, the words and phrases of the target language could be explained quickly as the students translated the text. Thus, it saves time. Even teachers who are not fluent in the second language (L2) can still teach as it does not really on the spoken ability of the teachers. Finally, the students will not have any problem in responding to the questions as they are most likely given in the first language. This helps teachers to understand whether the students have learned what they are taught or not.

Nevertheless, many experts have pointed out some disadvantages of the use of the grammar translation method for the teaching of modern languages. Asl (2015) summed up some flaws in GTM:

1. Speaking and understanding are more important for learners of modern languages than reading and writing. However, the grammar translation method focuses on the reading and writing skills instead of the speaking one.
2. Learners must gradually accumulate the knowledge from the basic to advance level before they can use the language properly. This will bring a disadvantage for learners whose objective of learning the language is for practical use.
3. Nowadays, teachers and institution prefer learning through exposure and experience method while GTM uses memorization of grammar rules or vocabulary instead.
4. Teachers and learners mostly communicate in the first language but many experts have argued the importance of the use of target language in the classroom.
5. Teacher is the center of the learning process. Students interact with their teacher with little to no student-student interaction.
6. Recently, experts and practitioners believe that translation is not the best technique in learning a language.
7. The Grammar Translation Method insists on accuracy which is quite the opposite of the recent teaching methods which emphasizing on the fluency.

Despite the objection to this so-called traditional method, some recent studies have shown that this method is still applicable to this day. Elmayanti (2015) highlighted the reasons why teacher used GTM in language learning. This method could help the students to improve their vocabulary and comprehend the text. In addition, the teaching-learning activities run quite well. In addition, Khan and Hafiza (2016) also mentioned that GTM could help the students in learning English. By applying this method, the students could understand the new vocabularies better as they are introduced in their mother tongue.
Method

This is a qualitative research as it provides description based on observation. A qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007) is a research that is started with an assumption and also based on a certain theoretical framework to learn about social issues. It allows the researchers to conduct study by using interviews, observation, or document review to get a closer look related to the issues addressed.

In this study, the researcher describes the use of GTM in teaching Bahasa Indonesia to Foreign Learner. There was one student in the class described. The student was a middle-aged Korean woman who was fluent in English and Korean. There were 8 meetings and GTM was constantly used as the method of teaching.

Discussion

The teaching and learning of Bahasa Indonesia in this class followed specific pattern of activities; text reading, reading comprehension, new vocabularies, structures, sentence exercise. The teacher started the lesson by text reading. A text in Bahasa Indonesia was given to the student. She, then, read the text twice; first, the student read the text aloud and second, she tried to translate the text into English. The teacher and the student would discussed some difficult or new words found in the text.

Once the student understood the text, the teaching process then moved to specific grammar rule. In this phase, the student was given some grammar pattern followed with some exercises. Drills could also applied during exercise activity. Once the student understood the grammar, the class would be ended by reviewing the material; from the vocabularies to the grammar.

The material chosen for this class is a book containing some texts in Bahasa Indonesia. The texts are simple, mostly telling about daily activities. The book is chosen for its simple and effective pattern. The grammar section covers varied rules, from affixation rules to the sentence structures. Based on the writer’s observation, the student struggled the most in understanding Bahasa Indonesia’s affixation rules.

The technique applied by the teacher affirms some principles of Grammar Translation Method; translation, reading comprehension, memorization, drilling. First, translation plays important role in the learning process. In the class, the student did not only translate the texts but also the questions given after each text. The exercises provided by the book was also about translating texts in target language to English or vice versa. The teacher also helped the student with sentence drilling.

The following character of GTM used in the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia is reading comprehension. Once the student understood the texts, she would answer the questions related to the text. As mentioned earlier, the questions would be translated to English first. New words and sentence structures are introduced in each topic and usually one level harder than the previous lesson. What was learned before will be found in the new topic. Thus, it affirms the principle of GTM which expect the students to memorize the vocabularies and structures. Furthermore, the student practiced forming new sentences by drilling.

Despite some objections and flaws argued by many experts (i.e, Asl, 2015) and it is also regarded as traditional method, GTM is applicable and adjustable to current language learning. In addition, the use of different kinds of texts will expose the students to the use of language learned in different context. This means that the application of GTM in classroom does not necessarily limit the exposure of the students to authentic texts. The translation of text and words from the source language to the mother tongue will help the students to grasp the meaning of the words and the idea of the text better.

The memorization of words and sentence structures will be able to help the students to the students language use in the future. Sentence drilling and exercises will help the students to practice using a structure in many different forms. As much as the students are expected to use language fluently, it is also the hope of any language teachers that the students use the language properly and accurately.

Although the writer has conducted the successful teaching process by using Grammar Translation Method, still, there are some things that should be noted by those who are about to apply the same method. The student should have basic knowledge about Bahasa Indonesia. The student should, at the very least, know some
vocabularies. The basic knowledge will help the teachers in introducing higher level concept of words and structures.

In addition, this method is effective in small class in which the students are around 1 or 4 students. The translation and the explanation require quite amount of time, as well as the drilling practice. Thus, having more than four students in the classroom will require the teacher to shorten the process of translating and lengthening the drilling activities.

Although communication in target language is not the nature of GTM, the teacher could try to communicate in the target language to the students once in a while. The teacher could make insert short sentences and some words in target language in order to familiarize the students to the target language.

Conclusion

Despite being regarded as ‘traditional’, Grammar Translation Method can still be applied in language teaching. This method indeed focuses more on translation, memorization and structure drills, yet it can be modified to fit student’s learning style and needs. The translation helps the students to get better understanding, memorization helps the students in the language use in the future, and the structure drills will help the students to form sentences correctly.

The writer has applied this method in teaching Bahasa Indonesia to foreign learner. The writer noted that it can help significantly the student who has known some basic vocabularies of Bahasa Indonesia. This method is also best fit for a small classroom as it requires a lot of time for translating and drilling activities. Finally, though not required, the target language can be used once in a while during the teaching-learning activities.

References


