

PAPER 8

What are different methods of foreign language teaching?

A method in linguistics and language teaching determines what and how much is taught, and the order in which it is taught, how the meaning and form are conveyed and what is done to make the use of language unconscious. Thus the method deals with selection, grading, presentation, and repetition. There are different methods of foreign language teaching:

1. TRANSLATION METHOD: It is the oldest method of teaching English in the Indian context. It is based on the following principles:

- (a) Translation interprets the words and phrases of the foreign language in the best possible way.
- (b) The foreign phraseology is best assimilated in the process of teaching.
- (c) Structures of foreign language are best learnt when compared and contrasted with the mother tongue.

In this method the teacher translates every word, phrase and sentence that he comes across in the book. This method is also known as the Grammar Translation Method because the grammar of L2 is taught with the help of L1.

Merits: It includes traditional grammar, tradition from native language L1 and wide literary vocabulary. It also makes use of child's knowledge of L1.

Demerits: In translation method teaching of language begins with the teaching of reading. It gives little stress on pronunciation and stress. Communication skills are neglected and a great stress is laid on rules and exception.

Since the translation is a difficult task, exact translation of the L2 into L1 is not possible. It encourages only literal translation.

2. DIRECT METHOD: It appeared as a reaction against translation method. It is based on the principle that pupil should think directly in the foreign language. Webster's N.E.D. says, "Direct method is a method of teaching a foreign language through conversation, discussion and the reading in the language itself, without use of pupil's language, without translation and without the study of grammar. The first words are taught by pointing to the object or pictures or by performing actions. In it speech precedes reading".

The idea of direct method is that the learner should experience in the same manner as did in his or her mother tongue.

Principles: Direct method emphasizes the value of oral training in learning L2. The pupil is provided sufficient listening and then speaking.

Since sentence is the unit of speech, the teaching through direct method starts with teaching of sentences, and not individual words.

Merits: It is a natural method that makes the use of audio-visual aids and helps the study of critical writing of English literature.

Demerits: This method is difficult for students who have problems in reading their L1. Since suitable teachers are not available, it cannot be applicable in a country like India because teachers themselves have got defects in pronunciation. It is not suitable for all students. Other aspects of language training except emphasis on speech training are not given due attention. It is not sufficiently controlled.

3. STRUCTURAL METHOD: Different arrangements and patterns are called structures. They may be complete utterances or they may form a part of a large pattern.

The structures include sentence patterns, such as "He gave me a book" formula, the group of the words that are used on certain occasion, such as 'good morning', 'well done', phrase pattern, such as 'on the table', 'with the stick', and idioms such as 'at the eleventh hour', 'tooth and nail', etc. It is based on the following principles:

- (a) The importance of speech as the necessary means of fixing all ground work.
- (b) Importance of forming language habits in the standard English sentence pattern to replace the pupils' L1 sentence pattern.

Merits: The language material is carefully selected facilitating on the part of the pupil. Much emphasis is laid on speech and not on writing. Through intensive drills, pupils cultivate the habit of speaking target language. It makes pupils more active.

Demerits: In this method, reading, writing, and vocabulary extension are neglected. Rigid sequencing of structure results in the production of uninterested reading material. It is not applicable when suitable teachers are not available.

4. BILINGUAL METHOD: While learning the native language, the child grasps the situation and learns mother tongue words. The advocates of bilingual method believe that it is the wastage of time for recreating a situation while teaching a foreign language. They think that teaching-learning method is useful when mother tongue equivalents are given to the pupil without duplicating the situation.

It differs from translation method in two respects. In the first case it is the teacher only who uses the mother tongue to explain meanings. Furthermore, pupils are given a lot of practice in the drill of sentence patterns. Such practice is not provided in the translation method.

Merits: It is an easy method since an average teacher of English can teach successfully. It promotes both fluency and accuracy. Since it requires little equipment and is thus suited to all types of schools, rural as well as urban, much time is saved which can be utilized to provide pattern practice to the pupils.

Demerits: In the hands of an unimaginative teacher it may degenerate into the translation method. It is not useful at the higher secondary stage.

From the merits and demerits of the different methods of teaching foreign language, we can conclude that none of the methods can suit all pupil, all places and all conditions. Our approach in this regard should be eclectic and pragmatic. Best method should be adopted by the teachers according to their needs. They should select features of any methods, which may be effective in particular circumstances.

OBJECTIVES OF L2 TEACHING

1. To develop the learner's intellectual power through foreign language.
2. To increase the learner's personal culture through the study of literature and philosophy.
3. Foreign language practicing makes the learner aware of the mechanism of his own mother tongue.
4. By foreign language teaching students keep afresh modern writing and research.
5. A greater understanding across national burden.

6. Provides students with skills which enable them to communicate orally in writing the foreign language.

VALUES OF L2 TEACHING

1. Acquisition of a set of skills: (a) understanding (b) speaking (c) grading (d) vocational/professional benefits.
2. A new understanding of language progress giving a new perfection on English.
3. Gradual expansion and deepening knowledge of a foreign country.
4. Language skills and cultural experiences endure through life.