



# METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

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*Prep By :-*

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The process of teaching centres around contents and methods. Both the items have always been very important. In the teaching of English, different methods have been popular at different times. A good teacher always runs after a good method. He remains in search of the most effective methods of teaching. *venish*

Let us first of all know what is a method? In a method, the word 'how' is important. Thus in a method we come to know how should something be presented. According to W.F.Mackey, "A method determines what and how much is taught (Selection), the order in which it is taught (Gradation), how the meaning and form are conveyed (Presentation) and what is done to make the use of the language unconscious (repetition). Thus we find that a method deals with form of things that is selection, gradation, presentation and repetition."

If we go back to the old days, we find that nobody was so particular about the method of teaching, but this does not mean that at that time, no method was being used. They followed certain methods surely. But a method has become a problem in this age of scientific approach. The questions, what should be taught and how it should be taught, are intimately connected. "Methods are meant for us and not we for the methods. The methods are to serve us in our teaching process and hence to be our servants and not our masters."

## 1. THE TRANSLATION METHOD

The Translation Method is better known as the Grammar-Translation Method. It is also called the classical method of teaching English. In the teaching of English as a foreign language, it has enjoyed a great reputation in the past. At present also, many teachers prefer to teach

English by this method. In the past languages like Greek, Latin, French, German etc. were taught by this method.

Translation method means teaching the target language by translating it into mother tongue – may be Hindi or Punjabi. Here each phrase or sentence of English is taught by translating it into mother tongue. The philosophy behind this method is that the foreign language can be best taught or learnt through translation. The learners, however, have to make use of set rules and principles of grammar.

### ↓ Principles of Translation Method ✓

The translation method is based on the following grounds :

1. Teaching of a foreign language through translation is easy, quick and economical.
2. The structural patterns of the two languages are compared and this comparison makes learning more clear and firm.
3. The fundamental principle of proceeding from known to unknown is followed throughout.
4. The knowledge of rules helps the learners to avoid any type of mistakes.

### Advantages

The translation method has many advantages which are given here below :-

1. This method is very successful in the present day class rooms, where there are a large number of students in each section.
2. By telling the meaning of any word or sentence in mother tongue, the teacher can at once make the students understand. Thus it is less time consuming.
3. It is very reliable for giving the students practice of reading with understanding. ✓
4. In this method, the teacher as well as the learners are able to facilitate the teaching learning process. ✓
5. Teaching English by using this method does not require lot of labour on the part of the teacher. Thus many teachers who are not habitual of working hard feel happy. ✓
6. By using this method, the comprehension of the students can be tested very easily. ✓



7. The learners are able to learn many items of English by comparison with mother tongue. That makes learning more clear and firm.

### Disadvantages

1. This method ignores the practice of oral work to the students which is the most important aspect in the teaching of any language.
2. In this method, reading comes first and speaking afterwards. That is very unnatural.
3. This method wastes a lot of time of the student because everything has to be translated compulsorily.
4. The translation work is always approximate. So the learner is not able to learn things accurately.
5. Through translation work, the real spirit of meanings contained in the sentences is missed.
6. It does not provide opportunity for silent reading.
7. It lays more emphasis on rules of grammar which is not very sound in the teaching-learning of a language.
8. This method makes the students think in mother tongue and then translate the same into English. In many cases, it may lead to funny expressions – for example, The road began to walk.
9. It is a dull and mechanical method because the learner remains passive mostly.
10. It does not help the students to learn correct pronunciation of English.
11. The learners can remain absent minded while being taught by this method. Many a time they just try to show their teacher that they are listening to him.
12. This method does not help the students to learn the language really.

Thus we find that the translation method has a few merits and more drawbacks. But even then we find that it has gained universal popularity. It is being used by a large number of teachers. One of the reasons of deteriorating standards of English is the use of this type of method. The

best thing would be not to use translation method as such in the class rooms. It may be used only when the class room situation demands it.

## 2. THE DIRECT METHOD

Direct method of teaching English means teaching English directly through English medium. In this method, mother tongue is not used at all. This method came as a reaction against the translation method. It is also called the natural method of teaching. No doubt, large number of teachers are in favour of translation method, but even then, there are many others who like to follow the direct method. The main philosophy behind this method is that the learner learns a foreign language in the same way as he learns his mother tongue.

According to Webster's New International Dictionary, "Direct method is a method of teaching a foreign language especially a modern language through conversation, discussion and reading, in the language itself, without the use of pupil's language, without translation and without the study of formal grammar. The words are first taught by pointing to object or picture or by performing actions." Some language experts are of the opinion that the direct method is not a method at all. Prof. Gurey says, "But essentially it (The Direct Method) is a principle, not a teaching method, a system that operates through many methods; a way of handling the new language and of presenting to the class. It demands direct bond, that is, a direct association, between word and thing and between sentence and idea ... Instead of an indirect one through the mother tongue."

### Basic Principles of the Method

The basic principles on which this method is based are briefly given below

#### 1. Direct association between thought and words :

In this method, the learners think and speak by using the same medium.

#### 2. Oral Practice

"A lot of oral practice is a must for every one, is the basis of this method."

#### 3. Functional Grammar

In this method, stress is laid on functional grammar and not on theoretical grammar.

#### 4. Inhibition of Mother Tongue +

This method propagates the teaching of the foreign language without using mother tongue.

#### 5. Sentence as the unit of speech ✓

Here the unit of speech is a sentence and not a word. Emphasis is laid on speaking full sentences.

#### 6. Limited Vocabulary

This method favours the presentation of limited vocabulary, based on needs and experiences of the learners.

#### Advantages

The following are the advantages of this method:

1. This method lays more emphasis on oral work. That ensures good pronunciation to the learners.
2. For teaching the idioms of English, this method is more suitable.
3. There is direct bond between thought and expression. So it helps the learners to have fluency in speech. It helps the students to have good command over the language.
5. Psychologically, this method is very sound because the teacher proceeds from particular to general and from concrete to abstract.
6. It makes the teaching of English easy and pleasant.
7. It helps the teacher and the learner to cover up more syllabus in less time.

#### Disadvantages

1. There is need of really competent teachers for teaching English by using this method. But we have dearth of such teachers. Some-times the teacher fails to make the students understand the meaning of a particular word because the use of mother tongue is not allowed.
2. In this method, there is over emphasis on oral work. Reading and writing aspects of the language get less attention.
3. This method cannot be used successfully for the average and the below average students.
4. It is an expensive method because the teacher has to use some aids for teaching.
5. This method does not lay emphasis on the selection and gradation of language material which is very important.



At the early stages, some times this method may not work. The students may not be able to learn anything thus we find that the direct method of teaching has some short comings, but its merits cannot be ignored. On the whole, it is considered to be a good method for teaching English. The best thing for the teachers would be to modify it according to the needs and requirements of the learners.

### 3. BILINGUAL METHOD

Bilingual method means a method where two languages i.e. the mother tongue and the target language are used. Here the mother tongue is used to achieve the target language. This method is based on the similarities and indifference which exist between the two languages. The similarities and differences may be of situation, sounds, vocabulary, structure etc. If these differences or common things are known well, then learning of a foreign language is facilitated considerably. When the child is learning his mother tongue, he becomes familiar with the situations and picks up the language correctly. While learning the foreign language, the situations are created again in order to make the child learn the foreign language. The advocates of bilingual method believe that it is merely wastage of time as there is duplicity of the same thing. Of course, mother tongue equivalents be told but there is no need of re-creating the situations. It is suggested that the time thus saved may be utilised for giving practice in sentence patterns.

#### Comparison with Translation Method

In comparison with translation method, the bilingual method stands unique because in this case, we have some modification of translation method. In this method, mother tongue is used by the teacher only, and that too for explaining the meanings of difficult words and not by the students. Secondly, the students get a lot of practice in patterns which is not taken care of in translation method.

#### Advantages of Bilingual Method

1. The use of mother tongue saves a lot of time otherwise the teacher will have to make use of a number of devices for giving meanings of words. Meanings and concepts conveyed in this way are better understood by the learners.

2. Pattern practice is given to the learners of language which is essential in acquiring a skill.
3. It helps in developing fluency in spoken language.
4. This method does not need special facilities or equipment. It can be successfully used anywhere and everywhere.
5. Teachers of English also love to teach by this method as it does not burden their minds with extra labour.
6. It fully makes use of the language habits already acquired by the learners while learning their mother tongue.
7. In this method, all the students of the class including the poor and the average students, are able to learn English well.
8. The teacher can test the understanding ability of the students easily when they are asked to explain in Hindi what they have understood.
9. When English is taught by using this method, teaching the language remains more or less a natural method.
10. It is not a time consuming method like translation method. Rather it saves time in typical situations.

### Disadvantages

1. While contrasting the features of the two languages, there is possibility of confusion.
2. A teacher who is not good at both the languages may cut a sorry figure.
3. The bad habit of learning everything by filtering through mother tongue may be formed.
4. The method may degenerate into pure translation method if the teacher fails to handle it properly.
5. A few students in the class may be more attentive to mother tongue sounds and less attentive to English sounds. They may acquire defective pronunciation.

### 4. The Text Book Method

- shift to Reading

This method is popularly known as Dr. West's New Method of Teaching English. It came as a reaction against the Direct method. This method suggests certain improvements over the Direct Method. The advocates of Direct Method plead for the importance of speech over other aims, but in West's method, the emphasis shifts to reading.



Dr. West was of the opinion that reading is the most important aim of language teaching. Due emphasis should, therefore, be laid on Reading Aloud and Silent Reading. "The child should, at the earliest, says he 'be enabled to read with ease and pleasure.' His firm belief is that 'learning to read a language is by far the shortest road to learning to speak and write it.'" In his booklet 'Learning to Read a Foreign Language' he gives his views on reading as— "The essential need of the bilingual child of the major languages is simply that of a reading ability in one of the major languages in order to supply to the informational and scientific deficiency of his national literature."

Dr. West is of the opinion that the Indian students get less chances of expressing their ideas through English. They need knowledge of English to collect information from English books. So they should be given training in reading only.

This method is popularly used in the schools for teaching English. The teacher holds the book in his hands, goes on reading it and side by side, he explains the matter to the students. At the same time, the students look at their books and listen to the teacher carefully. Sometimes, the students do loud reading one by one and the teacher corrects their mistakes in reading. Sometimes the teacher asks the students to do silent reading. Thus textbook is the central point round which the whole teaching-learning process revolves.

### Advantages

1. It helps in developing the reading abilities of the students.
2. The method suggests a definite procedure to the learners which they can follow easily. Thus it makes the teacher's task easy and economical.
3. Interpretation ability of the learners is also enhanced.
4. The teacher as well as the students are able to concentrate fully. They remain in the track.
5. It helps the teacher to give the home assignment quickly.
6. The teacher can plan his teaching well.

### Disadvantages

No doubt, the method won applause far and wide on the basis of its usefulness, but that does not mean it is free from any type of criticism. It has been criticised by some people on the points given below :

1. It completely neglects oral work which is generally considered the foundation for language learning.

2. Active skills required for language learning are not given any importance. There is over emphasis on passive skills.
3. Grammar and composition work are also neglected in this method.
4. Too much time spent on reading naturally causes dullness in the class.
5. The method remains incomplete because here the emphasis is only on one skill i.e., reading with understanding and not on other skills i.e., listening, speaking and writing.

Thus we find that Dr. West's method has its advantages and disadvantages. In case English becomes a library language for majority of students in India, it would prove to be very effective provided some practice in oral work is also given at the initial stages.

### Which Method is the Best?

Having discussed the various methods of teaching English in India, we come to the conclusion that there is something good or something bad in each method. None of the methods is perfect in every respect. This does not mean that we shall give up the use of all these methods. We must use one method or the other, but the point to be taken care of is that a teacher should use the method as long as it (method) is a slave to him and he is able to do well with it. But when the teacher becomes a slave to the method, the whole teaching work becomes a hotch-potch. So it is rather advisable that the teacher should adopt eclectic and pragmatic approach because no single approach is useful in all the situations. *Not following one style or method.*

The technique of teaching is important but at the same time we must say that the material is not of less importance. The success of teaching-learning depends upon the technique as well as the choice of material. The material required and the method to be used for it always depend upon a number of factors which are mentioned below.

1. The learner - his age, level of learning, capacity etc.
2. The teacher - his efficiency, insight, training etc.
3. The objectives of teaching English
4. Class in which its study is introduced
5. Availability of different types of aids.
6. Size of the class.

*no. of books  
to be read  
together without any  
particular order/reason*

7. Location of the institution.  
 8. Social background.

## LIST OF QUESTIONS

### Section A (Essay Type Questions)

1. "Direct method ensures fluency, Grammar-Translation method measures accuracy, but Bilingual method answers both." Discuss.
2. Which method or methods of teaching English would you advocate for the middle classes in a government school of your state and why?
3. The Bilingual method is the same as the translation method. Comment.
4. What are the principles of 'Bilingual Method' of teaching English? How is it an improvement over the other methods of teaching English?
5. What are the underlying principles, advantages and disadvantages of the direct method of teaching English as a second language (TESL) in India?
6. Is there any fool proof method of teaching English to Indian students? Give your comments on having an eclectic and pragmatic approach to the teaching of English in India.
7. How does the Bilingual Method of teaching English differ from the Grammar Translation and Direct Methods of teaching English? Elucidate with examples.

### Section B (Short Answer Type Questions)

8. Write notes on
  - (a) Principles of Direct Method
  - (b) Merits of Translation Method
  - (c) The Bilingual Method
9. (a) Compare the merits of translation method with the merits of Direct Method.  
 (b) What are the demerits of Direct Method?





**THANK  
YOU...**