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**GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD, A NECESSARY APPROACH IN
FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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INTRODUCTION

The interest in facilitating the learning of a foreign language is not new, throughout the time, different approaches and techniques have been created and applied according to different contexts, learners' needs, and their learning capacities, with the purpose that the language acquisition process is not inhibited but strengthened. Modern methodologies are focused on communicative aspects of the language and they are designed based on the socio-cultural aspects and educational contexts from developed countries. Also, these methodologies often require a high level of analysis from students. Therefore, when they are applied under a different context where learners possess diverse educational backgrounds and different levels of analytical reasoning, the teaching-learning process is hindered.

In accordance to some official resources, this paper points out the difficulties of analysis that Salvadoran students present when they learn English with modern communicative methodologies. Also, some of the possible causes for the issue are examined. In addition, students' reasons toward their English learning are described. Considering these facts, the Grammar Translation Method and its techniques are discussed. Also, the importance and benefits of those techniques are taken into account in order to state a better way to help Salvadoran students to cope with the analytical capability problem and to learn English more effectively. The novelty of the proposal asserted in this essay consists of a new way to approach this old, but not totally exhausted method by stating an adequate range of application of its techniques concurrently with the modern Communicative Approach.

The description and analysis of different techniques of the Grammar Translation Method provide the readers with information regarding to this method. At the same time, emphasizing the importance and benefits these techniques

provide. Furthermore, the useful techniques and the range of their application are determined by taking into account the present educational environment and the type of students involved in the process.

In addition, this paper is addressed to educators involved in the English language teaching into the Salvadoran context. With the proper application of Grammar Translation techniques along with current communicative approaches in their teaching, better outcomes on students' learning are expected.

THESIS STATEMENT

In order to obtain successful outcomes from students who are learning English as a foreign language, it is essential to analyze the characteristics and benefits of a teaching method that can fulfill most students' needs; considering their level of proficiency, social and educational background, and the learning environment in which they are involved. Salvadoran English learners deal with difficulties in learning because they present a low level of analytical reasoning resulted from different problems in the Salvadoran educational system. This issue slows down English learning since learners are taught through the use of approaches which require a good level of analytical reasoning. *An adequate range of the application of Grammar Translation Techniques for basic level English learners in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador must be used in order to facilitate the teaching-learning process.*

Language learning theories describe either the psychological or cognitive process in language learning or the conditions needed to be met so that the learning process is activated. Some of the language teaching methods like The Natural Approach, Total Physical Response, Silent Way, etc. are derived from different learning theories that describe the teaching-learning conditions needed to make the process effective. Moreover, the Grammar Translation Method is also derived from a learning theory which describes the conditions of learning in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This method took into consideration the importance of the prevailing foreign languages such as Greek and Latin and at the same time, the social context of the period which was the need of a teaching method that could be effective in short terms of study and that could also exercise the cognitive aspects of students in order to have a well disciplined class. Thus, these language learning theories are considered as general guidelines which lead educators to create specific methodologies designed for learners with different needs and social contexts.

Basically, a method refers to the general group of rules, procedures and specifications about teacher and students' classroom behaviors. It specifies the way objectives will be reached and the kind of materials to use. Moreover, methods are based on approaches which consist of sets of informed hypotheses about the nature of language and the form to take them into account for didactical purposes. A diversity of language teaching approaches flourished in the 20th century for the reason that the necessity of acquiring foreign languages in different societies had increased. The most remarkable approaches to mention are for instance Grammar-Translation Approach, Direct Approach, Reading Approach, Comprehension-Based Approach, Cognitive Approach, and so on.

Reviewing on these teaching approaches, a common aspect found in different language teaching methods that has been considered greatly by educators is Grammar. The term grammar plays a special function in second language learning. Over the centuries, grammatical aspects of languages have been taken into

account by different teaching approaches focusing either to make students analyze the language in order to learn it or to encourage them to use the language with the purpose of acquiring it. More specifically, Grammar is a description of rules and structures accepted by grammarians in which words are formed and combined into sentences in order to be applied to a particular language.

By this means, two principal reasons for teaching grammar in second language learning must be considered. The first one is *comprehensibility*, if the student knows how to build and use certain structures, that student will communicate his/her ideas successfully. Without grammar structures, it is difficult to make comprehensible sentences and try to identify and teach them correctly (Swan, 2002). Among different methods, the Grammar Translation Method has a particular technique that allows the teacher to use the mother tongue in class for giving instructions which help students to understand class content and difficult grammar points in an easier way and later they could produce accurate structures to communicate better. The second one is *acceptability*. In some social contexts, serious deviance from native speakers' norms can hinder integration and produce prejudice to a person who speaks "badly". This person may not be taken seriously, or may be considered uneducated or stupid (Swan, 2002). Students may therefore want or need a higher level of grammatical correctness than the one required for mere comprehensibility. For these reasons, it is important to take into account that although an English course is focused on communication, Grammar has a fundamental function.

A language teaching method that focused mostly on grammar aspects was the Grammar Translation Method, a popular method studied and used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was also known as the Prussian method in the United States. This teaching method was used by scholars who would translate English paragraphs into Latin and later analyze carefully for grammar and rhetorical training. One of the most prominent authors supporting the Grammar Translation Method was the German writer Karl Plotz (1819-1881) who used the

two-part rule/translation format. His method consisted of memorizing words, translating sentences, drilling irregular verbs, memorizing and applying grammatical rules along with exceptions. His aim was to use the vernacular to master the foreign language. Besides that, this method was widely used in textbooks during that century, putting emphasis on Grammar, native language instructions and translation techniques. "Grammatical rules and paradigms were provided as the basis for translating native-language sentences into the foreign language" (Meidinger, 1756-1820). This movement contributed to the fast acceptance of the method.

Nevertheless, because of the tedious, inefficient instruction in class, excess written and translation exercises on difficult classical texts that were not meaningful for students, and most likely, the lack of oral practice and teacher-student, student-student communication in class, the Grammar Translation Method was challenged by other approaches and methods such as Direct Method, Audio-Lingual, Communicative Approach, etc. As a result, teachers began to work with these methodologies and the Grammar Translation Method became disregarded gradually by the half of the nineteenth century.

In modern teaching, the Grammar Translation Method is still being used but in a lower degree. For instance, principles and techniques of the method can be observed in English textbooks such as *Skyline* (Lethaby & Matte, 2001). Also, many teachers in different countries use students' native language to give class instructions.

Although The Grammar Translation Method seems to be disregarded at least in theory, it is significant to examine the objectives, characteristics and techniques of this method in order to analyze the benefits this method provides for language teaching nowadays.

First, the objectives of the method will be summarized. Its primary goal was to learn a foreign language in order to read its literature. Therefore, students mainly developed the reading and writing skills. They were trained both to translate

sentences and to analyze the grammar structures from different readings containing sophisticated vocabulary. If the foreign language learner was able to translate the presented reading, he/she fulfilled the teachers' expectations. For the difficulty of studied texts, the method was directed to students with high intellect following the former belief that it would exercise and strengthen their brain.

Second, the learning of a foreign language through the use of the Grammar Translation Method presented several characteristics. For instance, by considering both the cognitive and systematic use of the grammar rules as a basis of instruction, the class using this method provided maximum control for teachers and students. Furthermore, classes were characterized by the use of the native language as a means of communication and instruction. Since long grammar rule explanations carried out in classes presented a high level of difficulty, it was wise to use the mother tongue in order to make sure students had understood the delivered knowledge. Besides that, the comparison of grammatical parts of both languages contributed to the students' assimilation of the target language since they made associations with both language similarities. Moreover, grammatical aspects were presented deductively where students were first provided with sentences or readings from which they had to infer their respective grammar rules. Students practiced different grammatical forms through translation exercises that facilitated their understanding of the target language readings, at the same time students could familiarize a foreign culture through these classical readings. Finally, classes were teacher-centered. Students were receptors who had to accomplish what the teacher assigned and their affective factors or ideas were not taken into account. Peer interaction was hardly observed. That was the reason why the classroom atmosphere was usually boring.

In addition to the description of characteristics above, all the techniques are presented to provide the readers a comprehensive view of the method. Diane Larsen-Freeman details the Grammar Translation Techniques in her book

Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching (1986). They are presented below.

Translation of a Literary Passage

A reading passage is translated from the target language into the native one. Also, vocabulary and grammatical structures are studied. Students are not expected to translate idioms. However, when a literary translation is carried out, it has to be as understandable as possible. In order to have further practice, a teacher may write a passage containing the taught vocabulary and grammar rules.

Reading comprehension Questions

In this technique, three different groups of questions are solved. The first group of questions is for checking the level of comprehension from the passage. The answers are found directly in the text. In the second group of questions, students must analyze the passage to answer those questions because answers are not found directly. Hence, conclusions are drawn out. The third group of questions is in the level of application where students are asked to associate the passage to their own experience.

Antonyms/Synonyms

When applying this technique three types of exercises can be developed. First, students must look for antonyms from a given set of words. Second, they may also look for synonyms. Third, learners can write definitions for some words by analyzing the message it conveys in the reading. This technique is opened to create other vocabulary exercises (Allen, 1983).

Cognates

Students have to learn to identify cognates by learning the spelling or sound patterns for both languages. They have to memorize words that appear to be cognates, but which have different meanings. It works only with languages that share cognates.

Fill-in-the-blanks

This technique consists of giving students a certain number of sentences with some missing words. They will be asked to fill out the blank spaces with a specific grammar category such as prepositions or verbs with different tenses.

Deductive Application of Rule

The presentation of grammar rules is done through examples. Exceptions to each rule are also discussed. After understanding a rule, students are asked to apply it to some different exercises.

Memorization

Students have to memorize lists of words in both languages of study, grammatical rules and grammatical paradigms such as verb conjugations.

Use words in Sentences

Students create sentences of their own using some vocabulary given by the instructor in order to demonstrate they have understood the meaning and use of new vocabulary items.

Composition

Students are asked to write a composition in the target language from a given topic related to the reading passage of the lesson. Sometimes they have to write a summary from the studied passage.

With the purpose of achieving successful outcomes in the learning of a foreign language, the application of certain Grammar Translation techniques mentioned above is adequate taking into account students' analytical capability; in other words, their level of critical reasoning towards different propositions.

Generally speaking, critical reasoning differs from a mere disagreement, and most people cannot distinguish them well. Disagreement presents when a person asserts a position and another just denies it, often looked as a kind of battle, which results in either humiliation or in sense of superiority. On the other hand, critical reasoning is the process that involves looking at the reasons on which an opposing view is based and making an assessment of those reasons. Its immediate aim is to

determine whether the position offered is worth believing, but it is also a basis for further inquiry and discussion which may move both participants to a better understanding of the issue at hand. (Cederblom & Paulsen, 1982)

Same case applies when students deal with oral or written argumentations in their learning. In order to be a critical thinker, they must be able to identify the opposing ideas or points of views, sometimes done by stating them into logical patterns first. Then, they must be able to evaluate the proposition the other party has offered, analyzing different materials found by breaking them down into their component parts so that the organization structure may be understood. Afterwards, they should provide their own conclusion toward the presented argument.

Nevertheless, most people have misconceptions about critical reasoning. They think it is always structured in logical patterns, but when the aim is to evaluate the proposition of the encountered party, one does not really decide whether to think logically or not. Critical reasoning is something everybody does all the time, it is only a matter of learning to do it better. In addition, there is not a right or wrong point of view, to engage in critical reasoning is to assume that sometimes one proposition can be seen to be more reasonable than another. And sometimes it is more reasonable to doubt a position than to believe it. (Cederblom and Paulsen, 1982). This aspect becomes important because most modern English teaching books and approaches often expect students to use their analytical skills to develop different communicative tasks in class and to use the acquired language afterwards. In most cases, teachers just merely follow presented instructional materials and most popular methodologies without considering the real teaching-learning context. For instance, factors such as the reasons why students decide to learn the foreign language, the kind of background knowledge they possess, etc.

It is then valuable to mention the reasons for learning new languages so that the specific purposes of the learners are identified. In the past, people used to learn new languages to strengthen their brain (Kelly, 1969), to spread religious and political ideas, etc. However, nowadays those reasons are different. The huge

phenomenon of immigration, globalization and international relationships has led the countries to search for more effective ways to teach foreign languages to their inhabitants so that they are able to confront different tasks that require the use of another language.

More specifically, learners in El Salvador possess special reasons to learn a new language, these are related to modernization, commercial agreements and other special purposes according to the learners' career regarding to language learning. At present, El Salvador is involved in a modernization process which includes free economic competition. For instance, with the CAFTA (Central America Free Trade Agreement), foreign enterprises will operate in the country. As a result, the need of bilinguals will increase. Moreover, individual learners in El Salvador have different needs which require English for special purposes. For example, some people study it in order to read literature related to their careers, some others need to communicate orally with English speaking colleagues or to prepare business documents. Other people also learn this language with the idea to travel to English speaking countries or to have better opportunities when applying for a job. In the case of students in the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, the learners need not only to speak the English language but also to manage all the main skills to communicate, translate and especially teach this language in order to have better opportunities to become professional in the future under the Salvadoran context; these special needs cannot be fulfilled just through teaching those students to communicate correctly. In consequence, paying attention to their needs would be decisive. However, not only students' learning needs but also their learning context and background knowledge have to be revised because of the relationship these factors establish with individual learners.

Socio-cultural aspects play a significant role in students' second language learning. According to Sharp and Gallimore (1988) the socio-cultural perspective has profound implications for teaching, schooling, and education. Vygotsky argues

that a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual. He thought that the external social world in which an individual life has developed must be examined through participation in activities which require cognitive and communicative functions. He also described learning as being embedded within social events and occurring as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment. (Vygotsky, 1986) Socio-cultural aspects in second language learning are very complex because each individual has his/her own behavior, culture, education, etc. All these aspects are very important components to consider when the communicative and cognitive developments of learners have to be examined in the language acquisition process.

Furthermore, student's background knowledge has an important relationship with second language learning. According to Mahoney (1991), background knowledge consists of the personal history that each individual brings to the learning setting. It is considered one of the most significant aspects that the educator has to take into account when teaching a foreign language. Contextual factors such as family, job, community, language and health problems have great influence in a learner's background knowledge, and sometimes these factors can create emotional or psychological barriers to his/her learning. Therefore, teachers have to use meaningful materials, which are clearly relatable to existing knowledge the learner already possesses. In addition, this existing knowledge base must be organized in such a way that the new information is easily assimilated to the learner's cognitive structure.

Considering the importance of social-cultural background and the analytical capability of students in their learning, under Salvadoran educational environment, most students present problems in their learning, for the reason that the Salvadoran educational system has long held a pattern which has produced students with a low level of analysis and lack of critical reasoning.

Supporting this argument, The Ministry of Education of El Salvador (MINED) has always insinuated and even stated the implementation of some guidelines and

reforms to promote the analytical thinking among the learners (MINED, 1995). According to Escamilla (1981), the reforms have proposed the promotion of such ideas as, “mental independence” and “a critical, liberated and creative mind”. However, the MINED document named “*Reforma Educativa en Marcha II*” (Educational Reform in Progress II, 1995) states that “all changes done in every reform have been unsuccessful” in view of there is a permanent need ‘to do something’ with the education. Unfortunately, that has been part of the discourse of every single educational reform since 1940 up to now and the results have been similar. At the present time, the new authorities of Education are proposing new reforms called the “Plan 2021” with the purpose to improve the quality of education (Hernandez, Joma, 2004), which confirm the comments of the mentioned MINED document.

Different standardized evaluations done to the learners as *PAES* and *ECAP* continue showing a poor performance on students’ analytical capability. In the *PAES* 2003 results, an evaluation taken by high school students, the highest percentage of students achievement is located generally in the intermediate level (52%) of competences; however, in Mathematics and “*Lenguaje y Literatura*” (Spanish and Literature) the highest percentages are located in the basic level (50%) of competences according to “*Boletín Informativo, PAES 2003*” (2004). Those results demonstrate problems in important areas such as the understanding of basic concepts and the “discrimination of essential characteristics of the studied topics.” Students for example, “magnify an element of a given text focusing on the first impression without deepening on the global analysis”. The *ECAP* (Evaluation on Pedagogic and Academic Competencies) results also enlighten the problems students have to analyze different topics; this test is taken by people who are finishing their university major of “*Profesorado*” (Teaching) though. The results show that only 43.3% of them passed the test and the students are hardly found in the intermediate level of proficiency established by the Ministry. According to the document “*ECAP Ordinaria 2003, Informe de Resultados*” (2004) these learners

have problems “to interpret the result of an evaluation of learning, they have troubles to analyze cases that require the use of teaching techniques adjusted to specific skills and levels of knowledge of the learners”. Those results make clear the need to improve the quality of education, and they also demonstrate that learners’ analytical capability must be taken into consideration in order to help them to acquire the knowledge they are supposed to obtain.

As a matter of fact, there must be undoubtedly strong obstacles hindering the educational objective of improving students’ analytical thinking. Some educational authorities offer their experienced comments on this issue.

The “*Reforma Educativa en Marcha II*” document states: “In this country, education has always been an unfinished and limited phenomenon which depends on the interest of the people in power”. That must be one of the reasons which causes the problems that students have always presented to analyze what they are exposed to in the classroom environment and in their reality in general. “The people in power who administer the educational system do not really promote analytical thinking since it usually produces people who question and reflect; they prefer to have obedient and submissive people”, says Lic. Balmore Escobar, Vice-principal of “*Instituto Nacional Albert Camus*”. Thus, according to that viewpoint the educational reforms are “passive” in the promotion of analytical thinking, which is not one of their priorities. Although the Ministry of Education proposes some reforms, they are seldom used in the classrooms. “More qualified supervision is necessary; teachers do need to be trained according to the constructivist pedagogy to change their point of view towards teaching methodologies, but they also need to receive a fair salary according to the job they do”, continues Lic. Escobar referring to the implementation of a reform that really reaches out the classrooms.

Another hindrance is the methodology used into classrooms. Teachers continue using the traditional pedagogical system which is memory led and where students are “machines”, passive receptors. Lic. Escobar mentions that: “students who ask questions are denounced as disruptive by teachers who usually get angry

at them. That is the reason why students do not participate in any analytical activity. They are apathetic and do not like to propose anything". Licda. Dora Consuelo Hernandez, Head (Stand-In) of the Department of Learning Achievement, MINED says: "the analytical capability in Salvadoran students is relatively poor due to the fact that the critical/reflective thinking is not fostered in classrooms". "In a general way people think that schools almost never produce students that have the capacity to discuss aspects that they consider relevant in their academic formation", expressed Ing. Joaquin Orlando Machuca, Vice-Rector of the University of El Salvador. Consequently, the Salvadoran pedagogical methodologies have been modeling students who are relatively good in memory, but deficient critical thinkers.

In fact, education in this country does not prepare learners to apply their knowledge in the social reality. Licda. Hernandez states: "the process of academic formation must produce a student with analytical and reflective capacity. Moreover, the students simultaneously must have the abilities and skills which allow them to be professionals in the labor level or to continue with their superior level studies". Education which resembles real life situation would help learners to take intelligent decisions about their future. Licda. Lilian Guatemala de Chavez, Principal of "*Colegio Bautista San Salvador*" said: "The Educational Reform must concern about the social reality where the learning of Salvadoran students is improved and adapted to the real context. The educational programs do not promote students' analytical capability. On the contrary, these programs are focused on memory, and it is lamentable because the students just repeat the information without understanding the reason to learn it". Lack of contextualization produces students who do not understand the purpose of education and who cannot analyze the paradigms presented in order to make the correct decisions in their future professional life.

As a result of the methodologies mentioned, the Salvadoran student is not a self-sufficient individual. Licda. Hernandez stated: "Pitifully, the theory "learning to

learn” based on search-action is something that the Salvadoran student does not practice because he\she is a passive learner who has dependent thinking”. “The interest the student puts in his\her general formation is the main base that will determine his/her academic quality. However, one of the most common behaviors in the Salvadoran students is that they do not like to struggle in their academic tasks. They are indifferent and in a certain way they are irresponsible with their studies. When they need to apply their analytical capability in an activity, most of them are frustrated, at the end they obtain negative results”, says Licda. Maria de Gallegos, Principal of “*Instituto Nacional General Francisco Morazán*”. Constructivist theory, which is one of the statements of the last reforms, states that students must build their own learning. However, just as it is not clever to build a building without foundations, it is not clever to demand from upper level students to have a high level of critical thinking if they have not been taught to develop it. Considering the reality, a large and conscious process is needed, starting by lower educational levels, in order to work for students to be able to learn and interpret new information by themselves.

The economic situation of most national high school institutions -and their learners- is another obstacle to the development of analytical reasoning of the learners. “Most students have chronic malnutrition and poor economic conditions. Besides, the infrastructure on these places is not adequate for the learning process” points Lic. Escobar mentioned before. These facts also hinder indirectly students’ progress for they are usually too tired or hungry, or the classrooms are too hot, etc. As a result they do not want or are not able to make a true mental effort.

In the light of the reviewed results and comments, the Salvadoran educational system must undergo great changes to surpass all those obstacles in order to have a whole process of analytical thinking development in students. Through the time, guidelines about the promotion of that ability have been established in different

opportunities, but they did not obtain the expected outcomes. It is seen that students' critical thinking capability has been asserted only in theory.

Regarding to English language learning in El Salvador, students also confront with difficulties in their learning resulting from their deficient analytical capability when dealing with modern communicative methodology. Nowadays, English classes mostly consist of communicative activities where learners must have a good level of analysis in order to discuss the given information and to accomplish different tasks in class; these activities refer to oral drills, teacher's questioning, etc. Therefore, since most students do not possess the required analytical level, several difficulties emerge in their learning. For instance, confusion toward teachers' discourse or grammar exercises, problem in expressing their own ideas and stating answers, etc. In classes, when students cannot understand teacher's discourse or grammar exercises, teachers try to explain through different ways using the target language, but students just remain confused and ask constantly for direct translation without doing the least effort at inferring the ideas from other propositions or examples the teacher provides. Besides, most students choose not to participate and stay quiet in class when they find it difficult to express their own ideas or to state their answers. Consequently, it is evident that in most Basic English classes not much participation is found, and most students demonstrate a passive attitude toward their learning. Thus, the language learning process fails.

All the mentioned aspects describe the need for a method or some techniques which can facilitate the teaching-learning process. Supporting this idea, among different teaching methods, The Grammar Translation Method provides various techniques that are most suitable for the mentioned learning situation.

However, it is important to establish which of its techniques are more relevant in foreign language teaching-learning in El Salvador because the Grammar Translation method per se does not cover all the needs of the mentioned learners. Different educational resources reveal that techniques such as the use of the mother tongue of students, translation exercises, reading comprehension

questions and fill in the blanks are the most useful ones from the Grammar Translation Method, referring to Salvadoran educational context.

In order to facilitate students' learning process, the use of the mother tongue is beneficial, especially in basic levels, to carry out some activities performed in class. Most of the teachers from Basic English courses of the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador consider very useful to apply the students' native language, in this case Spanish, to make themselves understood. The technique should be used for explaining grammar instructions, important academic tasks, for using new vocabulary and when correcting students' mistakes. When this particular technique is used by teachers in the classroom, students become more interested toward teachers' explanation. However, if the teacher explains only in English and ask them to make an effort to understand by analyzing his/her speech, most students resort to dictionaries or ask questions, in Spanish, to their partners. Some cases also happen where students just do not pay attention until the next exercise because they had not understood the previous explanation. Besides, it is very important for students to understand clearly the explanation of grammar rules and vocabulary when they are in basic levels so that they can apply them properly afterwards, in written and oral ways. Supporting this point of view, Licda. Rhina Franco states: "Pupils get relaxed, when the mother tongue is used". This is very helpful when the environment is tense or when learners are studying certain structures which are difficult to learn. Moreover, another benefit is that teachers save time. "Instead of giving long explanations on vocabulary in English which sometimes confuse some students, it is more helpful to present that word in the students' native language", says Lic. Edwin Peraza, a former teacher in charge of a basic level English course in the University of El Salvador. Nevertheless, when students ascend to advanced courses, teachers should not use their mother tongue as often as they did in basic levels. By this means, the benefits obtained through the use of this technique cannot be overlooked.

What is more, although a lot of students express they would not like teachers

to speak more Spanish in class, by contrasting their opinions with actual happenings in most English classes, it is obvious that they feel better when new vocabulary and grammar explanations are given in Spanish. As mentioned before, students are frustrated, not very interested, confused or just afraid to participate in activities where they have to practice the English topics of study. Besides that, some of them become upset when the teacher refuses to provide the Spanish meaning of a given word or idea and insists on them to try to infer the idea from his/her English explanation. This contradiction is the result of the communicative approaches that have influenced both students and teachers to believe that only English should be used in class. Under this sort of teaching, the use of Spanish in our context is in a way forbidden by general acceptance.

Another technique of importance that has a direct relationship with the use of the students' native language is the use of translation. When correctly applied, this technique is beneficial not only for students but also for teachers. Students express that the main reasons why they are tempted to translate are that they cannot understand well a topic, vocabulary, and teachers' instruction in class. Another reason is that they do not want to get confused. In some cases, the use of some resources and techniques such as "showing pictures" or "body language" cannot deliver the idea as effectively as translation. Besides that, when a word of the foreign language is not part of daily vocabulary and culture of students, translation is especially necessary to help them to understand. Moreover, the majority of students would like to be provided with the Spanish translation of new English words that they do not understand. This fact demonstrates that the target language explanations of new vocabulary are seldom enough for students to understand them effectively, even if they are creative. In most classes, students do not really understand teachers' explanations while they are doing the exercises for the reason that most of them have problems understanding the real meaning of new English vocabulary. Consequently, they are not sure of what to do at the moment of developing those exercises. Supporting this argument, there are many students

who think that some translation exercises can help them to understand English better. In relation to this, it is remarkable to mention that in “*Academia Europea*”, a renowned English language school, translation exercises are often being used as part of foreign language teaching, according to the comments of students from that institution. Even though, the use of translation exercises is rejected by most professors of the University of El Salvador who consider that it must be treated apart, they do not want to part the idea of using some translation exercises to help students to analyze the languages and to understand better the target language with the idea of teaching Translation as a major subject.

An important benefit of the use of translation techniques in the Salvadoran context is the manner they work with analytical levels. The learning of English as a foreign language consists of the acquisition of special skills which bases on the learning processes acquired in prior levels of schooling. Consequently, college language educators do not have the obligation of teaching pupils how to learn since they are supposed to have developed those processes in prior stages of instruction. However, as educators, they need to help their learners to understand altogether the new language topics they are teaching, especially when learners have problems to comprehend the knowledge. It is there when the translation exercises are helpful to the students with analytical problems. When this type of exercises is presented for students to develop, they get involved in an analytical process that would demand different levels of study, especially when the level of discourse of the reading to be translated is chosen taking into consideration their analytical levels. With the usual discussion of the information rendered later, the teacher can evaluate the level of improvement in the analytical processes of students. As a result, these techniques do not work just according to students’ proficiency levels but also help them to improve their analytical skills, laying better foundation for their professional careers.

Although most teachers of English try to avoid translation activities and the use of Spanish in order to follow communicative teaching principles, there is a marked

necessity to use those techniques. In modern English classes, there is a tendency, from the majority of students in class, towards translation of contents or exercises from the target language to their mother tongue; even when they are told not to do it. This occurs when the difficulty of the didactic material or exercises is hard in relationship to learners' capability of comprehension, and the teacher fails to provide explicit explanation to facilitate their understanding. Also, sometimes the nature of those materials and activities require high level of analytical reasoning and creativity which students do not often possess.

Furthermore, regarding to the use of students' native language in class, in this case Spanish, most teachers of English use it for certain purposes. Nevertheless, it happens only in a minor degree for the reason that in modern language teaching, educators who use students' native language are seen as unskilled and not professional. Thus, they are afraid to apply this grammar translation technique. As a result, teachers become unaware of the advantages that the use of Spanish can bring to students' learning.

Moreover, referring to reading comprehension questions, this technique is considered very resourceful to use in the classrooms. Many professors apply this technique in their teaching, not necessarily as a technique they use intentionally, but as another activity found in textbooks, which they use as a guide for their teaching. A very positive aspect to emphasize is that this technique provides great help for learners to improve their analytical capability and train their minds to think independently in order to accomplish the reading tasks successfully. This would be done by appealing to the three levels of questions which can be developed as part of this technique according to the level of analysis of every group and individual students. The application of this technique depends on the reading exercises done in classes, which are as crucial as the oral activities in accordance to most professors.

The usefulness of reading exercises in the foreign language class is not argued

by any of the subjects involved in the learning process. Educators express that reading and speaking activities are equally important in classrooms. Furthermore, a total of 71.43 % of students from basic courses declare that they have plenty of reading exercises in class while a 77.14 % of them expect more. In addition, learners assert that they would like to have readings with topics of common interest to the group which would also be useful along with the reading comprehension questions, to promote a delightful foreign language discussion.

In order to practice some vocabulary and parts of the speech, the grammar translation technique “fill-in-the-blanks” is ideal having a great acceptance by teachers and students. At present, this is one of the most applied techniques by language teachers because many English textbooks include this type of exercise in almost every unit. Also, students do not need further instructions on account of its frequent use in classes. Furthermore, this technique serves as a good evaluation resource for both teachers and students regarding to class contents taught.

All the Grammar Translation techniques presented above are very helpful to provide learners of English with resources to facilitate their learning of the new language, having into account the limitations they possess as a result of their educational learning background.

Different educational resources prove that both teachers and students are in agreement with the application of the Grammar Translation Method and its techniques in class. Several teachers apply some of these techniques in their current teaching. Following the principles of modern teaching, teachers tend to combine these techniques with communicative ones. Nevertheless, in Basic English classes, they usually place too much emphasis on communicative methods and overlook the benefits the Grammar Translation Method provides. Consequently, the application of several grammar translation techniques and its adequate range of use are needed.

The usage of the Grammar Translation Method under this viewpoint has certain differences with the traditional one. The activities are developed with teacher's guidance and attention, avoiding the boring classroom environment that this method usually creates. One relevant aspect to be mentioned is the use of students' native language in class, different to its traditional application in the Method where the class was taught completely in students' mother tongue, the class is aimed to use the students' mother tongue only when it is necessary in order to facilitate their learning. This refers to situations where the teacher has to explain grammar rules, give important academic tasks, explain vocabulary meanings, etc. Besides, when this particular Grammar Translation technique is applied in modern teaching, students are free to ask questions or to discuss with classmates in Spanish. By the same token, aspects like correcting students' grammar and pronunciation mistakes are taken into consideration. The teacher is constantly aware of every grammar or pronunciation mistake students make, instructing them with correct forms.

Referring to the general aspects of a class where the Grammar Translation techniques are applied, the outcomes are very positive. Some of the aspects to mention are for instance the peer interaction in class. Unlike other teacher-centered classes where students present passive attitude towards the learning process, in this type of class, students work actively, helping each other not only in different classroom activities but also when they have questions. Likewise, students participate more in class and feel more comfortable in expressing their ideas using their own language. However, provided that they are free to speak Spanish, many students also try to ask questions or produce sentences in the target language by their own initiative. Besides that, another application of students' native language can be found in teacher's explanation on grammar rules of the target language. In this case, students understand thoroughly different rules as well as their use and they are able to develop grammar exercises later; they do not just pretend they have comprehended, as they usually demonstrate in other

classes.

Regarding to the analytical aspects of students, the teacher uses students' mother tongue as a helpful tool to convey his/her ideas in the class explanation, avoiding the class time wasted on redundant explanation only in the target language. Consequently, students can easily assimilate different ideas and are capable to analyze teacher's discourse.

Concerning this argument, most students who are exposed to this methodology manifest their satisfaction toward the application of it and consider the method very beneficial. The techniques help them to develop different activities in class and provide them with more opportunities to participate and express their ideas. In general words, they feel they learn more with the application of Grammar Translation Techniques in class. Besides those comments, most students also prove, when evaluated, that they have succeeded in learning the contents taught through the use of that methodology.

Regarding to the adequate range of application of Grammar Translation techniques, by considering students' proficiency level, their analytical reasoning capability and all the other aspects commented before; it is essential to delimit the application of the mentioned techniques so that it is optimized to fulfill our specific learners' requirements. This range of Grammar Translation techniques must span from 60 to 75% of activities developed in Basic English class sessions, and they must be combined with communicative ones. Despite of the problems learners have in the national context, the use of translation exercises, the application of students' mother tongue, and other grammar translation techniques mentioned previously, used in the mentioned range would definitively facilitate effective learning and accurate use of the target language into the Salvadoran context.

To conclude, the usefulness of the Grammar Translation techniques can be summarized stating that they help students to cope with analytical thinking problems, serving as a helping method to the modern communicative approach that are applied in the current context, at the same time, it fosters a positive

attitude in students toward English language learning. The advantages of applying these techniques are shown when students find it difficult or frustrating to understand teachers' explanations of class contents, or to develop activities and exercises that require a good level of analytical reasoning. In addition, the application of Grammar Translation techniques results beneficial for all students since it helps them to understand easier the class topics and to devote more time to practice the acquired knowledge. These aspects serve as a remedy for the needs of Salvadoran educational context, especially in dealing with English language teaching.

Revising thoroughly the most beneficial techniques, the use of the mother tongue helps pupils to *clearly* understand the class content or some difficult grammar points. Its application is necessary when teachers observe that students have the necessity to use their native language in order to understand better what they are learning. This statement also goes in function with Gamelin's principle (1964) of "conscious assimilation" which mentions the need for students to comprehend the taught contents and to form their own criteria regarding to learning. In addition, the Grammar Translation Method is also a good way to facilitate the foreign language learning process avoiding the waste of class time.

Regarding to translation techniques, although many professors offer strong resistances toward their application in class for these belong to a specific subject of study, there are three main reasons why these techniques must be part of modern language teaching methodologies, specially for the students of the "Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador".

First as we assured before, translation exercises are very useful to help students to assimilate better the topic of study. Later, with the acquired information, they will be able to express their ideas and participate actively in communicative activities such as class discussions, oral presentations, etc. in the target language. Second, the analytical level of students is improved because of the kind of readings they have to translate. Since different reading topics require different

levels of analytical capability, students can develop the mentioned skill in a paced way. Finally, translation exercises help students to start developing their translation skills. It enhances the purposes these students have toward the learning of English such as becoming teachers, or continue studying a major on Translation in the future.

Furthermore, the use of reading exercises and the consequent application of the reading comprehension questions, in their three levels, contribute greatly in improving students' reading skills. At the same time, they serve as helpful activities to facilitate students to overcome the problems of analysis they have carried through their educational histories. This issue has not only been discussed but solutions have also been given to help solving it.

The excellent outcomes obtained when applying these techniques, in comparison to other Basic English classes that use only the communicative approaches, have demonstrated an improvement in English language teaching. Thus, when adopting those techniques into language teaching, students obtain more aids that result beneficial in their English learning. By having understood written aspects of the target language, students become successful in different oral practices and they are able to use the acquired language accurately.

Moreover, the specific range of use of the techniques confirms the fact that we are not just exerting a method that was used decades ago to give an opposing view towards current language teaching methodologies. Indeed, different techniques of the method are reconsidered to cope with the problem of analytical capability of students. This proposal does not mean to underrate the learners' mental capacity but it acts as a response to the formation received from the educational system. Besides that, the application of these techniques facilitates learners to confront the language learning demands of the new millennium which consist of accurate production of the language in a communicative environment.

That is the reason why other communicative techniques must be used to complete the class time. In fact, the application of the proposed language teaching

techniques in modern English teaching must not be seen just as a quaint possibility but as an urgent issue since students' learning conditions and needs cannot be overlooked again, or they will continue having problems in the labor market afterwards.

The proposal of an innovative way of teaching without the fear of combining some grammar translation techniques with communicative ones cannot serve as a panacea for English language teaching. Indeed, there are many other aspects that must be examined and searched with the purpose of helping our learners to reach their goal of managing successfully the English language. Those aspects are learning styles of the students into the Salvadoran context, their economic, psychological and cultural barriers toward learning a new language, and learning in general, etc. They were not discussed yet they are also very important in relationship to students' learning. In conclusion, although we took into account specially the learning necessities of students from the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador, these techniques also provide help to English learners under Salvadoran educational context in general.

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