

## IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH GRAMMAR -TRANSLATION METHOD

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### ABSTRACT

Reading is considered as an important part of language skill. It became vital in the process of learning a language. However, many researches showed that many learners have difficulties with this skill. This article is mainly aimed to identify the effect of reading comprehension improved through grammar translation method. A number of researches showed that there was significant improvement of the students' skill in reading comprehension through learning it with the help of grammar-translation method in which it was found out that the level improved from insufficient to good. This article shows how the usage of grammar-translation method can help to improve students' reading skill through some researches that were done in this field.

**Keywords:** grammar translation method, reading comprehension skill, literary passage

### Introduction

Reading is considered as one of the crucial language skills that should be taught by the educators because through reading students are able to extend their knowledge, to get more information in certain fields and broaden their horizon. Pollard claims that reading is a good source of learning language. English teachers should teach reading intensively as it is one of the most important language skills.

Reading has many benefits for learners, because it has a positive effect on learners' vocabulary, spelling and even on their writing skill. The students' ability to understand a reading text depends on many factors such as learners' knowledge and ability, knowledge of a teacher, and physiological factors as attention, motivation, and interest of learners. As we know teaching reading has been done since elementary school. Indeed, many learners still find reading skill difficult to master especially in comprehending and answering the questions that related to the text.

Reading helps students appreciate foreign language literature. Richards states that grammatical competence refers to the knowledge we have of a language that

accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language. It is believed that with the help of the study of the grammar of target language, learners will increase their knowledge about the target language grammar and it will positively effect on their speaking and writing skills in target language.

Reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text or their own background knowledge to build meaning. The goal of reading is comprehension. If students cannot understand the text that is given, then they cannot find the information that is in the text. Therefore, reading comprehension is necessary to support students' success in reading comprehension.

In fact, many linguists agree on the opinion that reading comprehension is a complex activity where the readers can get knowledge from the text both of information or message and new vocabularies. In addition, in order to understand text or a passage the readers need to find out the meaning or the correlation between the sentences that establish in the whole text. They can retell again the information that they have read depend on their knowledge, culture and background.

Larsen-Freeman gives general techniques that are closely connected with the grammar-translation method for the better comprehension of reading such as: translation of a literary passage by translating target language into source language, understanding the reading questions (finding information in a passage, making inferences and referring to personal experience), antonyms and synonyms (identifying antonyms and synonyms for words), cognates studying spelling of words, sound patterns similarities and differences between the native language and the language that is being learned, deductive approach to learning a language, fill in the blanks (completing the gaps in sentences with new words or particular grammar item), memorization (memorizing the lists of vocabulary, grammatical rules and grammatical paradigms), applying words in sentences (learners make up their own sentence in order to show that they know the meaning and usage of new words) and composition (learners write about a topic using the target language).

Many learners have difficulties in reading comprehension despite the fact that teaching reading has been developing for a long period of time. And as one of the methods that helps to solve this problem is grammar-translation method. It is known that the application of grammar translation method is needed to help teachers and students in teaching and learning reading comprehension. One of the experiences of this method is translating sentences.

The grammar-translation method is considered as old method of teaching a foreign language and had been used by numerous language teachers and it had variety of names. Once it was called the

Classical Method since that time it was first used in the teaching of the classical language, Latin and Greek. In the past this method was used with the goal of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature. It was also hoped that through the study of the grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and read their native language better.

This method derived from traditional approaches to teaching grammar of Greek and Latin languages. In this approach the grammar rules of a language was being taught and was put into practice by translating sentences from a language that was being learned into the native language of learners. In this way students developed their ability to read literary texts.

According to the research that was carried in SMP Widya Suara Sukwati School in Bali it was concluded that students' ability in reading comprehension through grammar translation method was improved significantly. As a result of this research the students became more interested and more active in involving themselves in the classroom activities and improved their reading skill.

Another research was conducted among the students of 11<sup>th</sup> grade at one of the schools in Uzbekistan. The reason why the teacher decided to apply this method is because of some reasons such as the students' ability in reading comprehension was very low. The students had great difficulties to understand the reading text and answering the questions related to the text. Identifying the problems of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students, the English teacher decided to apply grammar-translation method, as method is known as classical method and proved its effectiveness in improving students reading skill. The results of this research showed that students' reading comprehension increased significantly and they also developed an interest to reading.

According to Timothy Shanahan, who is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of urban education at the University of Illinois at Chicago: "There is a lot of evidence showing the importance of grammar in reading comprehension. Studies over the years have shown a clear relationship between syntactic or grammatical sophistication and reading comprehension; that is, as students learn to employ more complex sentences in their oral and written language, their ability to make sense of what they read increases, too."

### **Conclusion**

It is important for struggling readers to work on the grammar rules of the language that they learn, as knowing all of the aspects of grammar greatly helps to comprehend a reading text. Researches given in this article proved that the application of grammar-translation method in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language greatly improve the reading comprehension of learners and increase their interest to learning a

language as knowing grammar rules make easier to comprehend reading texts. Thus, for teachers whose learners struggle with comprehending texts it is advisable to conduct their lessons with the application of grammar-translation method.

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