# The most Influential Teaching Methods Used by Myanmar Language Instructors

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## Abstract

In this paper, the four teaching methods and their advantages and disadvantages being used by the Myanmar language teachers are studied by qualitative approach and analytical study method. The essential data for this research paper was collected via interview, questionnaires which were distributed to the 20 teachers from French departments of MUFL, YUFL, private schools and language classes. And this paper aimed to explore the most influential four teaching methods and their weakness and their good points for the sake of the language teachers.

Key Words: Teaching Methods, Myanmar Teacher, English, French

## Introduction

Since the late 20th century, language teaching has begun as a profession. Since then, the language specialists have studied and invented the theories, the approaches, techniques and principals. As a result, a variety of language teaching methods have come out, and some of them are well-known and others are less well-known.

Teachers from Myanmar and all over the world who teach English and French are not native speakers of both. However, as a language teacher, teacher needs to know-well about the teaching methods, the principals, theories and to choose the right and suitable teaching methods, depending on their students, and their good points and their weaknesses.

As a second language teacher, he has to be skilful at grammar, vocabulary and teaching methods. And he also needs to be able to handle the language activities, drills, internet access and to catch up with current news, movies and music, etc. in order to be used as teaching aids. As a successful language teacher, he must know and understand well about his students' age level, profession, needs, aims and use the most suitable teaching methods to develop the essential four language skills dramatically.

Therefore, the most influential teaching methods, Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method and Communicative Approach used by Myanmar language teachers according to the targeted language skills are presented in this paper.

## Aim and Objectives

This research paper aims to develop and simplify the teaching and learning process and the objective is to know the most useful teaching methods and their advantages and disadvantages which are based on opinion of the experienced language teachers.

## Materials and Method

The simple and traditional techniques were used to obtain the required data and opinion for the survey, the questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and the essential data and information for this research paper were collected by asking and discussing with the experienced language teachers, by exploring the internet websites and by reading the books of

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teaching techniques. And the data was analyzed by the qualitative approach and the Analytical Study method.

## Research Questions

1. Which teaching methods are most commonly used by Myanmar language teachers in teaching foreign languages such as English and French?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these methods?

## Literature Review

In the 7th edition Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Methodology is defined as "*A set of methods and principals used to perform a particular activity*"[4]. Likewise, on the British Council website, it is defined as "*Methodology is a system of practices and procedures that a teacher uses to teach. It will also be based on a belief about the nature of the language and how it is learned (known as "Approach")* [5]". And the three methods (i) **GTM**[6] (ii) **ALM**[7] and (iii) **DM**[8] are mentioned as the clear methods for examples.

Similarly, author Daniel Modard, center of Distance Education, Rouen University, published by Methods and Methodologies in French, in which on page 10, the methodology was reiterated the opinion Pierre Martinez on Methodology: "*Est pédagogique tout ce qui touche à la relation entre celui qui enseigne et celui qui apprend et, par conséquent, à l'instruction et à l'éducation*".

In the book "Teaching and Principals in language teaching", Second Edition, page-11, Diane Larsen-Freeman wrote about GTM which is very familiar with the Myanmar Teachers and students: "*It has had different names, but it has been used by language teachers for many years. At one time it was called the Classical Method since it was first used in the teaching of the classical languages, Latin and Greek (Chastain, 1988). Earlier in this century, this method was used for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature*".

About the Direct Method, Diane Larsen-Freeman states that "*The Direct Method has one very basic rule: No translation is allowed. In fact, the Direct method receives its name from the fact that meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids, with no recourse to the students' native language (Driller, 1978)*" in the book "Teaching and Principles in Language Teaching", Second Edition, page-23.

And about ALM method, he states that: "*The Audio-Lingual method, like the Direct Method we have just examined, is also an oral-based approach. However, it is very different in that rather than emphasizing vocabulary acquisition through exposure to its use in situations, the Audio-Lingual Method drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns (Charles Fries, 1945)*" in the book "Teaching and Principles in Language Teaching", Second Edition, page-35".

And in the book "Teaching and Principles in Language Teaching", Second Edition, page-121", the purpose of CA approach is written by the Diane Larsen-Freeman, "*Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the*

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[4] Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 7th edition, 2005, p.963.
[5] British Council, *TeachingEnglish : Methodology* https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/ article/.methodology.
[6] Grammar Translation Method
[7] Audio -Lingual Method
[8] Direct Method

*Communicative Approach by making Communicative competence the goal of the language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication*"[9].

## Finding and discussion

In this paper, the things that the language teachers should know: the most influential teaching methods for Myanmar students, the teachers' opinion for these four methods and their advantages and disadvantages are presented. The data required for this paper were mainly based on the theories and the opinion of the language teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience.

However, it was also found that the other factors such as: students and teachers' age, interest and environment are important for the teaching and learning process too.

As the foreign language teachers, they need to do constant learning and to know not only the traditional and current teaching methods but also their advantages and disadvantages. And, it is necessary to know about the students' background: profession, age, social status, interests and their needs. After analyzing the data, here, the results are found as following.

As per the survey done by the researchers, it can be assumed that the most frequently used language teaching methods in Mandalay area are as follow:

(1) Grammar Translation Method

(2) Direct Method

(3) Audio-Lingual Method

(4) Communicative Approach

After analyzing the principles, nature, advantages and disadvantages of these methods, the following facts can be found.
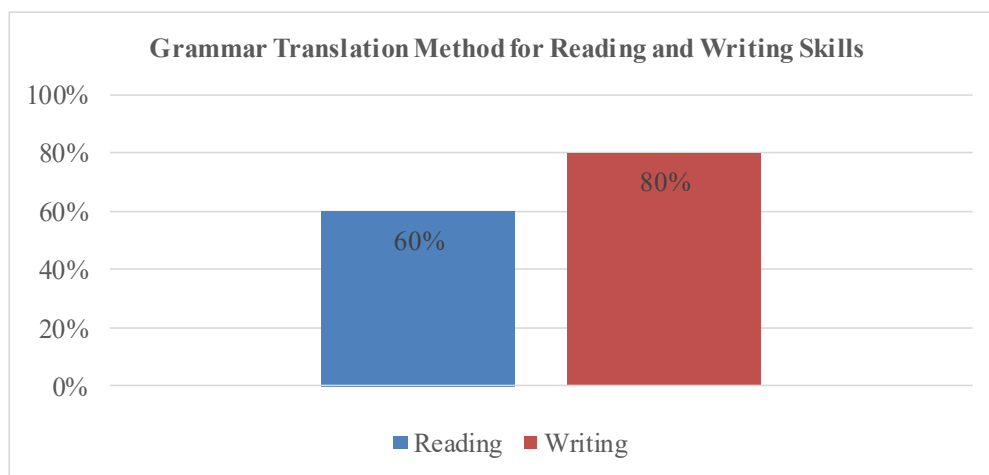
## (1) Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

It is observed that Myanmar Language teachers are very familiar with this method. This method is also called as classical method since it was used in teaching Latin and Greek in ancient times. In order to provide thorough understanding on target language grammar and literature, Myanmar teachers seem to prefer using this method. The teacher takes a greater role when this method is applied in a class. Each and every student will be asked to read sentences and paragraphs in the target language and translate them into mother tongue.

The teacher needs to give necessary explanations on new vocabulary and grammar rules. Reading and writing are focused. After translating, the teacher poses questions, gives vocabulary and grammar exercises and check the students' work, then to be followed by composition exercises.

By following the teacher's instructions, the students learn new vocabulary and grammar rules of the target language. When using this method, it is found that there exist a few student-student interactions as teacher-student interactions, but dominance of the teacher. Actually, in Myanmar, teachers never use pure Grammar Translation Method. Instead, they just translate the text and some grammatical rules are explained. Anyway, in this paper, the name "Grammar Translation Method" will be used to refer to it. According to the survey taken, the percentage of the teachers who apply the GTM to teach reading and writing skills can be observed in the chart below.

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[9] Larsen-Freeman, D. (2003). "*Communicative Language Teaching*", p.121

**Grammar Translation Method for Reading and Writing Skills**



## 1. 1. Advantages of Grammar Translation Method

Grammar Translation Method helps the students with vocabulary enrichment and acquisition of new grammar rules. Better understanding on the grammar of native language thanks to translation exercises along with the improvement of reading and writing skills. It can assume that the teacher is at ease when GTM is used in a class because this method does not require many teaching aids and mother tongue is mostly used.

## 1. 2. Disadvantages of Grammar Translation Method

It is found that medium language of Grammar Translation Method is not the target language but the mother tongue. As this is a translation method, it usually begins with reading passages. It, therefore, does not follow the natural order of a language learning process. Besides, this method mainly focuses on reading and writing skills, so listening and speaking skills are often neglected. It encourages the students to think first in the mother tongue, then translate the thoughts into the target language. That is why students' language acquisition may not be quick.

## 2. Direct Method (DM)

This method, too, is one of the common methods used by Myanmar teachers. As the target language is mainly used, this method does not encourage the students to use their mother tongue during the class. So, it is called as Direct Method.

Only **L2**[10] is asked to use in student-teacher/ student-student communication, correct pronunciation is focused. Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are taught using speaking activities. Vocabulary enrichment is emphasized and grammar is taught superficially. Although this method chiefly focuses on speaking skills, Myanmar teachers use it to teach 3 skills such as writing, speaking and listening. It can be observed in the following chart.

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[10] L2 = English or French
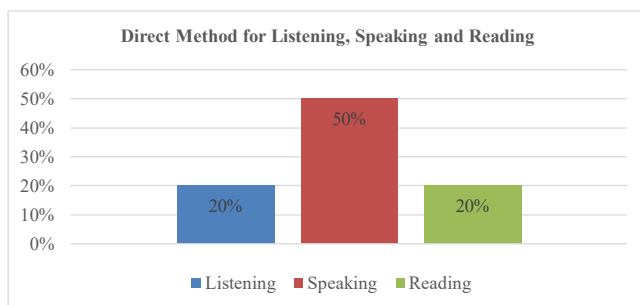
## 2. 1. Advantages of Direct Method

It is found that when this method is used, the students become more familiar with L2 patterns and they can express their feelings and thoughts in a natural way both spoken and written, as only L2 is used as a classroom language. It is also evident that students who use L2 become more interested in learning and they become more fluent in speaking as they use it every day. Grammar is inductively learned, too.
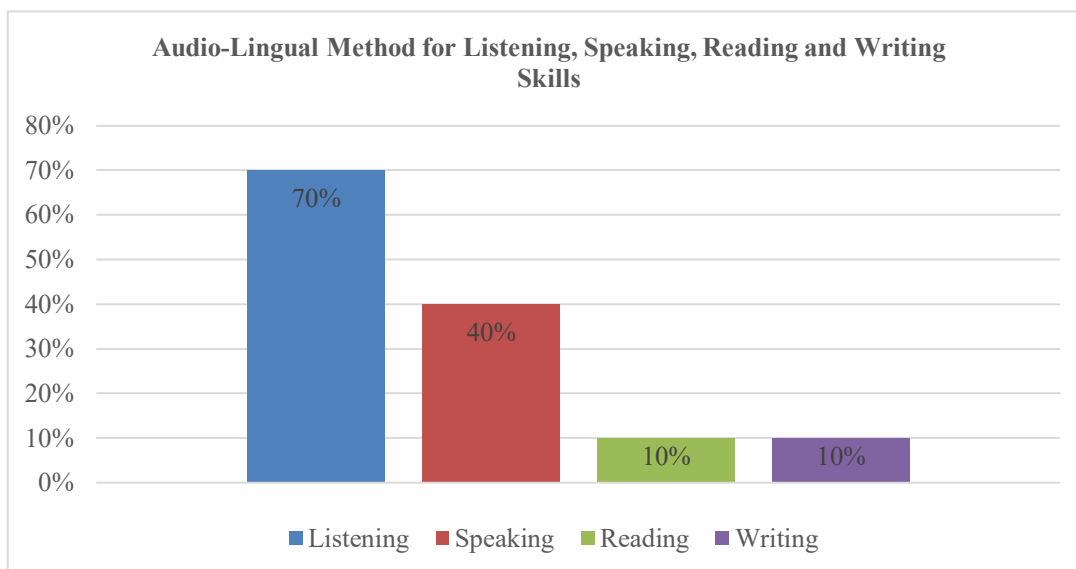
## 2. 2. Disadvantages of Direct Method

Speaking is mainly emphasized and other 3 skills are almost ignored. Teaching aids are needed. This method is more suitable to the competent teachers with good pronunciation. Sometimes, grammatical rules are ignored and vocabulary is explained only in L2, so that students may find it difficult to get complete understanding on the lessons.

## 3. Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)

This method is quite different from GTM and it is similar to DM. It is widely accepted that this method was started using in the USA during the World War II. Like DM, ALM is used with the intention of getting quicker L2 acquisition. However, there are certain differences between these two methods. In ALM, students need to repeat sentences, phrases, discourses and speeches until they can smoothly speak them without thinking. The teacher is like an orchestra leader or just a facilitator and helps and guides the students with their learning. Students are to imitate the dialog from the recorder and repeat it. Both teacher and students use L2 alone, not L1[11].

The following chart indicates how Myanmar teachers apply this method.

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[11] L1 = Myanmar

**Audio-Lingual Method for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills**

| | |
|---|---|
| Listening | 70% |
| Speaking | 40% |
| Reading | 10% |
| Writing | 10% |

■ Listening  ■ Speaking  ■ Reading  ■ Writing

### 3. 1. Advantages of Audio-Lingual Method

This method is proved to be effective for vocabulary teaching owing to visual aids which are important in this method. A certain number of students can learn simultaneously. Listening and Speaking skills can be improved. Students' pronunciation is supposed to get better as they imitate the native speakers. (via audio-visual aids)
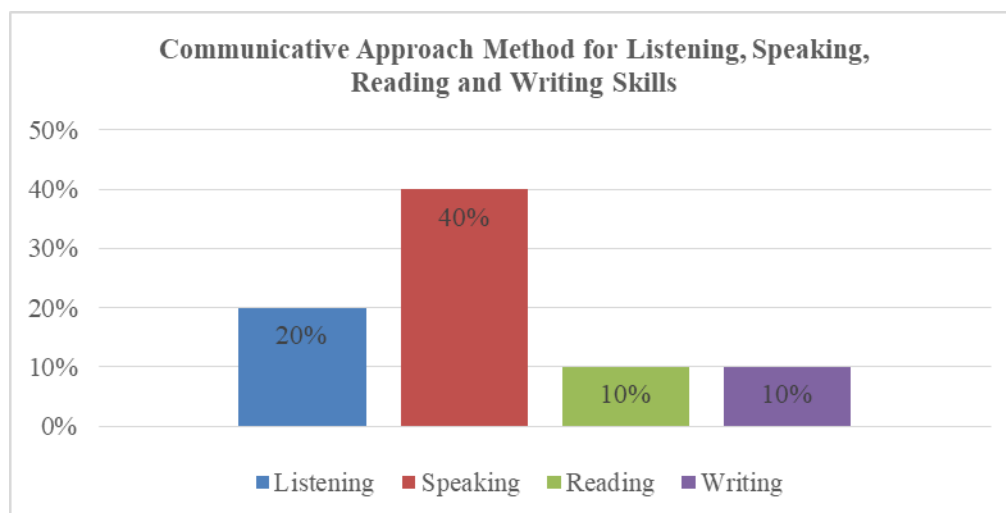
### 3. 2. Disadvantages of Audio-Lingual Method

It is an effective method for listening and speaking skills, but it cannot support the improvement of all four skills. It is regarded as a teacher-dominated method and it gives few opportunities to students to get communicative competence. Sometimes, language forms are repeated without understanding both grammatically and lexically.

### 4. Communicative Approach Method

Teaching sentence construction and vocabulary of L2 is doubtlessly important, but it is not enough to build a communicative process between two people. It means that students cannot use L2 if they only know rules and structures of it. They need to practise using what they have learnt. Therefore, the teacher is supposed not only to teach the students but also to train them to use the language they have studied.

In this method, the teacher is just a facilitator who provides necessary support to the students for a smooth communication in L2.

This method is less teacher-dominated than others. The teacher acts as an advisor or coordinator to help the students communicate each other in L2 using the vocabulary and sentence construction they have learned. By doing so, the teacher will have a chance to evaluate the students and to provide support when needed. Myanmar teachers use this method to teach all four skills and respective percentage can be observed in the chart below.

**Communicative Approach Method for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills**

| | |
|---|---|
| Listening | 20% |
| Speaking | 40% |
| Reading | 10% |
| Writing | 10% |

## 4. 1. Advantages of Communicative Approach Method

It is student-oriented and activities are chosen depending on the students' interests. These activities need to be authentic to make the students more motivated. It helps the students understand that they will speak better language if they know vocabulary and grammatical rules.

## 4. 2. Disadvantages of Communicative Approach Method

As activities are built up according to the students' interests, sometimes they are out of context with the lessons. It is quite obvious that the teachers need to know about their students to make better use of this method. If native speaker teachers who do not know about their students use this method, it may cause misunderstanding. Another weak point is that as this method chiefly focuses on smooth written and spoken communication, the teacher is, sometimes, urged to ignore the students' grammatical errors.

## Conclusion

In analyzing the teaching methods commonly used by the Myanmar teachers from Private schools and the Mandalay University of Foreign Languages, the most common methods and their advantages and disadvantages were found and presented in accordance with the international teaching methods in this paper.

They are GTM, ALM, DM and CA used by the Myanmar teachers according to their respective skills. And also, the advantages and disadvantages of these methods are very helpful to the language teachers and the teaching and learning process.

It is also advisable to explore the teaching methods in teaching other languages; German, Russia, Chinese, Korea, etc., at the Mandalay University of Foreign Languages.

In addition, as the language teacher plays an important role in the teaching and learning process, the four methods frequently used by Myanmar teachers are presented with their advantages and the teachers' opinions in this paper. It is sure that it will be helpful for Myanmar teachers to some extent.

In addition, the activities and the drills commonly used by Myanmar teachers should be observed and analyzed too. And also, it is advisable to study and analyze the new teaching techniques, principles and their drills and activities for language teaching.

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