

## TRADITIONAL METHODS OF TEACHING VOCABULARY

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**Annotation:** In the methodology of foreign language teaching, teaching vocabulary has been a vital part of teaching. In this field, using traditional methods give a chance to have accuracy, systematicity and teacher control. This thesis demonstrates information about a number of traditional vocabulary teaching methods and usage of these methods in secondary school pupils.

**Keywords:** teaching vocabulary, traditional methods, approaches, Grammar-translation method, rote memorization, definition-based vocabulary.

In the methodology of foreign language teaching, traditional methods of vocabulary instruction have played a decisive role in shaping learners' lexical knowledge and skills for many decades. These methods emerged within the framework of classical language teaching approaches and were primarily oriented toward accuracy, systematicity, and teacher control. Despite the rapid development of communicative and digital methodologies, traditional vocabulary teaching methods remain pedagogically significant, as they continue to influence classroom practices and provide a theoretical foundation for modern instructional models.

One of the earliest and most influential traditional approaches in foreign language teaching is the Grammar-Translation Method, within which vocabulary learning is primarily based on direct translation from the target language into the learners' mother tongue. In the context of secondary school education, this method has been widely applied due to its structured nature and alignment with formal curriculum requirements. Vocabulary items are typically introduced in the form of isolated word lists, accompanied by their equivalents in the learners' native language, which allows school pupils to quickly establish basic semantic associations.

For secondary school pupils, whose cognitive development is still in progress and who often rely on their first language as a support system, translation-based vocabulary instruction serves as a useful scaffolding tool. It enables learners to comprehend new lexical items with minimal confusion and reduces cognitive overload, especially at the beginner and elementary levels. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the Grammar-Translation Method prioritizes the accurate mastery of lexical meaning and grammatical form, which contributes to the development of learners' receptive vocabulary knowledge.

In school settings, this approach is particularly effective in helping pupils recognize and understand written vocabulary in textbooks, reading passages, and examination tasks. Through systematic translation exercises, learners develop accuracy in spelling, meaning recognition, and word-form associations. Although the method has been criticized for neglecting communicative competence and contextualized language use, its effectiveness in fostering lexical precision and

passive vocabulary knowledge cannot be underestimated, especially in exam-oriented educational environments.

Moreover, for secondary school pupils at the initial stages of language learning, translation-based vocabulary teaching supports confidence-building. Learners feel more secure when new words are clearly linked to familiar concepts in their native language. This is especially relevant in large classes, where individualized communicative practice may be limited. As a result, the Grammar-Translation Method remains a practical and accessible approach for introducing core vocabulary and establishing a lexical foundation.

However, while this method effectively develops receptive lexical competence and accuracy, it offers limited opportunities for active vocabulary use in speaking and real-life communication. Therefore, in modern secondary school education, the Grammar-Translation Method is most beneficial when used selectively and in combination with communicative and digital approaches, ensuring a balanced development of both receptive and productive lexical skills.

Another widely used traditional method of vocabulary teaching is rote memorization, which involves repetitive learning of lexical items through drills, copying exercises, and oral repetition. In secondary school classrooms, this method is frequently applied due to its structured nature and clear learning outcomes. Teachers often require pupils to memorize word lists, spellings, and meanings, followed by regular revision and testing to ensure retention.

Rote memorization is theoretically grounded in behaviorist learning theory, which emphasizes habit formation through repetition and reinforcement. From this perspective, repeated exposure to vocabulary items strengthens stimulus–response connections, gradually leading to automatic recall.<sup>2</sup> For school pupils, especially at beginner and elementary levels, such repetition can help establish a basic lexical foundation and improve spelling accuracy and pronunciation.

As noted by Nation (2001), rote learning can effectively support short-term vocabulary retention, particularly when learners are preparing for quizzes, dictations, or examinations. In formal school education, where assessment often focuses on recognition and recall, this method aligns well with institutional requirements. However, without sufficient contextualization and meaningful use, pupils may experience difficulties transferring memorized vocabulary into active and communicative usage, especially in speaking and writing tasks.

Despite these limitations, rote memorization remains common in secondary school settings due to its simplicity, time efficiency, and ease of assessment. It allows teachers to manage large classes and monitor learners' progress through objective testing. Nevertheless, contemporary methodology suggests that rote memorization should not be used in isolation; rather, it should be complemented by contextual, communicative, and interactive activities to promote deeper lexical processing and long-term retention.

Definition-based vocabulary teaching also constitutes a core element of traditional methodology in foreign language instruction. Within this approach, new



lexical items are introduced through dictionary-style definitions, accompanied by explanations of meaning, pronunciation, and grammatical characteristics such as part of speech and word formation. In secondary school classrooms, teachers frequently rely on this method when presenting academic or abstract vocabulary that cannot be easily demonstrated through visual aids.

For school pupils, definition-based instruction contributes to the development of lexical accuracy and metalinguistic awareness. By focusing on precise meanings and formal properties of words, learners gradually build an understanding of how vocabulary functions within the language system. Teachers often provide formal definitions, followed by example sentences, which help pupils recognize correct usage in controlled contexts. This approach is particularly effective in reading comprehension tasks and written language activities commonly used in secondary education.

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