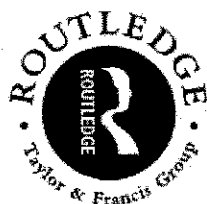


ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Edited by Michael Byram



London and New York 2000

of French as a second language required a specific type of language teaching.

The teaching of foreign languages in France is an evolving sector which is seeking its way between a strong trend to highlight the specificities which distinguish three major areas: the teaching of French as a native language and as a foreign language (with the sub-area of French as a second language), the teaching of other foreign languages and a more recent cross-cultural trend based on the similarities across languages, i.e. between mother tongues and foreign languages or between foreign languages. A baseline has been developed to encourage the building of interrelations.

See also: Audio-visual language teaching; *Civilisation*; France; *Fremdsprachendidaktik*; Teacher thinking; Teaching methods

References

- Cuq, J.-P. (1991) *Le Français langue seconde*, Paris: Hachette.
 Dabène, M. (1972) 'Le CRÉDIF en 1972', *Le Français dans le monde* 92: 8–13.

Further reading

- Etudes de linguistique appliquée* (1998) 'La Didactique des langues en contexte scolaire', 111 (Special issue).
LIDIL (1997) 'Vers une métalangue sans frontières?' (Special issue 14 July 1997), Université de Grenoble III.

GISELE HOLTZER

Direct method

The direct method of language teaching developed in Europe (mainly in France and Germany) in the late nineteenth century as a result of the **REFORM MOVEMENT** against the **GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION** method, and was dominant from the nineteenth century until World War Two. It was mainly based on such theories as linguistic principles of inductive analogy, experimental **PSYCHOLOGY** and naturalistic methods of education. The direct method imitated the way that children learn their first

language, emphasising the avoidance of **TRANSLATION** and the direct use of the foreign language as the **MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION** in all situations. Everyday **VOCABULARY** and structure of the language were used as the primary need. The method insisted on the introduction of phonetics and the spoken variety of the language. Concrete meanings of linguistic items are introduced through lessons involving objects, and abstract meanings are introduced through the association of ideas. Natural method, oral method, phonetic method and psychological method were some of the substitute names of the direct method.

- The procedures and main principles of the direct method typically involve:
- The use of the foreign language as a medium of instruction. Translation is totally avoided.
- Learning of a foreign language is similar to that of first language **ACQUISITION**. Imitation and an artificial language environment are needed in the classroom.
- Language teaching is focused on the sentence level with vocabulary of daily routine, oral communication and **GRAMMAR** learnt by induction.
- Oral communication **SKILLS** are built up in a carefully graded progression. They are organised around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small but intensive classes.
- New language points are to be introduced orally. Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration of objects and pictures; abstract vocabulary is taught through association of ideas and concepts.
- Both listening comprehension and **SPEAKING** ability are encouraged. And correct **PRONUNCIATION** and inductively acquired grammatical knowledge are insisted upon.

The teaching method adopted has the following axioms (Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 9–10):

- Never translate: demonstrate
- Never explain: act
- Never make a speech: ask questions
- Never imitate mistakes: correct them
- Never speak with single words: use sentences

- Never speak too much: make students speak much
- Never use the book: use your lesson plan
- Never go too fast: keep the pace of the students
- Never speak slowly: speak normally
- Never speak too quickly: speak naturally
- Never speak too loudly: speak naturally
- Never be impatient: take it easy

The name of the direct method came from one of the official documentary papers issued by the Ministry of Education of the French government in 1901. However, before the name was put forward, by the end of the nineteenth century educationists had shared a common belief that pupils learn a language by listening to it and also by speaking it. According to those beliefs, a child could acquire the foreign language in the same way as they learned their first language. Scholars (mostly French and German scholars at the first stage) believed that the learning of a foreign language was similar to that of first language acquisition. Direct association of foreign words by connecting them with the concepts of the outside world was emphasised in the method. The writings of **SWEET**, **Viétor** and **Passy**, among several other reformists, explained how linguistic principles could be put into practice at the time of teaching a foreign language in a classroom situation. It was said that the impetus to the direct method can be partly attributed to practical unconventional teaching reformers who responded to the need for better language learning in a new world of industry and international trade and travel, such as **Berlitz** and **GOUIN** (Stern, 1984: 457). As a result, various 'oral' and 'natural' methods developed in this sense. All these methods advocated the learning of a foreign language by the direct association of foreign words and phrases by avoiding the native language.

In the following years, the influence of the direct method on theory and practice was deep-rooted and widespread. The method was first introduced in **FRANCE** and Germany by its supporters and later was recognised officially by the Governments of Germany, France and Belgium (1900–02). An international congress of modern language teachers was held in 1898 in Vienna and decided that the direct method should be used in all elementary teaching of foreign languages. **Hennessy**, **Sauveur** and **Berlitz**

introduced the direct method in the United States where it was well received (Hawkins, 1987: 130). In Great Britain, a compromise policy, i.e. to adopt the direct method's emphasis on the spoken language and some other techniques, was recommended in the inter-war years (Stern, 1984: 457).

There are several criticisms of the direct method:

- 1 It is argued that, because of the absence of translation, the method makes it very hard to convey the semantics or to teach grammar. But this drawback is equally refuted by some scholars (Howatt, 1984) who state that semantics can be conveyed by gestures and objects. Similarly, progressing from the simple to the difficult, grammatical patterns can be built up in accordance with the learner's development.
- 2 It is argued that the direct method can be practised only in a classroom where the number of students is limited, because certain activities involved in the method are unlikely to be applicable to larger groups of learners. However, it is to be noted that the activity and its application to the learner group does not depend on the number of students in the group but the creative nature of the teacher who can divide the class and make it possible to engage all students.
- 3 The main drawback would be that for most of the time it is difficult to find a **NATIVE SPEAKER** to teach the foreign language. However, it can be argued that a language teacher who imparts foreign language instruction in a classroom should be able to imitate the native speaker as far as possible.

Other criticisms involved were as follows:

- 1 It was hard to believe that the learning conditions of the native language could be re-created in the foreign language classroom.
- 2 The method was only suitable for teaching younger pupils rather than **ADULTS**.
- 3 The method was too much dependent on the qualification of the teacher rather than on a **TEXTBOOK**.
- 4 It could not go beyond the intermediate level into academic study.

Whatever the criticisms, the direct method remained the biggest force for reform and progress and the dominant widespread method in the history of foreign language teaching during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, after the grammar-translation method. Its emphasis on the use of the foreign language as the medium of instruction, and on oral and **LISTENING** communicative skills, and the use of simple words and associations to explain difficult concepts challenged the more traditional grammar-translation method to undergo some changes. It also had great impact on the later **AUDIOLINGUAL** and **AUDIO-VISUAL LANGUAGE TEACHING** methods. It is still possible to find some of its traces in today's foreign language teaching methods.

See also: Bilingual method; History: the nineteenth century; Jespersen; Monolingual principle; Teaching methods; Translation theory

References

- Hawkins, E.W. (1987) *Modern languages in the curriculum*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Howatt, A.P.R. (1984) *A history of English languages teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, S.T. (eds) (1986) *Approaches and methods in language teaching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stern, H.H. (1984) *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Further reading

- Jespersen, O. (1961) *How to teach a foreign language*, London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Palmer, H.E. (1929) *The oral method of teaching languages*, London: Harrap.
- Richards, I.A. and Gibson, C. (eds) (1974) *Techniques in language control*, Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Rivers, W.M. (1964) *The psychologist and the foreign language teacher*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sweet, H. (1964) *The practical study of languages: a guide for teachers and learners*, London: Oxford University Press (originally published in 1899).

West, M. (1962) *Teaching English in difficult circumstances*, London: Longman.

YU WEIHA

Direct/Indirect testing

Direct testing involves using tasks that are a direct reflection of the skill being tested. The **SPEAKING** and **WRITING** sections of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are good examples of direct test tasks, for they include simulated interviews, role plays, discussions of plans and aspirations, report writing and essay writing.

It is argued, however, that it is only possible to have direct tasks for speaking and writing, for these are productive **SKILLS**. The two receptive skills, **LISTENING** and **READING**, on the other hand, are not directly observable, so any measure of these two skills is necessarily indirect, i.e. it is an inference about the skill based on some observable behaviour.

Typical indirect tests generally contain more artificial tasks that are, at best, tenuously related to the skill they purport to measure. They are most popular in contexts where large numbers are being tested, e.g. dialogue completion as a measure of speaking in contexts where the candidature is too large to allow for face-to-face speaking tests. One example of an indirect test task is one of the tasks in the Test of English for Educational Purposes (TEEP), where students are given a text which contains a number of errors of **GRAMMAR**, spelling and punctuation with instructions to identify and correct all the errors.

Arguably this is a defensible test task, as it reflects a process that most writers in educational institutions have to go through when constructing their own texts. However, the task makes a number of unjustifiable assumptions. For instance, it is unclear whether students are as capable of identifying their own errors as they are of correcting others. Additionally, the task does not necessarily reflect the way people actually write. Finally, it is not clear how the resulting score can be interpreted, since this involves making an infer-