

Tikrit University / College of Education for Women

English Department

Methods of Language Teaching / 3rd. class

Instructor Afraa' Husam Sami

Lecture 2.

The Direct Method

Introduction

As with the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method is not new. Its principles have been applied by language teachers for many years. Most recently, it was revived as a method when the goal of instruction became learning how to use another language to communicate. Since the Grammar- Translation Method not very effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively. The Direct Method became popular.

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.

Objectives of the Direct Method

Teachers who use the Direct Method intend that student learn how to communicate in the target language. In order to do this successfully, students should learn to think in the target language.

Features of the Direct Method

- 1) No L1 is used in the classroom.
- 2) Vocabulary and sentences taught are of ordinary forms which are used daily. Concrete vocabularies are taught through pictures and real objects, but abstract ones are presented via association of idea.

- 3) Oral communication skills are built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
- 4) Grammar is taught inductively.
- 5) Correct pronunciation and grammar are emphasized.
- 6) The demonstration is preferred for explanation and translation. Meaning should be taught in the first instance by demonstration to establish the meaning and then be defined and used in context to encourage thinking in the target language.
- 7) Every teaching point is introduced orally first and only after it is orally mastered, reading and writing will be dealt with.
- 8) Conversation taught through imitation and practice. For this reason, either native or native-like teachers should be employed by these schools
- 9) Pronunciation receives primary attention-focus on the form. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.
- 10) Immediate correction is suggested: self-correction is preferred to teachers' correction.
- 11) Its syllabus is topical, not structural.
- 12) Culture is part of the language, so the two should be taught together. In fact, learning a language should be like visiting the country where it is spoken, only more effective because "the language has been methodically and systematically arranged".
- 13) Due to its emphasis on naturalness, DM doesn't allow students to prepare homework in advance.

Techniques of the Direct Method

- 1) Reading Aloud: students take turns reading a section of the passage, play, or dialogue out loud. At the end of each student's turn, the teacher uses gestures, pictures, regalia, examples, or other means to make the meaning of the section clear.
- 2) Question and Answer Exercise: this exercise is conducted only in the target language. Students are asked questions and answer in full sentence so that they practice new words and grammatical structures. They have the opportunity to ask questions as well as answer them.
- 3) Student Self-Correction: the teacher of this class has the students self-correct by asking them to make a choice between what they said and an alternative answer he supplied. There are, however, other ways of getting students to self-correct. Another possibility is for the teacher to repeat what the student said, stopping just before the errors. The student then knows that the next word was wrong.

4) Conversation Practice: the teacher asks students a number of questions in the target language, which the students have to understand to be able to answer correctly. The questions contained a particular grammar structure. Later, the students were able to ask each other their own questions using the same grammatical structure.

5) Fill-in-the-blank Exercise: all the items are in the target language; furthermore, no explicit grammar rule would be applied. The students would have induced the grammar rule they need to fill in the blanks from examples and practice with earlier parts of the lesson.

6) Dictation: the teacher reads the passage three times. The first time the teacher reads it at normal speed, while the students just listen. The second time he reads the passage phrase by phrase, pausing long enough to allow students to write down what they have heard. The last time the teacher again reads at a normal speed, and students check their work.

7) Paragraph Writing: the teacher in this class asked the students to write a paragraph in their own words on the major geographical features of the United States. They could have done this from memory, or they could have used the reading passage in the lesson as a model.

8) Map drawing: The class included one example of a technique used to give students listening to comprehensive practice. The students were given a map with the geographical features unnamed. Then the teacher gave the students directions.

Advantages

1. Student of DM develop fluency in spoken English and can use this knowledge in communication in L2.
2. Understanding L2 takes place through L2. So there is no need for translation and hence no division between active and passive vocabularies.
3. Its outcome or the ability to communicate in the target language is very attractive to those who need to learn a language other than their mother tongue.
4. Its use of realia for teaching vocabulary is a natural way of changing perception into the conception

Disadvantages

1. Not all age groups and not all educational contexts benefited equally from DM. It was more useful for adult language learners in a private language school.

2. Its overemphasis on the similarities between L1 acquisition and L2 learning disregard the fact that the condition under which a child acquires his mother tongue is totally different from the condition in which adult learners a second language. In fact, the care time and opportunities available in these two contexts cannot be compared at all.
3. DM is not as structured as a method. That is, its materials are not probably graded and sequenced. So, at times it is very confusing for learners who are bombarded with examples of living language.
4. Not all teachers are able to teach in this method. DM teachers have to have native-like competence, creativity, time, devotion, energy and imagination to design their own courses.
5. Its rejection of translation makes this method very time and energy consuming. At times when it is difficult to convey meaning through realia, explanation in L2 can be a great asset in the hands of the teacher.
6. It doesn't build upon the reading skills the learners have already developed in their L1 and instead passes all the responsibilities on to the teachers. So success in DM becomes too much dependent on teachers' skill rather than on methodology itself.