

BLOCK 3.

Back to the past (2).

The 19th century: The century of “methods”

Sub-block 3.2.

The Natural Approach from the 19th century

Unit 3.2.4. The Direct Method (DM)

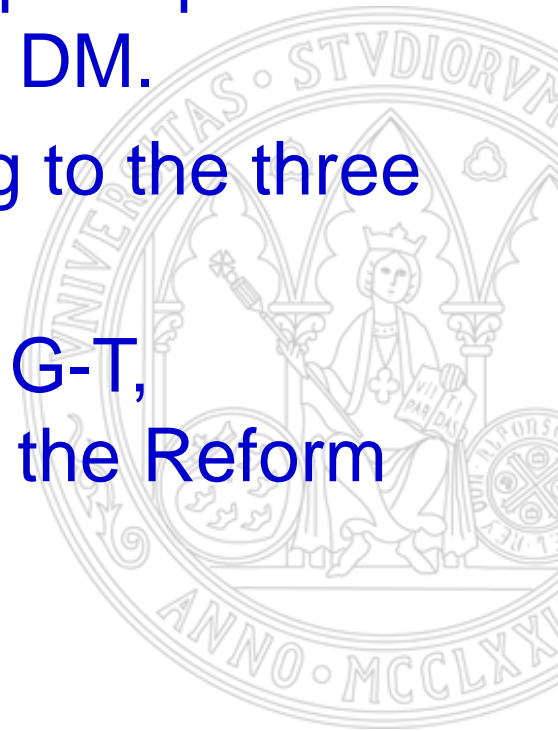
Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Goals of the DM
3. Historical background of the DM
 - 3.1. Predecessors and origins of the DM
 - 3.2. The Berlitz Method
4. Analysis of the components of the DM
5. Critical assessment of the DM



1. Objectives of this unit

1. Know the origin of the DM and its influence on language teaching.
2. Know the theoretical and practical principles together with the techniques of the DM.
3. Critically analyse the DM according to the three components of method.
4. Critically compare the DM with the G-T, Ollendorff's "practical method" and the Reform Movement.



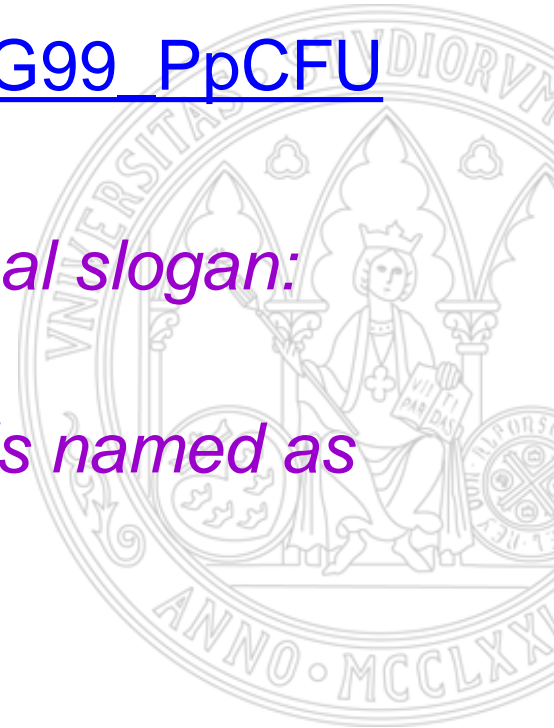
2. Goal of the DM



Watch the following advertisement about the Berlitz Method (which became to be equated with the DM). Answer the questions:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNG99_PpCFU

- a) What do you think is meant by the final slogan: “Understand your world”?*
- b) Why do you think the Direct Method is named as such?*



2. Goal of the DM



Now watch the following video where a teacher teaches English to two Japanese children using the DM. Answer the following questions:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiQvG-fvzLM>

- a) *Can you spot any distinctive features of this method?*
- b) *Can you guess what the goal of this method is?*



2. Goal of the DM

Learn to think in the target language so that students can learn to speak in that language.



3. Historical background of the DM

3.1. Predecessors and origins of the DM



Do you remember the historical factors that contributed to the development of the Natural Approach in the 19th century?

Parallel to the ideas put forward by members of the Reform Movement was an interest in developing principles for language teaching out of naturalistic principles of language learning, such as seen in first language acquisition. This led to what have been termed natural methods and ultimately led to the development of what came to be known as the Direct Method.

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 11)

Let us study now the predecessors and origins of the DM, “the most widely known of the natural methods” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 11).

3. Historical background of the DM

3.1. Predecessors and origins of the DM

- 1) **Comenius** (17th century). Object-based teaching.
- 2) **Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi** (1746-1827). Retook object-based lessons, which are similar to L1 learning.

Pestalozzi (1898/1915). *How Gertrude teaches her children; an attempt to help mothers to teach their own children and an account of the method*, by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi; translated by Lucy E. Holland and Francis C. Turner, and edited with introduction and notes by Ebenezer Cooke. London, G. Allen & Unwin Ltd.; Syracuse, N.Y., C. W. Bardeen

- ✓ “There are and can be no two good methods of instruction in this respect. There is but one -and this is the one that rests entirely upon the eternal laws of Nature” (Pestalozzi, 1898/1915: 156)
- ✓ Example of object-based teaching: A cup (in Howatt, 2004: 217):
“What is it made of?; ‘How big is it?; ‘What can it be used for?; ‘What colour is it?; ‘Are all cups alike?’, etc.”

3. Historical background of the DM

3.1. Predecessors and origins of the DM

3) Gottlieb Heness

- ✓ A student of Pestalozzi's.
- ✓ German immigrant in the USA who taught German to children. He hired Sauveur's services for the teaching of French.

4) Lambert Sauveur (1826-1907)

- ✓ A genial, very motivating teacher.
- ✓ Used intensive oral interaction in the target language, employing questions as a way of presenting and eliciting language
- ✓ Works:
 - *An Introduction to the Teaching of Living Languages without Grammar or Dictionary* (1874a). A teacher's guide to his "coursebook"
 - *Causeries avec mes élèves* (1874b)

3. Historical background of the DM

3.1. Predecessors and origins of the DM

4) Lambert Sauveur (1826-1907)

- ✓ From the *Causeries* (Sauveur, 1874b: 10. In Howatt, 2004: 219)

Here is the finger. Look. Here is the forefinger, here is the middle finger, here is the ring-finger, here is the little finger, and here is the thumb. Do you see the finger, madame? Yes, you see the finger and I see the finger. Do you see the finger, monsieur?-Yes, I see the finger.- Do you see the forefinger, madame?-Yes, I see the forefinger.-And you, monsieur? Etc.

- ✓ Sauveur's techniques (Howatt, 2004; Sánchez, 2009)

“Earnest questions” (genuinely looking for an answer) and coherence.

a) *Is it grammatical or communicative coherence?*

b) *Which author does Sauveur's textbook fragment remind you of?*

Can you see any similarities and differences between the two authors regarding this interaction parameter?



3. Historical background of the DM

3.1. Predecessors and origins of the DM

5) F. Franke

✓ German scholar.

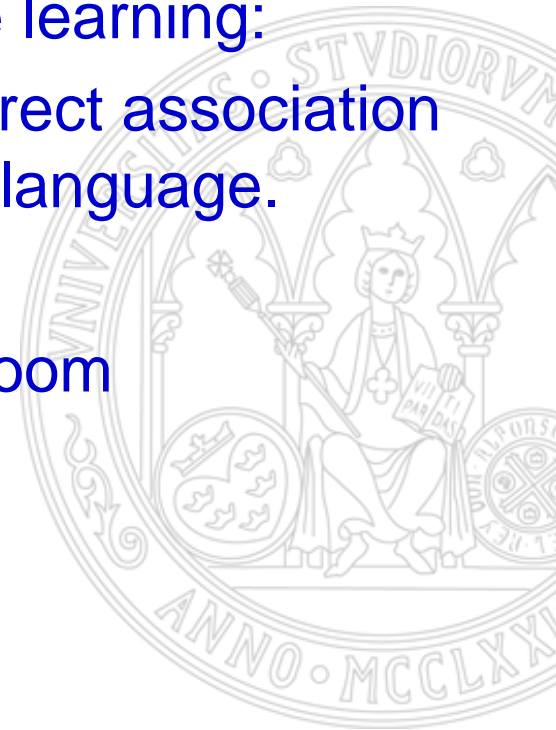
✓ 1884. Associationism applied to language learning:

Psychological principles underpinning the direct association between forms and meanings in the foreign language.



Rejection of L1 in the FL classroom

Object-based teaching



3. Historical background of the DM

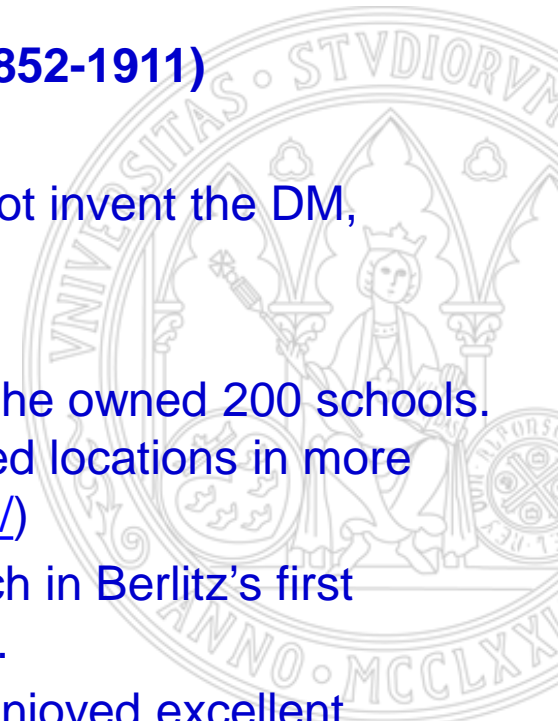
3.2. The Berlitz Method

- ✓ Sauveur's method became referred to as the "Natural Method", from which Berlitz Method evolved.
- ✓ Very difficult to implement in classrooms. Need to make the natural method available to customers at large scale.



The German Maximilian Delphinus Berlitz (1852-1911)

- ✓ Founder of the Berlitz Schools (not of the DM!).
- ✓ DM and "Berlitz method" are usually equated. Berlitz did not invent the DM, though, and never mentioned this name in his works.
- ✓ Extremely famous.
- ✓ Opened his first school in Rhode Island, in 1898. By 1914 he owned 200 schools. Nowadays: "More than 550 company-owned and franchised locations in more than 70 countries" (<http://www.berlitz.com/About-Berlitz/28/>)
- ✓ Origin of Berlitz's method: Nicholas Joly, who taught French in Berlitz's first school without any recourse to English. Immense success.
- ✓ Berlitz was not an academic methodologist; however, he enjoyed excellent systematizing qualities which he applied to the DM.



3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

Preface to 1914 edition of the *Berlitz Method for Teaching Modern Languages, English Part, First Book* (p. 3):

The Berlitz Method is the systematized application of the psychological process which enables a child to learn its mother tongue; it is adapted, however, to the different stages of mental maturity reached by a youth or adult.

Preface to 1931 edition of the *Berlitz Method for Teaching Modern Languages. English Part. First Book*. (439th ed.). London: Berlitz School (p. 1):

Instruction by the Berlitz method is to the student what the sojourn in a foreign land is to a traveller. He hears and speaks only the language he wishes to learn, as if he were in a foreign country. He has, however, the advantage that the language has been methodologically and systematically arranged for him.

3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

- ✓ Berlitz's textbooks followed the same basic course patterns and directions to the teacher.
- ✓ Two distinct parts in each textbook:
 - a) Dialogues
 - b) Reading

Example: 1931 edition of the *Berlitz Method for Teaching Modern Languages. English Part. First Book.* (439th ed.).

First part: “Preparatory Lessons” or “Object Teaching”

Second part: “Elementary Reading and Conversation” or “Teaching through Context”.

So what is Berlitz's favoured order of skills? Why do you think that the textbook was relegated from the early stages of learning?



3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

All new words and expressions should be written on the blackboard but only after they have been practiced a little. The student must at first learn through the ear, in order to acquire a good pronunciation.

*(Berlitz, M. D. (1892: 7). **Berlitz Method for Teaching Modern Languages. English Part. First Book.** Revised American Edition. New York: Berlitz and Co.)*

3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

✓ **Guidelines for teaching oral language**, which are still used in contemporary Berlitz schools:

- *Never translate: demonstrate*
- *Never explain: act*
- *Never make a speech: ask questions*
- *Never imitate mistakes: correct*
- *Never speak with single words: use sentences*
- *Never speak too much: make the students speak too much*
- *Never use the book: use your lesson plan*
- *Never jump around: follow your plan*
- *Never go too fast: keep the pace of the student*
- *Never speak too slowly: speak normally*
- *Never speak too quickly: speak naturally*
- *Never speak too loudly: speak naturally*
- *Never be impatient: take it easy*

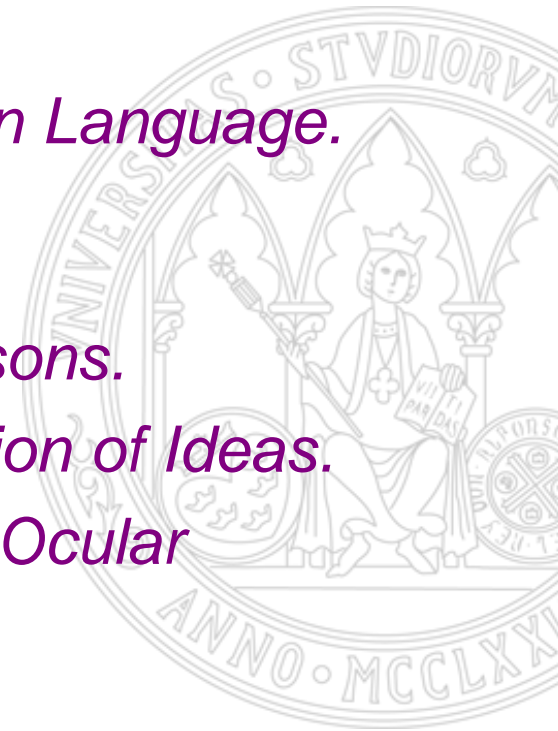
(Titone, 1968: 100-101)

3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

- ✓ **Fundamental principles of the Berlitz Method** (Berlitz, 1931: 1):
 - *Direct association of Perception and Thought with the Foreign Speech and Sound.*
 - *Constant and exclusive use of the Foreign Language.*

- ✓ **Pedagogical means** (Berlitz, 1931: 1):
 - *Teaching of the Concrete by Object Lessons.*
 - *Teaching of the Abstract by the Association of Ideas.*
 - *Teaching of Grammar by Examples and Ocular Demonstration.*



3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

✓ Several observations about Berlitz's principles and pedagogical means:

a) Berlitz's reasons for his rejection of translation (1931: 1-2, also in 1914):

In all translation-methods, most of the time is taken up by explanations in the student's mother tongue, while but few words are spoken in the language to be learned. It is evident that such a procedure is contrary to common sense.

He who is studying a foreign language by means of translation, neither gets hold of its spirit nor becomes accustomed to think in it; on the contrary, he has a tendency to base all he says upon what he would say in his mother tongue [...] thereby rendering the latter unintelligible or, at least, incorrect.

A knowledge of a foreign tongue, acquired by means of translation, is necessarily defective and incomplete; for there is no means for every word of the one language, the exact equivalent in the other. Every language has its peculiarities, its idiomatic expressions and terms [...] which cannot possibly be rendered by translation.

Furthermore, the ideas conveyed by an expression in one language are frequently not the same as those conveyed by the same words in the other.

These undeniable facts suffice to show clearly that all translation-methods are deficient, and prove that every language must be learned out of itself .

3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

- Criticisms of the “traditionalists” against the banning of the L1 in the DM:

I have it from a very trustworthy authority that in some New England town a teacher of the ‘Natural Method’ gambols around the room to express the idea to run. If this be the general case, school committees will no longer be called upon to deliver certificates of proficiency to teachers of Languages: This duty will devolve on P. T. Barnum.

(Levy, 1878. In Kelly, 1969: 11).

3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method

b) What happens with vocabulary that cannot be taught by means of *realia*?

What cannot be taught by means of object lessons is elucidated by being placed in proper context; i.e., the new words are used among previously learned expressions in such a manner that the meaning of the new becomes perfectly clear from its connection with what precedes and follows; this is in accordance with the established mathematical principle of finding the value of the unknown X through its relation with the known quantities A and B. In the more advanced lessons, new words may frequently be explained by simple definitions containing the vocabulary previously acquired.

(Berlitz, M. D. (1931: 5). *Berlitz Method for Teaching Modern Languages. English Part. First Book.* (439th ed.). London: Berlitz School)

3. Historical background

3.2. The Berlitz Method

- ✓ **Summary of Berlitz's techniques** (Celce-Murcia, 2001: 6; Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 12; Sánchez, 2009: 53):
 1. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught.
 2. Oral communication skills are built up in a carefully graded progression organised around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
 3. New teaching points are introduced orally.
 4. Both speech and listening comprehension are taught.
 5. Correct pronunciation and grammar are emphasised.
 6. Lessons begin with dialogues and anecdotes in modern conversational style.
 7. Literary texts are read for pleasure, and are not analysed grammatically.
 8. Concrete vocabulary is taught by means of *realia*, demonstration and pictures.
 9. Grammar is taught inductively.
 10. Rejection of grammatical explanations, at least until a minimum degree of language command has been achieved.
 11. The target culture is also taught inductively.

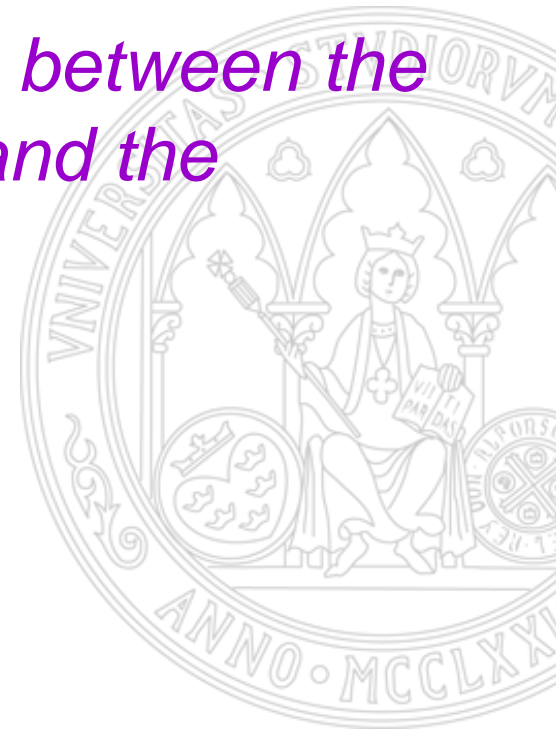


3. Historical background of the DM

3.2. The Berlitz Method



Can you spot the main differences between the DM / Berlitz Method with the G-T and the Reform Movement?



4. Analysis of the components of the DM

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

□ Theory of language (nature of language, including approach to culture)

- Apparently a theory of language as such does not exist. It is taken for granted that language is a means of communication, firstly at an oral level and secondly at a written level.
- Daily-life culture of the L2 plus history and geography of L2 country(ies)

□ Theory of learning (learning principles)

L2 learning = L1 learning: inductive learning through practice. Unconscious process.

4. Analysis of the components of the DM

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

- Theory of teaching (pedagogical principles)
 - Inductive learning: through practice and interaction between teacher and students
 - Objects, pictures, *realia*, mime, gestures to convey the meaning of words
 - Abstract concepts are to be taught by associating them to the concrete objects
 - Formal accuracy is emphasised
 - Translation is forbidden, though some Direct Methodologists show a more relaxed attitude:

As any hint of exaggeration must be avoided, I must add that it would not be good to reject, absolutely and systematically, all recourse to the mother tongue. In exceptional circumstances it could happen that one might be in too much of a hurry to use gestures and explanations in the foreign language.

(Passy, 1899: 16. In Kelly, 1969: 25)

- Occasional grammatical explanations after minimum command of oral language is achieved
- Teacher is the authority in the classroom

4. Analysis of the components of the DM

Axis 2. The What. The What. Objectives of teaching. Syllabus specifications

- ❑ Model of language: not literary or cultivated, but daily oral communication (useful sentences for communicative purposes, not driven by grammar rules)
- ❑ Emphasised language areas: vocabulary from everyday life and pronunciation; useful sentences
- ❑ Emphasised skills: oral (listening and speaking)

4. Analysis of the components of the DM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

Activities:

- Use of objects, drawings or gestures to transmit the meaning of words and phrases.
- Use of demonstration techniques to convey what is to be taught, with no formal explanation.
- Use of the question-and-answer technique as a fundamental tool in teaching. Interactive practice.
- Sporadic recourse to dictation and reading which will underpin the comprehension of the learning content.

Roles of teacher (including feedback issues).

Traditional. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. Error correction is compulsory and immediate, performed during interaction by the teacher supplying other sentences, vocabulary and correct pronunciation.

4. Analysis of the components of the DM

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

Roles of students

Passive as interaction takes place via the communicative stimuli provided by their teacher. Constant participation in the classroom.

Roles of instructional materials

Secondary. Only as reference guides. Teacher replaces written materials in early stages of learning.



5. Critical assessment of the DM



Can you think of any advantages and disadvantages of the DM?



5. Critical assessment of the DM

□ Positive aspects:

1. Berlitz catered for the basic communicative needs of the new learner in the 19th and 20th century, immersed in international trade and travel. Nowadays it caters for the same profile of learner.

2. The DM was

*a first attempt to make the language learning situation one of language **use** and to train the learner to abandon the first language as a frame of reference.*

(Stern, 1983: 439. Emphasis in the original)

3. It could be considered a predecessor of present-day immersion techniques (Stern, 1983).

5. Critical assessment of the DM

❑ Negative aspects:

1. “The product of enlightened amateurism” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 13).
2. “It overemphasized and distorted the similarities between naturalistic first language learning and classroom foreign language learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 12).
3. Irrational detachment from translation and the use of the L1 in class. Remember Kelly’s (1969: 11) quotation citing Levy (1878).
4. “It lacked a rigorous basis on applied linguistic theory, and for this reason it was often criticized by the more academically based proponents of the Reform Movement” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 13).
5. Teachers had to be native speakers or near-native speakers. Extreme effort on their part (‘online’ use of spontaneous question and answer, eliciting answers from students, etc.). Very skilled, creative, motivated and motivating teachers.
6. Initial chaos caused by unsystematic and rigid application and enthusiastic young but unprepared teachers.
7. How to apply the DM beyond elementary stages of language learning? (Stern, 1983)

5. Critical assessment of the DM

□ Influence of the DM on FLT

The Direct Method can be regarded as the first language teaching method to have caught the attention of teachers and language teaching specialists, and it offered a methodology that appeared to move language teaching into a new era. It marked the beginning of the ‘methods era’.

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 12)