

Critical reflection essay

Business, Management



As an Italian native speaker I find it quite simple and easy to understand, listen and read the Spanish language, in fact the connections and similarities between Italian and Spanish are numerous. I am able to understand quickly and immediately the meaning of the texts I read and what I listen to, I find it easy to identify words and structures. My speaking skill is good I can effectively speak Spanish with a good accent and I am fluent.

Having lived in Spain for some months and living with native Spanish speakers and bilinguals, I had in the past and I currently have the good opportunity to practice spoken Spanish every day. This is a great experience that helps to keep my spoken Spanish up to date, on the other hand I need to pay more attention and spend time practicing my written skills. Even if I practice the language almost every day, it has been quite a long time since I lived in Spain studying and practicing the language in the country for an extended period of time, for this reason I have to brush up on my vocabulary and writing. I want to practice deeper my spelling skills, amplify and extend my knowledge of the vocabulary as well as refreshing and exercising my grammar and my writing skills. I feel confident about teaching Spanish in Secondary School; I know that with effective lesson plans prepared in advance I will be able to teach the language successfully.

I'm currently training in a Secondary School where I can practice Spanish a lot, working in a department with highly skilled professional teachers. LA – French I started studying and learning French last August during the enhancement course provided by the Faculty of Education at Edge Hill University. The course was effective and provided me with structures, vocabulary and grammar I need to teach at KS. Despite the high quality

enhancement course attended, I need to boost my French ND I am aware of the fact that I would need to practice it more often. I need to work and improve my listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. At the moment I am able to listen, read, speak and write in French in a limited way, but I am able to employ some vocabulary and grammatical structures effectively in order to express certain topics such as holidays, family, myself, in a spoken and written way. I find it easy to understand, learn and remember words and structures in French, as I can speak and write in Italian and Spanish. The relationships and similarities that exist among neo-Latin languages will be deeply useful to help me improve and develop my French skills.

I know I will be able to teach French successfully at KS (starting from Year 7) if I organise the lesson in advance (as I did for the French presentation at the end of the enhancement course in August). ALL – Evidence of professional development through meetings with placement-based colleagues (142 words). Evidence of Professional Development The Curriculum and Professional Mentors meeting I had in my placement at the Secondary School during the last few weeks, provided a lot of information about the school. Through these meetings I have developed awareness of Child Protection Policy, Anti Bullying Policies, Safeguarding Policy and Internet Security rules to protect pupils from inadequate and distracting web contents while they are at school. Sharing my teacher training with highly experienced staff is really useful and it will positively affect my professional development. I know that I still have a lot to learn about teaching in Secondary Schools and about the English Educational System, this is why I find it really effective having such professional and skilful colleagues I can

learn from. I'm learning new pedagogical approaches and techniques to deliver successfully lessons at different levels, as well as improving my skills in behavioral management.

ALL – An assignment demonstrating a critical understanding of Pedagogy in Modern Languages teaching and learning (2698 words). Critical Understanding of Pedagogy in Modern Foreign languages teaching and learning. The focus of this assignment is to consider and investigate the use and effectiveness of the Direct Method in Modern Languages teaching and learning. This assignment will analyse the Direct Method, its strengths and weaknesses, arguing that despite its popularity throughout the years and its proven effectiveness, the exclusive use of this method is inadequate in meeting the goals of academic achievement. This assignment will show that the Direct Method is proven to be useful in certain language teaching fields and sectors such as private Language Schools, but it has been proven it does not offer an approach that integrates the skills bilingual students need to succeed to fulfill academic needs and targets. The reason why I have chosen to focus and develop the assignment around this topic is my professional experience as a Language Teacher.

Having worked for 3 years using almost exclusively the Direct Method, I feel confident about the knowledge and understanding I have achieved by teaching using this method. I also feel motivated and confident enough to review my teaching experiences through a critical analysis discussing the content of this assignment. Numerous methods for teaching Second Languages have been developed and delivered over the years. Most of the

methods employed over the last years such as the Grammar -Translation Method and the Direct Method have been created or influenced by different schools of thought, as a result is a melting pot of many theologies and pedagogical approaches based on different assumption and goals. Through my research I will explore this specific pedagogical theory known as the Direct Method, largely employed in Modern Languages teaching and learning, evaluating it in light of my professional experience as a language teacher and in light of other language learning theories.

In order to explore this argument this essay will closely examine the views and researches of Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers developed in the book *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (1986), edited by Cambridge University Press.

This essay will also refer to the analysis and synthesis of a wide range of current theories and research regarding different approaches in Foreign Languages teaching and learning developed by James D. Williams and Graces Capsize Snippier in *Literacy and Bilingualism* (1990). Other theories and texts will be considered in order to consolidate the argument and views expressed in this assignment as well as my personal teaching experience. This essay will first focus on Language teaching and learning scenario before the XX Century, before teachers started to approach new natural teaching strategies such as the Direct Method. According to Richards and Rogers (1986: 7, 8, 9) the Direct Method derives directly from those ideas and theories developed at the beginning of the XX Century by several language

teaching specialists as an alternative to the traditional Grammar – Translation Method.

At that time teachers were starting to experiment with teaching and educational models as previous techniques were failing to improve spoken communication. Increasing opportunities for communications among Europeans created a demand for oral proficiency in foreign languages (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 5). New approaches and methods for Modern Foreign Languages teaching were needed. The traditional Grammar-Translation Method derived from the classical method of teaching dead languages such as Latin and Greek could no longer fulfill the needs of language learners at the end of the XIX Century. The Grammar-Translation Method dominated European and foreign language teaching from the sass to the sass and in modified form it continues to be widely used in some parts of the world today (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 4). Students learn grammatical rules and then apply them in sentences between the target language and their native language. The teeth includes word for word translation of texts, grammar is taught deductively and practiced through translation exercises. Richards and Rogers (1986) perfectly express the sense and meaning of this old fashioned teaching method: “ language learning meant a tedious experience of memorizing endless lists of unusual grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose.

I personally experienced the meaning of this sentence, as I have studied Latin for five years with the Grammar-Translation Method. I currently have

no memories of the language I have studied with this method, I found the whole learning experience hard, boring, tedious and deeply ineffective. In the late nineteenth century opposition to the Grammar-Translation Method gradually developed giving birth to a Reform Movement. Important linguists, such as the French L. Savvier and the French Gouging, turned their attention to naturalistic principles of language learning. These language learning principles provided the foundation for what came to be known as the Direct Method. It was first introduced in France and Germany and therefore in the United States through its use by Macmillan Burlier in commercial languages schools.

I will start my reflections around the Direct Method developing the discussion according to my professional experience. Between 2007 and 2010 I was teaching English as a foreign language in a private language school in Switzerland exclusively employing the pedagogical language teaching strategy known as the Direct Method. As a teacher I have been trained and required to use only the Direct Method during my lessons, working with groups starting from 2 up to 10 people, in a variety of settings with different age ranges.

The Direct Method does not allow any translations, students are expected to understand the meaning of what is said directly from the language they are learning. The aim of this pedagogical method is a wide use of the target language (TTL) focusing in deep on the speaking. Students are expected to communicate a lot in the TTL and great importance is given to vocabulary development, conversation and pronunciation. The theoretical background

behind the Direct Method is built around observation of child language learning.

According to this pedagogical approach there is a focus in using a method for language teaching and learning out of naturalistic principles such as the ones involved in the first language acquisition. The basic idea behind the teaching method I have been using for three years is that children learn their native language according to the following steps: 1- Listening 2- Repeating 3- Speaking 4- Reading 5- Writing The language lessons following this principle were delivered in relation to these five steps. Other characteristic features of the Direct Method include: ; Teaching vocabulary through pantomiming, flashcards, games and other visuals ; Teaching grammar through an inductive approach ; Focusing on question- answer patterns ; Centrality of the spoken language The Direct Method is also widely known as the Natural Method.

Considering the word natural, speaking and listening would certainly qualify as natural activities more than reading and writing. All people have naturally acquired speaking and listening skills, while reading and writing have to be taught. Transmit meaning through body language, is also, a naturally occurring communicative feature. Grammar rules can also be learnt inductively through exposure to language, this is also a naturally occurring phenomenon for native learners, and all languages have some form of question-answer pattern as filling in information gaps is a primary use of language. It was a challenge learning how to correctly use the Direct Method to teach a foreign language which is not my native language. A further

challenge consisted in acquiring a complete new teaching and learning approach, coming from an educational background where mostly traditional teaching methods such as the Grammar- Translation Method were employed.

I soon realized that after having learnt and practiced the basic principles, concepts and techniques involved, I was able to deliver English lessons successfully using the Direct Method. The secret for an outstanding lesson is to create a lesson plan that reflects and correctly develops the theory of the method. Getting the students involved in dialogue, role-playing and language games is the fundamental feature and core of the lesson. The aim of each lesson is to encourage students to communicate with each other using the structures and vocabulary they have learnt and to improve the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

An exhaustive example of typical lesson delivered using the Direct Method is the first lesson of level 1 (the first English lesson for absolute beginners) presented in the English Course I used to teach. Even though effectiveness of the Direct Method has been doubted and criticized a lot, the results students achieve by the end of the lesson are incredibly outstanding. By the end of 90 minutes lesson most of the students are actually able to: Use greeting structures, ask name and respond. Hello! -What's your name? - My name is Gigolo - How do you do? - How do you do! Recognize and use first, second and third person singular and plural.

She, he it, you, they. Recognize and use several nationalities adjectives. Italian, Russian, English, Spanish, etc. Conjugate the verb to be according to different subjects. I am, You are, She is, He is, etc. Use in a complete

sentence the verb to be conjugated plus the adjectives in affirmative, interrogative and negative form. They are English.

- Are they English? They are not English. Give short negative and affirmative answers. Are you English? Yes I am / No I am not.

I used to start each lesson orally introducing the vocabulary and structures I wan students to learn, using flash cards, tools and pantomiming. In delivering the less according to the method's principles I present the vocabulary and structures exclusively in the target language, showing clearly with visual gesture and mimics ensure students understand what is taught. In this teaching context the role and ability of the teacher is essential, the teacher must be able to express structures introducing the element in the TTL not only saying clearly but also showing with b language. Being able to teach with the Direct Method means being able to act and pantomime effectively. Showing, miming and repeating is absolutely essential.

I start the lesson waving hands and saying aloud " Hello! " pointing the hand on m chest and repeating a few times the element: " My name is Claudia! " After that I a student: " And you? " This is an excellent way to start question-answer patterns involving all the student After having introduced a language element students repeat and try. At this point is very important to correct students promptly if necessary using repetition and a proper gesture to show how to articulate the sound. I experienced that an excess use of correction at this stage is counter-productive as it might stop the students from practicing various attempts of pronunciation. The use of small plastic international flags to introduce the verb to be is really effective. I give each student a flag and,

following the same pattern showing- petting-try, and they practice the adjective, first as a single element and after complete sentence. All students can say their nationality according to their flag. T start practicing and learning the adjective “ French” for example and learning how to match it with the verb: I am French.

An interesting technique I use to show the interrogative form of the element You hand gesture I mime the inversion of place between the verb and t and repeating the interrogative form: Are you French? An important feature is the peculiar use of the text book provided the beginning of each course students are given an empty file and envelopes containing each of the 15 lessons of the course. Student envelopes before starting the lesson, they are allowed to open it only the lesson, during the reading. This feature shows how the text bob secondary tool according to the Direct Method principles, the aim is getting information and knowledge from books, but through a anta similar to the native language assimilation. In a 90 minutes lesson t teacher is to let the students speak for about an hour. Only the final lesson is dedicated to the reading and it just covers the final 15 mi done only at home through homework exercises. As I mentioned in the previous paragraphs the Direct Method pres positive and effective aspects.

Stake Raman Trial (2008: 78) develop point explaining that the Direct Method facilitates the understands understanding of the language becomes easier, due to the inhibition – interference of the mother tongue. Learners can achieve in Just a fee use and knowledge of the Target Language, having learnt to use SP effectively to practice an everyday use of the language.

Good achieve seen not only in speaking and listening but also in reading and writ The main positive aspect of the Direct Method is that it properly De lunacy of speech and pronunciation in quite a short time compare methods focused more on grammar learning, writing and reading. Teaching one of my biggest aim was to establish a lively, positive an atmosphere in the classroom, I am deeply convinced that engaging natural approach in the classroom not only makes sense, but also communication that positively effects the learning. The Direct method teaches the language and not about the language on speech and the inductive teaching of grammar makes it attracts have needs of real communication in the target language. The met usefully employed with students of different abilities and with child tit adults.

One of my students aged 71 achieved very good results course practicing the course activities at the same pace of young SST In spite of its achievements, the direct method fell short from fulfill educational systems.

One of its major shortcomings is that it was hard for public schools to integrate it. As Brown (1994: 56) points out, the Direct Method: " did not take well in public education where the constraints of budget, classroom size, time, and teacher background made such a method difficult to use. "

The method was and is successful in private languages schools where paying clients eve high motivation and the use of native or bilingual teachers is the norm (Richard and Rogers 1984: 10).

The Direct Method failed to consider the practical realities of the classroom, requiring a skilful teacher it is largely dependent on the teacher's skill rather than text book and not all the teachers are experienced enough to perform a

good lesson following its principles. The method focuses exclusively on everyday vocabulary without fulfilling academic needs and targets. It also does not get deeper into a language learning that goes beyond everyday vocabulary and structures. Its reorient focus on the spoken aspect of the language failed to consider that also the writing needs attention and development in the classroom. This assignment has highlighted the main features of the Direct Method, pointing out its historical and social background as well as its practical aspects, advantages and disadvantages. As a conclusion it can be argued that the use of this method despite the numerous critics can actually be very successful.

The assignment showed how the effectiveness of this method can only be proven through specific educational paths developed by private language schools with specific educational targets. According to the discussion of this essay it can be argued that the following aspects have been proven to be successful.