

The Direct Method in Foreign Language Teaching in the Netherlands

Useful in Principle but Unachievable in Practice?



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Introduction

On many occasions during the first year of the Masters-program for education and communication the principle of 'doeltaal = voertaal' has been addressed during class. This principle basically stands for teaching the Target Language (hereafter TL) by use of the language itself in the classroom. The reason for this principle being addressed multiple times is its suitability for the language classroom. This is because it is thought that when language learners are orally exposed to the TL, they will acquire aspects of this language accordingly. Moreover, this acquisition would occur almost automatically, without focusing on any syntactical issues but purely being in a meaning-based setting.

Nevertheless, reflecting on the language teachers from my secondary school who used a great deal of the target language in class were the teachers who would spend a large amount of time supplying us (as pupils) with monologues in the target language which we did not understand or were not willing to understand, or both. That is why it seems so odd that using a great deal of the target language in class would almost automatically trigger language acquisition. However, theory behind second language learning and teaching shows a clearer view.

The theory behind the 'doeltaal = voertaal'-principle comes from the 'Direct Method'. This approach dates back to the end of the 19th century when it was still thought that learning a second language (hereafter L2) was basically the same as learning a first language (hereafter L1). As children acquired their mother tongue only by use of oral exposure to the language, it was hypothesized that adolescents or adults should also be able to acquire a second language in the same manner. In other words, the 'direct' aspect in the term Direct Method (hereafter DM) basically refers to the causal link between L2-input on the one hand and second language acquisition (hereafter SLA) on the other.

Throughout the 20th century however it became more and more clear that learning a L2 is wholly different from learning a L1 and therefore should be approached differently. Children seem to acquire their entire L1 within four to five years by only being exposed to the language. Adolescents or adults need much more time to acquire the L2, who in most cases eventually do not become a native speaker of the language. Furthermore, L2-learners seem to need *instruction* in aspects of the language to acquire it at a faster pace. In short, purely exposing learners to the L2 is hardly enough. Learners need to be aware of syntactical issues

of the language to make it less difficult to understand as well as learning its vocabulary. Therefore, in a classroom setting the teacher should modify his/her L2-input and check whether learners still understand this input.

This was exactly what went wrong with the teachers referred to above. A thirty minute (formal) monologue in the TL was already difficult enough to follow, especially if the teacher did not make it understandable in any way. Moreover, as the teacher did not check whether we understood what has been discussed, we did not make a true effort to understand.

However, before blaming all teachers for poor use of the TL in a classroom setting one has to give a closer look to the theory. Although teachers, SLA-researchers and theorists agree on the benefits of using the ‘doeltaal = voertaal’-principle, theory behind this principle as well as consistent theory behind the DM is difficult to come by and therefore remains mostly undetected. This might make it more understandable for teachers being reluctant in using the principle.

Unfortunately, the ‘Inspectie van het Onderwijs’ (Dutch educational inspection) have indicated that the use of the TL in language classes in secondary schools is unacceptably low. Dutch language-teachers are reported to use their mother language during class too much and are strongly advised to utilise the target language to its full potential. Considering the above-mentioned lack of research on the subject, it becomes understandable that most teachers remain reserved in using the target language, as they do not know what type of approach yields the best results. Is one simply to direct the pupil in the TL at all times or can the L1 still fulfil certain functions in the language classroom? Can one address the pupils in formal TL or does he/she have to ‘downgrade’ his/her language? If so, what can one do to modify the target language in order to achieve the greatest language improvement in pupils?

The aim of this thesis is to present SLA-research which is relevant to the DM and therefore, to the ‘doeltaal = voertaal’-principle as well as trying to discern what the advantages and disadvantages of this method are to language teaching. This may provide an answer to its practical failure in the Netherlands.

The thesis is divided into two chapters, of which Chapter 1 is dedicated to the theoretical background of the Direct Method from ESL-research and Chapter 2 to the practical application of this research to foreign language teaching. The conclusion incorporates the discussions of the two chapters as well as including suggestions why the DM seems to have failed in the Netherlands. This to answer the main statement of the thesis;

Although the benefits of using the Direct Method have been acknowledged theoretically, the method has failed practically in the Netherlands.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Background of the Direct Method from ESL-Teaching

Introduction:

A major flaw of the DM is the fact that its methodology has changed through decades and therefore makes it unclear of what components the method consists in, apart from the simple correlation that one completely relies on the TL for language teaching. For example, theory behind the DM has originated almost completely from teaching *English* as a *second* language, as theory on other languages as well as foreign language teaching is still rather slim. The ideas being brought forth hereafter are considered universal however, i.e. also pertaining to other languages apart from English and both second and foreign language teaching. However, this may not always be the case, as e.g. *second* language teaching is in most cultures different from *foreign* language teaching. This issue will be discussed more thoroughly in the conclusion.

One important underlying idea in the DM which importance has been emphasized throughout decades is the idea that learning a language is an innate ability and therefore exposure to a new language would automatically trigger a process in the learner leading to a grammatical system being made for this language. Therefore, a language learner would generally only need exposure to this language for language learning to take place. This approach has been referred to as the ‘nativist’ approach.

A nativist theory of second language acquisition (hereafter SLA) concerning language exposure which has had a great influence on language teaching was brought forth by Stephen Krashen in 1981. This theory is referred to as the ‘Monitor Model’. An important hypothesis of the Monitor Model is the ‘input hypothesis’, which has been derived from Krashen’s observations of caretaker speech, otherwise referred to as ‘motherese’¹.

¹ Motherese basically means the speech directed from adults towards children and is e.g. simplified and only referring to something which is happening at that particular moment.

Krashen's 'input hypothesis':

At the core of Krashen's input hypothesis lies the notion of 'intake'. Intake, Krashen argues, can be found in caretaker speech and can be described as "input that is *understood*" (102). Furthermore, this aspect of "comprehension may be at the heart of the language acquisition process". In other words, Krashen argues that in order for language acquisition to take place, one needs comprehensible input, or as he refers to it, 'intake' to start with.

The basic component of intake has become incredibly important in many theories on second language learning. It is the first (necessary) component of e.g. the 'task-based' second language teaching approach as well as many other approaches on SLA, learning and teaching. This also includes the DM, considering the fact that in order to use the target language as the language of the classroom; the teacher needs to make sure that the input he/she is giving the pupils is being understood by them. This basic notion is very important, as pupils do not seem to learn from language which they do not understand².

Furthermore Krashen argues that if a second language learner is able to understand intake directed at him/her, "perhaps we acquire by *understanding* language that is "a little beyond" our current level of competence." (103). In other words, acquisition appears when a learner is confronted with elements he/she does not know already, but *understands* because of what Krashen refers to as "the aid of extra-linguistic context or our knowledge of the world" (103). This hypothesis is referred to as ' $i + 1$ ', where i stands for the learner's current level of language competence and the '+ 1' stands for that part of the language which is understood by the learner, although not yet acquired.

As with the input-hypothesis (mostly referred to as 'comprehensible-input hypothesis'), Krashen's ' $i + 1$ '-hypothesis is extremely influential and returns in many second language learning theories. These theories include the DM since in this method learners are supposed to learn primarily from the language input directed at them. Therefore, the teacher needs to make sure that the exposure to the TL he/she is giving the learners consists of elements which have already been acquired by the learners, as well as new elements not yet acquired, though understood by them. In order to include these known and yet unknown elements and still make the language comprehensible, the teacher needs to adjust his/her language. This language is referred to by Krashen as 'modified speech'.

² This notion will be discussed in the paragraph concerning Schmidt's 'noticing effect'.

Unfortunately, for a classroom consisting of circa 30 pupils, it is very difficult to provide modified speech which corresponds exactly to all the learners' level of language proficiency, which Krashen also keeps into account. In his description of valuable exercises which improve language acquisition, he argues that "analysis of what intake is predicts that what is called "meaningful" and "communicative" drills or exercises can be more efficient in producing language acquisition. [Even these] may have their limitations, however. Even if they manage to hit the "next" structure ($i + 1$), which is unlikely for all students in a given class, they may fail to provide enough input [...] for language acquisition." (104). In other words, apart from noticing that not all pupils have acquired the same ' i ' and therefore need different ' $i + 1$ ', he also admits that "meaningful" and "communicative" exercises may not provide pupils with enough input to trigger acquisition. What applies to these exercises also applies to modified speech when the teacher adjusts his/her language. Here, this language may be considered ' i ' by one learner who will acquire nothing new, whereas it can also be ' $i + 1$ ' for another learner. However, this does not mean that trying to adjust one's speech to match ' $i + 1$ ' is useless. Instead, it seems to imply that one may not reach every pupils' ' $i + 1$ ', but nevertheless one may reach the majority of pupils as classes in the Netherlands are still (roughly) divided into age and level of competence. This is also acknowledged by Gerard Westhoff in his article "Trends in Second Language Pedagogy", where he argues that although "long and fierce debates" concerning Krashen's ideas have occurred, a general agreement seems to exist in the recent scientific literature that being exposed to a rich foreign-language input for a long period of time is imperative for language acquisition (1). Considering the fact that the teacher is the primary source for language input, the learner would learn mostly from the speech the teacher is providing him/her with. Although this teacher's 'modified speech' may not always be ' $i + 1$ ', trying to include new language elements as well as returning to acquired language elements is thought to bring about the most language acquisition in learners.

One of the above-mentioned "long and fierce debates" Westhoff might be referring to is Krashen's distinction between 'learning' on the one hand and 'acquisition' on the other. As part of the Monitor Model, Krashen hypothesizes that learning (which can be explained as conscious knowledge of the L2) can never become acquisition (which can be explained as the subconscious knowledge used to produce L2-speech). "He cites as evidence for this that many speakers are quite fluent without ever having learned rules, while other speakers may 'know' rules but fail to apply them when they are focusing their attention on *what* they want to say more than on *how* they are saying it." (Lightbown & Spada, 39). In other words, Krashen

asserts that learners may be able to reproduce the 'learned knowledge' of a certain language, but cannot incorporate this into their natural speech production, as this speech production is composed of 'acquired knowledge' which learned language rules will never become. In addition one could say that *conscious* speech production is distinct from *subconscious* speech production. However, the terms conscious/subconscious are prone to make the discussion rather unclear, as different researchers have used the terms rather ambiguously. This subject will return later on in this chapter.

The Canadian ‘immersion’-studies:

Krashen’s attribution to the discussion of input and intake brought forth work on a new language method in the 1980s, called ‘immersion’. This pioneering language program did away with all grammar instruction as well as any other instruction on language forms. Instead, the program relied completely on comprehensible input by the teacher as found in Krashen’s Monitor Model.

The most noted of all ‘immersion-programs’ is the one conducted in Canada by Merrill Swain of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, with cooperation from other colleagues of other institutes and universities. This program was designed for pupils with French as a mother language who would (after a few years in school) become acquainted with a new language; namely English. The idea was that this new language would slowly but surely take over the task of the mother language, i.e. become the language of communication in the classroom by the pupils. It was hypothesized that through this method pupils would learn the second language at a much faster rate than pupils outside of this program and finally become bilinguals.

Unfortunately, the predictions the researchers made concerning the program did not correspond with the actual results and in these terms the program proved false. Although the pupils inside the immersion-program did achieve a good level of language competence in the TL, none of them could be considered an actual bilingual in any way. Moreover, a different group of pupils who did not receive immersion in the English language achieved the same level of competence (Genesee). In addition, side effects appeared in the primary group which showed contrasts to the researcher’s expectations. For example, it seemed that “immersion students [...] increasingly avoid using their second language in peer-peer interactions as they move into higher primary grade levels” (MLJ Reader’s Forum, 166). In other words, the pupils would not let go of their first language very easily concerning communicative purposes. This was in contrast to what was expected by the researchers, as the classes themselves were completely conducted in the TL.

Although the initial Canadian immersion-program did not bring about the anticipated results, there was one important prediction that did come out. This was the fact that both groups of pupils which were tested (immersed pupils vs. non-immersed pupils) did achieve better

overall results than the control group³. Therefore, the researchers decided to continue working on the program itself in order to finally come to a language program which *would* achieve the anticipated results. Researchers Swain and Lapkin explain it as follows:

“It is important to understand the linguistic outcomes of [...] immersion programs in Canada within a historical perspective. Immersion programs [...] did not produce students who could comprehend and use French in authentic context. Immersion program outcomes [...] have shown that in most cases immersion students do significantly better than core French students in all aspects of French language proficiency.” (69-70)

In the meantime, successes in the immersion programs have been delivering a great contribution to both the validity of Krashen’s theory as well as new initiatives in language teaching. These are initiatives where the focus is not on grammar instruction anymore, but on a classroom environment where communication in the TL is of primary importance. In this case, the results from the immersion-studies are important to the DM, as it underlines the assumption by *empirical* research that using the TL as the language of communication yields better results in contrast to classrooms where the language is not given this primary role. However, although the research (in combination with Krashen’s theories) has accelerated studies in SLA, it has overlooked one aspect which is of primary importance in the language classroom and more specifically, on proficiency by second language learners. This is the aspect of ‘noticing’.

³ This group consisted of pupils who did not receive immersion in the English language and were additionally given grammatical instruction.

Noticing:

In the before-mentioned discussion on Krashen's distinction between acquisition on the one hand and learning on the other, it must be noted that Krashen's reference of acquisition as a subconscious process is somewhat confusing. This is because Krashen does not explain in detail what he means with the terms 'conscious' and 'subconscious'. Does consciousness mean that the learner is *aware* of aspects of the TL or that he/she is making an effort to learn something, in other words, is the learner *intently* learning something? This distinction is important insofar as it has consequences for the language classroom. If the learner is simply aware of something he/she has acquired, this has little to no effect on language interaction he/she might be in at that moment. However, if the learner is intent on learning something, he/she is not trying to interact but instead is working on learning that specific element.

Krashen is not alone in dividing language proficiency in terms of consciousness and sub- or unconsciousness. According to Richard Schmidt in his article "The Role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning" from 1990, many researchers and theorists in the field of SLA

"believe that conscious understanding of the target language system is necessary if learners are to produce correct forms and use them appropriately. [Although] there is little theoretical support for the most traditional form of this view [...] Baileystok (1978) has provided a theoretical framework that allows a role for conscious knowledge, and Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985) have argued that 'consciousness-raising', drawing learners attention to the formal properties of language, facilitates language learning. Others firmly believe that language learning is essentially unconscious. Seliger has claimed that 'obviously, it is at the unconscious level that language learning takes place'" (129).

It becomes clear from this quote that while Baileystok refers to "conscious knowledge" as something a learner has *intently* learned, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith⁴ refer to it as an element of *awareness*. Furthermore, Seliger believes that language learning takes place at an unconscious level, while Krashen (as mentioned before) believes that learning is a conscious process⁵. Lastly, it has been suggested that language learning may in turn serve as raising *awareness*.

⁴ In addition, Sharwood Smith believes that when learners raise their consciousness, all input becomes intake.

⁵ Note here that Seliger and Krashen do share the same opinion, i.e. that language competence is subconscious. However, Seliger refers to this competence as learning, whereas Krashen refers to it as acquisition.

Amidst this confusion, Schmidt is trying to come up with a clear definition of what consciousness means and what role it is assigned (if any) in the process of language proficiency. He claims that consciousness can be divided into three categories: “consciousness as awareness”, “consciousness as intention” and “consciousness as knowledge”. Whereas consciousness as intention means that something is done intentionally, consciousness as knowledge means that one picks up or is taught something about e.g. a language or culture. For example; one can consciously bear in mind that an Australian might say “How are you?” as an alternative to “Hello”, instead of truly asking how one is doing. Krashen’s use of the term can be inserted here, as he discusses consciousness as knowledge of the TL by the language learner, i.e. the learner having learned specific rules of the TL.

Schmidt asserts that consciousness as awareness is of primary importance to the process of language learning. Although Schmidt notes that there are various levels of consciousness, one level is of specific importance here. This is the second level, called “Noticing or Focal Awareness”. This level, Schmidt argues, can best be explained by the following example:

“When reading [...] we are normally aware of noticing the content of what we are reading, rather than the syntactic peculiarities of the writer’s style, the style of type in which the text is set, music playing on a radio in the next room, or background noise outside a window. However, we still perceive these competing stimuli and may pay attention to them if we choose.” (132).

In other words, if we translate this example to language learning, a learner may normally be involved in getting a message across to the teacher or a peer. In trying to get this message across, the learner is not thinking of grammatical parameters or verb changes but composing the message in such a manner that the teacher or peer is able to understand him/her. However, the learner might also take note of these syntactic issues if asked. This aspect of taking note (or one might say, looking at the input focusing on different aspects) then is ‘noticing’.

When returning to Krashen’s Monitor Model, this noticing might be an aspect of language learning. However, Schmidt notes that noticing comes before any learning or acquiring takes place. He assigns a place for noticing between input and intake as he argues that “intake is that part of the input that the learner notices” (139). This idea is explained in diagram 1.

Diagram 1:

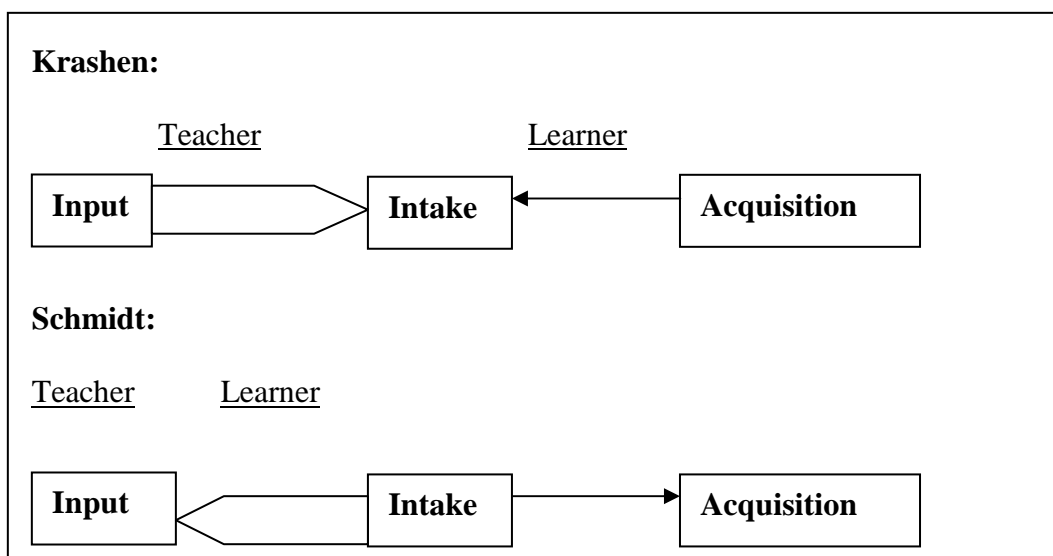


Diagram 1 shows that Krashen sees the role of the teacher as someone who uses modified speech to convert input to intake, which the language learner then acquires. Schmidt, on the other hand, sees the role of the teacher only as someone who provides input. The learner ‘notices’ part of this input (which becomes intake) and only then acquires.

The aspect of ‘noticing’ may be somewhat difficult to place in terms of language acquisition and moreover, concerning conscious vs. sub-/unconscious knowledge of a language. However, the importance it displays in the language classroom is quite straightforward. According to Schmidt, language learners ‘notice’ only a part of the input directed at them. This part of the input, which Schmidt refers to as intake, enters the process of acquiring. Although one might infer that since learners will only notice a part of the input directed at them it is useless for teachers to modify their speech in any way, this is not the case. Teachers can still modify their speech in such a manner that learners will notice the majority, if not most of the input. Moreover, teachers can always inspect whether their speech has been noticed by the learners by asking them if they understand or could repeat what he/she has said. This in turn may trigger acquisition.

Teacher Talk:

In the 1980s, research on the topic of comprehensible input and ' $i + 1$ ' has led to a critical review of the term 'modified speech'. It has become clear from research on the subject that there is general agreement on the meaning of the term modified speech, as it simply meant speech originating from the teacher and adjusted to the learner's level of language competence. However, it remained obscure *how* a teacher needed to adjust his/her language in order to match the learner's language competence. In other words, in what ways is it possible to modify one's speech and what are the results of these modifications?

An important addition to this discussion was brought forth by Craig Chaudron in 1988, in his book *Second Language Classrooms: Research on Teaching and Learning*. In this book Chaudron includes all the different studies conducted on modified speech and its outcomes.

In Chapter three of the book, Chaudron addresses the amount and types of modified speech in second language classrooms, or as he refers to it, 'Teacher Talk'. Chaudron explains in this chapter that whereas "the initial approach of this research has been to describe the features of L2 teacher talk which distinguish it from speech to L2 learners in noninstructional settings[,] the main goal of this research has been to determine what makes teacher talk an aid to learning." (8). In other words, Chaudron's main research question concerning teacher talk is that "if input to learners must be comprehensible, what factors make teacher talk in classrooms appropriate for L2 learners' differing proficiency levels?" (8). An important point which must be made in this discussion is the fact that many researchers have used the aspects of 'teacher talk' as well as 'modified speech' as a fixed term. This means that researchers believed that teachers would always modify their speech in the same manner, as seems to be the case in 'caretaker speech' or the much referred to 'foreigner talk'. However, Chaudron argues that "differences [in teacher talk] are not systematic, nor are they qualitatively distinct enough to constitute a special sociolinguistic domain. [Rather], it appears that the adjustments in teacher speech to nonnative-speaking learners serve the temporary purpose of maintaining communication." (55) In other words, Chaudron notes here that teachers do not modify their speech in the same manner on all occasions, but rather seem to pick out different modifications of language in order to improve learner comprehension in that specific setting.

Characteristics of Teacher Talk:

Modifications in teacher speech

Pauses:

“One feature observed in several studies which contributes to overall rate of speech, but which may independently aid learners’ comprehension and processing of specific words, is amount and length of pauses.” (69). Chaudron divides pauses into two types; pauses “intentionally made for comprehension” (70) or pauses resulting from a generally slower and more articulated speech. However, it must be noted that some studies also indicated that teachers may use pauses not primarily to improve comprehension, but to gather their thoughts or for planning the lesson. Therefore, not all pauses could be included in the results.

Adjustments in phonology, intonation, articulation and stress:

Although different studies suggest that changes in phonology, intonation, articulation or stress enhances the comprehensibility of teacher talk, Chaudron notes that the various differences in the comparison groups in the mentioned studies presents too much diversity to make general claims. Furthermore, “while the overall slower, accentuated speech likely enhances the learner’s comprehension, other levels of linguistic adaptation (lexical and syntactic) are probably equally if not more important in their effects” (71).

Modifications of vocabulary

Several studies mentioned in Chaudron’s book found teachers modifying their vocabulary to a more basic set when teaching, especially in lower grades. For example; Chaudron mentions a study by Henzl in 1973 and 1979 which proved that teachers used language which was more “stylistically neutral” (i.e. less colloquial and more general; ‘woman’ instead of ‘gal’), which included fewer idioms as well as indefinite pronouns and instead, more proper nouns. This ‘downgrading’ of language was also found in other studies, however without the same amount of detail as in Henzl’s research.

Modifications of syntax

“By far one of the most investigated and quantified characteristic of teacher talk has been teachers’ syntactic modifications. These can be grouped into five types: measures of length of utterances, measures of subordination, measures of markedness, measures of grammaticality, and measures of distribution of sentence types.” (75).

Measures of length of utterances:

The use of this measure, Chaudron notes, has been conflicting in different studies. The reason for this may be due to differences in analysis. For example, some studies analyzed utterances, while others analyzed complete sentences. Moreover, concerning the results, some studies indicated that teachers used fewer words to beginning learners in comparison to advanced learners or native speakers, while other studies did not find any differences. Lastly, one study which included one English professor and one French professor has shown a significant difference in the amount of words in the first teacher, but not in the second. In other words, the studies conducted on vocabulary lengths, Chaudron argues, “should be viewed cautiously” (77-8) as the results seem to be conflicting.

Measures of subordination:

Studies measuring the amount of subordination of clauses (or in other words, syntactic complexity because of sentence-clauses) showed (as indicated above) different results. While some studies did not find any differences in subordination in sentences when ESL-pupils were addressed, others did. Moreover, in studies where different types of subordinate clauses were investigated some researchers found that advanced learners were addressed with a greater diversity in subordinate clauses, whereas other researchers did not find any differences.

Measures of markedness:

Although there is a great diversity as to the definition of ‘markedness’, the term can generally be defined as certain words or structures to seem difficult for learners to acquire. Here Chaudron mentions that the studies including measures of markedness did generally notice that teachers did not use certain verbs and/or simplified use of other verbs. In contrast, present tense (in comparison to past or future tense) seemed to be used more often in certain studies.

Although it can be generally noted that teachers seem to use less marked structures when addressing (beginning) language learners, a general lack of systematic methodology makes the studies very difficult to compare.

Measures of grammaticality:

An interesting observation in several studies was that many teachers or other native speakers used sentence fragments when addressing language learners. The reason for this was (according to Hyltenstam in 1983) that “fragments serve as elicitation devices, repetitions, and so on.” (82). In other words, fragments were used because of the teachers’ pedagogic approach.

However, ungrammatical language originating from the teacher was also observed in several studies. Pica and Long suggested here that this ungrammatical language “appears to have more to do with the general competence of the teacher than with the learners’ proficiency” (82). In other words, in cases where the teacher was not a native speaker, this variable could be attributed to his/her level of language competence.

Measures of sentence type distribution:

“This final type of syntactic analysis concerns the relative use of declarative/statement forms, interrogatives, and imperatives.” (82). It seemed that teachers, when addressing second language learners, use more questions in comparison to native speakers. Moreover, teachers seem to be more inquisitive to learners, especially concerning the degree of comprehension of their speech. The researchers note that this has more to do with classroom pedagogy than specifically with teacher talk.

Modifications of discourse

Self-repetitions

Several researchers found that self-repetitions of teachers were more common when language learners were addressed than when native speakers were addressed. This amount of self-repetition ranged from twice to seven times as much! Moreover, Ellis (1985) found a decrease in frequency of self-repetition while observing over a long time span.

However, other researchers found no difference in frequency of self-repetitions, neither between levels of experience of teachers nor the amount of time of teaching. Because of this, self-repetitions are rather difficult to include in teacher talk.

Results of Teacher Talk:

Apart from characterizing teacher talk, Chaudron's book also notes quite a few studies dedicated to the results of teacher talk; i.e. in how far these adjustments have had a positive influence on learners' second language proficiency. However, it should be noted that unfortunately these results do not correspond precisely with the above-mentioned characteristics. This has to do with the fact that research on this subject (especially in the 1980s) is too broad to make valid claims on such specifics.

Rate of speech

Although specific studies in use of pauses and phonological adjustments were lacking at the time the book was written, the book does include a study by Hatch (1983) which suggested that an overall lower rate of L2 speech by teachers may have several benefits. The reason for this, Hatch argued, was that a slower speech-rate allowed for more "processing time and clearer segmentation of the structures in the input." (154). This hypothesis was supported by research from Kelch (1985) as "he found that University L2 students had significantly greater success in dictation when the rate of speech of lecture listening passages was slowed down from about 200 wpm [words per minute] to 130 wpm." (155). More importantly, these slower rates also approximated the general speech-rate to beginning language learners.

Apart from this, there was an interesting study conducted by Dahl (1981) on 16 L2 college students who were asked to judge comprehensibility in L2-speech. They appeared to judge the more understandable messages to be spoken more slowly. However, the measured speech rate did not support this notion. Dahl therefore argued that indeed adjustments in articulation, phonology etc. may have caused this effectiveness. Although Chaudron notes that more research is needed for a definite support of this theory, it does suggest that these typical characteristics of teacher talk do improve learner comprehension.

Syntactic complexity and repetition

"Although the studies of degree of subordination [...] suggest that speech to lower-proficiency learners tends to be simplified, research on [comprehensibility of such speech] is surprisingly quite limited." (155). Moreover, the studies conducted on this subject show conflicting results. For instance, Michael Long (1985) conducted research on a lecture which was given, first in a native speaker version and then in a 'foreigner speech'-version. It showed that students were able to comprehend more of the foreigner version than of the original.

However, it was unclear what the source was of this result. Moreover, a study by Fujimoto which was a modification of Long's study (two foreigner versions instead of one) also could not answer this question. The only interesting result here was that both foreigner versions (which differed in terms of lexical and syntactic simplification, as well as redundancy) worked equally well. In other words, simplifying messages does seem to improve comprehension, but it is unclear if this is due to syntactic or lexical adjustments. Moreover, a study by Speidel, Tharp and Kobayashi (1985) showed that messages with "lesser complexity alone does not result in significant improvement in reading comprehension; in most cases, it was less effective than other passage versions." (156)

The only tested modification which has shown a serious improvement in learners' comprehension was that of repetition of information. However, instead of being a characteristic by itself this is rather a link to 'self-repetition'.

Other results

Apart from teacher talk, Chaudron also mentions two other factors concerning input which are generally thought to improve learner's comprehensibility. However, research has shown that these two factors do *not* seem to improve comprehensibility or language improvement.

The first factor is not specifically a characteristic of teachers, but of learners. This is the degree of participatory involvement in class. According to research conducted by Seliger (1977), language learners who are so-called "high input generators" (100) generate more input towards them and, as a consequence, show more language improvement than so-called 'low input generators'. However, a study conducted by Day (1984), showed that in fact high input generators did not obtain greater language proficiency. Her study was a replication of Seliger's study, with a slight difference in methodology and a larger amount of persons being tested. It is important to note here that one cannot ascertain from one study that such a correlation between amount of input and proficiency exists or does not exist. This counts especially for any causal relationship between input generation on the one hand and language proficiency on the other, without considering other aspects of language competence (such as language learning aptitude or attitude).

The second factor concerning language acquisition exhibits the same problem. "[Although] the hypothesis that L2 learners acquire what they hear the most may seem tautologous [,] extensive research on the acquisition of L2 grammar does not tend so support the notion"

(157). Here Chaudron replicates research conducted on ‘Morpheme Rank Orders’, which means that certain grammatical morphemes are acquired before other grammatical morphemes. Moreover, it was thought that every morpheme has a special ‘rank’, meaning that one morpheme is harder to acquire than others (see the discussion of ‘measures of markedness’). For example, it was thought by Krashen (who was one of the initiators of research on these morpheme orders) that the copula would be acquired before the auxiliary verb, followed by articles. However, every other study following from Krashen’s hypothesis showed that articles would be acquired as the first of all the morphemes, whereas auxiliaries would be one of the last.

The point to be made here is the fact that researchers were under the impression that there was a direct correlation between what language learners had heard and what had been acquired first. However, such a simple relationship proved false.

As almost twenty years have passed since Chaudron wrote his book in 1988, research in the field of teacher talk has been advancing in the field of SLA⁶. For example, the focus on the ‘communicative classroom’ in the 1990s meant a great advance on this subject. This is also acknowledged by Chaudron in an article he wrote in 2001 for the *Modern Language Journal*, where he passed in review all the different eras in language teaching from 1916 to 2000. In his paragraph “The Task of Teaching – The 1990s and Beyond”, he states that the “focus on task performance in the late 1980s and 1990s has also inspired several more detailed analyses of teacher talk than had been published before” (64). In other words, the focus on ‘task-based learning’ in the 1990s also initiated greater focus on the communicative abilities of the teacher and therefore, teacher talk. Whereas Chaudron only discussed material from the *Modern Language Journal*, the subject of teacher talk has been investigated and published in many other research journals as well. For example; Richard Cullen, writer for the *ELT Journal*, has published several articles on teacher talk. However, in his articles, there is an important deviation in description of teacher talk as apparent in Chaudron’s work. This is the fact that teacher talk described by him not only implies ‘down-grading’ of speech by the teacher, but basically any adjustment in speech made to improve comprehensibility by language learners. This could be attributed to the increased attention on the communicative classroom mentioned above. An example of one of these adjustments can be found in Cullen’s discussion of the so-called ‘I-R-F-move’. This notion basically means that in a classroom

⁶ However, note here that although teacher talk has been receiving attention from *second* language teaching studies, it has not been receiving much attention in *foreign* language teaching.

setting, most dialogue is started by the teacher (Initiation), after which a response is apparent from the pupils (Response) and finally a movement from the teacher following the pupil's response (Follow-up). Whereas Chaudron would have never included this 'I-R-F-move' in his discussion of teacher talk, during the 1990s additions such as these have become more and more apparent.

In addition to this, Cullen describes in another article different features of teacher talk (following from work by Thornbury in 1996) which do not seem to be apparent in descriptions found in the 1980s. These features include the use of 'referential questions', where the teacher is addressing the whole class when asking a question and also the 'echoing' of pupils' responses (which basically means a repetition of a response to stress its content) (181-2). It becomes clear that the focus on teacher talk seems to have deviated from merely being speech-adjustments to improve comprehensibility towards something described as "communicative classroom talk" (181). This alteration of focus is also stressed by Herschel Frey in his article "The Applied Linguistics of Teacher Talk" where he includes a definition of teacher talk which can be thought of as typical of the focus on the "communicative classroom" of the 1990s as well as the space it leaves open for teacher pedagogy.

"While my definition of "teacher talk" is broad, I exclude any of the familiar, deliberately fixed or structured segments of a class, such as (pattern) drills, recited or read dialogs, lists of questions, and so on. Activities that are not included in teacher talk are, then, many of the predetermined activities that the instructor takes directly from the textbook. Put another way, teacher talk is anything that the teacher says spontaneously, without a script, the actual linguistic content of which is created to suit a particular need." (681).

An important aspect of teacher talk in the 1990s is a focus on feedback. The reason for this importance lies in the fact that proper feedback on a pupil's response improves the input of the message and can therefore improve comprehensibility (and accuracy). Moreover, feedback on responses may also trigger a greater amount of noticing. For example, returning to the above-mentioned I-R-F-move, Cullen was the first researcher to focus on teachers providing feedback in the 'F-move'.

The overall spotlight on teacher's feedback probably originated from the importance of feedback in focus-on-form⁷, which was a principle originating in the late 1980s (as a reaction

⁷ This notion can roughly be explained as a focus on syntactical form of a language in a communicative context.

to the immersion programs which purely focused on language proficiency by use of speech) and applied more thoroughly during the 1990s in the context of the communicative classroom.

However, in an article by Frank Morris and Elaine Tarone, the two authors describe that in fact this communicative classroom may have a negative effect on language acquisition, or more thoroughly, “stimulated recall revealed that negative feelings about their conversation partners seemed to have caused some learners to interpret recasts⁸ not as helpful corrective feedback, but as criticism and even mockery.” (325). Moreover, concerning Schmidt’s aspect of noticing, the authors argue that “the social dynamics of the language classroom may in some cases dramatically alter the way the cognitive processes of attention, or noticing, are deployed in cooperative learning activities in which feedback occurs, and this in turn appears to affect acquisition.” (325-6). In these cases, what can be applied to the language learner can also be applied to the language teacher. This means that although a language teacher may offer his/her pupils with proper and comprehensible input and feedback and moreover, include all sorts of non-speech acts which also may improve language learning, this input may not be considered by the learner because of (what the authors refer to as) ‘Classroom Dynamics’. In short, learners may not *notice* some (or perhaps all) of the input directed at them because of the atmosphere of the language classroom, which results in a decrease in language acquisition.

Because of this (and the issue has been raised quite often in recent years), language teachers should, apart from offering good input, also offer a learning environment where pupils feel safe to interact with the teacher as well as with other learners, in order to process the input directed at them and test their own language when they produce output of themselves. This issue will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 2.

⁸ A recast is an immediate (mostly corrective) feedback on a learner’s output.

Conclusion:

There has been a great deal of research conducted on SLA and L2-teaching which is relevant to language input by the teacher and therefore to the Direct Method. A central aspect brought forth by Stephen Krashen in the beginning of the 1980s is the notion of ' $i + 1$ '. Here, the ' i ' stands for the learner's current level of language competence and the '+ 1' for that which the learner understands, but has not acquired yet. It is the teacher's role, Krashen asserts, to provide learners with ' $i + 1$ ' by use of modified speech.

Although this principle may seem difficult to incorporate in language classrooms, evidence from (Canadian) immersion programs show that it is very much possible to use the TL as the classroom-language without sacrificing SLA in pupils. Although the initial immersion programs did fail to show a large increase in the learners' levels of language competence (which can mainly be attributed to the lack of grammatical instruction), later programs did live up to its expectations and sometimes even beyond.

Apart from this, many conducted studies on modified speech or rather 'Teacher Talk' have also shown that adjusting one's language in certain ways does yield better comprehension in learners and subsequently, acquisition. This works especially if teachers evaluate what has just been discussed by e.g. asking referential questions or asking learners to repeat what has just been said. This in turn can also improve comprehension and acquisition, as learners 'notice' more of what has been discussed. In other words, this research shows that using the DM in a classroom setting is not only quite possible, but will also probably improve comprehension, as well as acquisition of the TL.

Diagram 2

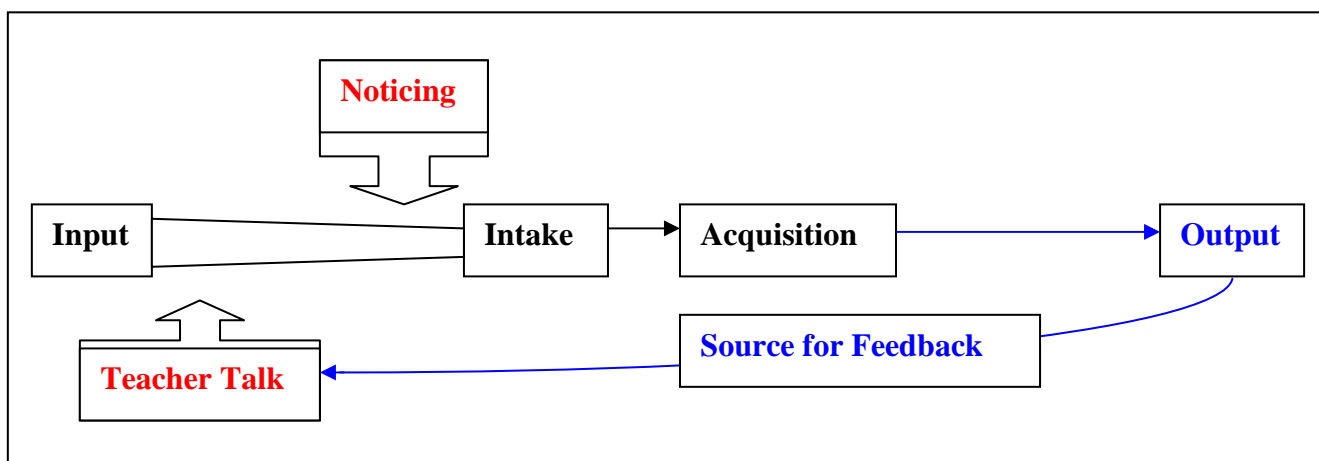


Diagram 2 shows every step of what has been discussed so far, in order to provide a clear foundation to place the practical approach to be discussed in Chapter 2, as well as any further discussion.

The first step of the diagram is the change from input to intake. The input is, because of teacher talk (or modified speech), adjusted into ' $i + 1$ ', after which the process of noticing modifies the input further. This input becomes the intake of the learner on to which the acquisition device of the learner may produce so-called 'uptake'; that what the language learner actually has acquired. Then, this 'uptake' might optionally be used in the learner's output which then returns to the teacher. Lastly, the teacher may be able to use this output as a possible source for feedback to the learner which then becomes input again.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background of the Direct Method from FL-Teaching

Introduction:

The discussed research conducted in the 1980s on ESL-Teaching has in the (late) 1990s been translated to foreign language teaching. Especially the successes scored with immersion programs in this decade have made researchers wonder whether this approach can be incorporated into foreign language classrooms and if so, how. This interest in ESL and more specifically the use(s) of the TL in ESL has in the Netherlands led to three different theoretical approaches for teachers.

The first approach to be discussed originates from a major influence in language teaching globally, namely the ‘task-based learning’ method. Here, learners are required to participate more actively in class and need to rely heavily on the TL. This is because the input they are receiving is in the TL as well as the output they need to produce themselves. Therefore, this language teaching approach seems to be a solid foundation to work from using the DM.

The second approach to be discussed is not so much a framework as task-based learning is, but more of an accumulation of ESL- & FL-research which could aid teachers in language teaching. In this approach, referred to as the ‘smart pinball machine’, there is again a large emphasis on the TL and subsequently, the DM.

The final discussed foreign language teaching approach originates directly from the (Canadian) immersion programs and has become very important in Europe. This approach, called ‘Tweetalig Onderwijs’ (Education in Two Languages) greatly expands the use of the TL as not only language classes are taught in the TL, but almost all classes in this specific school curriculum. Because of this great attention to the TL, this approach relates most directly to the DM.

Task-based learning:

As mentioned above, task-based learning and subsequently task-based teaching is an approach which has become very prominent in teaching globally. The main reason behind this importance might be found in the fact that task-based learning corresponds to recent trends where instead of the teacher, the learner is given a central role. This central role involves e.g. less dialogue between the teacher and a single pupil and more dialogue among pupils themselves. In other words, pupils work more independently in this approach. This is also one of the basic principles of the '2de fase'-method implemented in Dutch secondary education.

As the name already indicates, task-based learning evolves around a 'task' involving language. This 'task' is not very different from any task which we present ourselves with in our daily lives, apart from the fact that in order to finish this task the language in question has to be used communicatively. In their book *Researching Pedagogic Tasks*, Bygate et al. define a task in this context as follows:

“A task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective” (11). Although the authors continue to explain the term further from different pedagogic perspectives (e.g. from a teachers perspective in comparison to a researcher's perspective), for this thesis the simple definition suffices as it illustrates how general the term 'task' can be interpreted. In other words, a task can range from a teacher asking a pupil how his/her weekend was to several lessons where pupils are supposed to discover about sharks and its environment. Although the final objective of a task is of minor importance, the definition stated above already indicates that the “use [of] language, with emphasis on meaning” is assigned an primary role. However, how can teachers create proper tasks with emphasis on meaning-focused language use?

In reply to this question, Jane Willis decided to bring forth a task-based learning framework which enables one to create tasks which satisfies this demand. Moreover, her framework seems to be quite a good bridge between theory and practice, as the so-called 'task cycle' which it evolves around incorporates all aspects of task-based learning. These aspects keep in mind four 'conditions for language learning' which are either essential or desirable in a classroom setting (see figure 1).

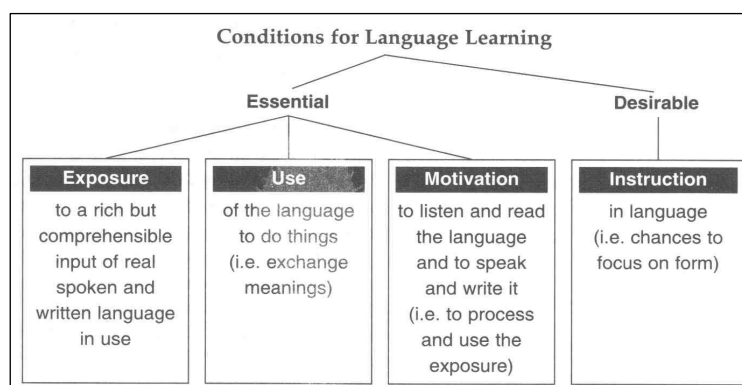


Figure 1

The primary and essential condition according to Willis is “exposure to a rich but comprehensible input⁹ of real spoken and written language in use” (11). Here she assigns an important role for the teacher as a means of language exposure. Moreover, she also addresses the issue of ‘teacher talk’ (although she does not name the term explicitly). However, although she agrees with the benefits of “repeating, rephrasing [and] stopping to explain a vital new word” (12), she seems to disagree on the notion of approaching learners with a lower rate of speech. She argues that “there will [...] be problems if everything is always said very slowly and clearly, for there are likely to be distortions of common intonation patterns, and learners will never get used to coping natural speech” (12). Although this notion contrasts to research quoted by Chaudron, unfortunately Willis does not indicate where this belief comes from. Moreover, it is quite unclear what she means with “natural speech”. It seems as though here she aims at a ‘natural *rate* of speech’. Apart from this example however, her arguments on the whole seem to follow logically from SLA theory.

Concerning the DM, Willis’ task-based learning framework is (as mentioned above) a solid foundation to work from. She assigns an important role for the teacher to provide the essential TL-exposure to pupils. Moreover, in her ‘task cycle’ the teacher returns multiple times as a source of comprehensible language input. For example; already in the ‘pre-task’ pane the teacher is supposed to “[explore] the topic with the class, [highlight] useful words and phrases [and help] students understand task instructions and prepare” (38). During the rest of the task the teacher is supposed to help pupils in different stages, be it planning, practice etc. This is supposed to take place in the TL.

⁹ Her ideas behind ‘comprehensible input’ correspond to what has been argued in the first chapter of this thesis; namely modified speech which the learner may ‘notice’.

Although it may be difficult for a language teacher to continuously use task-based learning in a classroom setting, when used it nevertheless seems a perfect starting point for TL-use. Not only is it possible to address the class in the TL during the pre-task when the teacher explains the topic of the task itself; the teacher can always use the TL during the task itself and in evaluation of the task. This is mainly because he/she is only helping the pupils by use of the TL, instead of explaining in detail different aspects of language. This will most likely lead to a higher amount of comprehension/noticing of the input directed at the pupils as this TL-use pertains directly to the (finishing of) the task at hand. In the words of Bygate et al., the teacher uses the TL communicatively, “with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective”. Moreover, if the teacher notices that different pupils seem to struggle with a certain language issue, he/she can still decide to address this problem in class. Lastly, because a teacher is communicating with pupils in a meaning-focused manner, he/she will be able to obtain a better idea of what the level of competence of the learners is, which would make it easier to address them with ‘*i + 1*’-speech.

A Smart Pinball Machine:

In the before-mentioned article “Trends in Second Language Pedagogy”, Gerard Westhoff follows recent theory in SLA which has been or will probably become implemented in the language classroom. From this theory he also creates a sort of task-based framework (see figure 2) in which language activities can facilitate learner’s language acquisition. He refers to this framework as a pinball machine, where the learner is the pinball itself and the teacher the builder of the machine as well as the person in charge of the buttons. “The longer the ball is in the machine, the higher the score” (1). Although Westhoff notes immediately after this that “we know very little about which contacts account for that score”, it is nevertheless the teacher’s job to keep the ball rolling and hitting different contacts.

Although Westhoff’s pinball machine differs on several points to Willis’ task cycle (for example, Willis notes that learner motivation is essential, while Westhoff does not address learner characteristics at all), they both assign a crucial role to TL-exposure. Westhoff asserts as follows: “without extended exposure to a rich¹⁰ input, there is little SLA” (1). Needless to say, the primary source for extended input is the TL-input provided by the teacher. Although the article mainly focuses on language activities and the effect these language activities may produce, the author does mention TL-input by the teacher indirectly as he argues that “CLIL, bilingual education [and/or immersion] provide us with a very powerful tool to organize foreign language learning in an effective, attractive and efficient way” (5).

There is one final issue addressed in this article (as well as in Willis’ ‘conditions for language learning’; see figure 1) which is of importance to this thesis’ topic. This is the role of a learner’s output. Apart from the fact that output seems to enhance fluency and that it makes learners conscious of their level of language proficiency, it “contributes to form-orientation and gives the teacher [...] the opportunity to give corrective feedback” (2). As noted at the end of Chapter 1, if the learner notices this feedback or at least notices that his/her output differs from that which he/she receives from the teacher or peer respectively, it may serve as intake. Henceforth, it is important that the teacher provides time and a safe environment for learner output, be it directed at him/her or at other pupils in the classroom.

¹⁰ Whereas the input Westhoff refers to complies with Krashen’s input-hypothesis, the term ‘rich’ refers to language that has a great variety of aspects, such as language from different domains or with different syntactic structures.

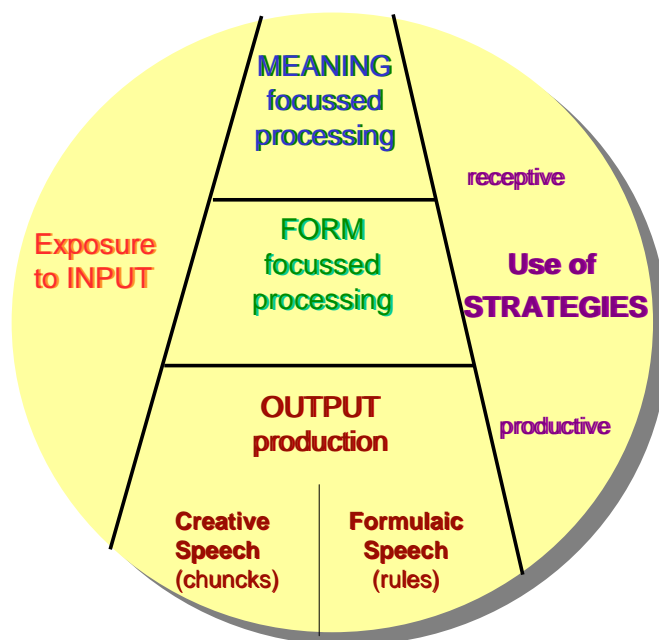


Figure 2

CLIL/TTO:

Research in immersion and bilingual education has in Europe led to initiatives concerning language teaching in which the second or foreign language is assigned a much more important role. For the Netherlands, this has resulted in an initiative called ‘Tweetalig Onderwijs’ (hereafter TTO) during the beginning of the 1990s. This TTO, which basically means education in two languages, bears close resemblance to immersion. The difference however is the fact that unlike the immersion studies in the 1980s, TTO does not reject instruction in a language and moreover does not rely purely on comprehensible input. In contrast, TTO is an approach where there are no notable changes in the school curriculum itself, apart from the fact that all subjects are now taught in two languages instead of one; Dutch and English.

Since its start the amount of schools which offer TTO¹¹ has already risen to approximately 80 and every year new schools are added to this list. Because of this large amount of schools participating in TTO-projects for quite a long time, we can distinguish a very clear pattern of development in these schools offering TTO. This pattern involves moving away from purely offering their pupils *material* in the second language and qualified teachers towards an approach where the impact of the teacher’s pedagogy on the pupils is given a more prominent role (de Graaff, 2006). Therefore, the more broader term ‘Content and Language Integrated Learning’ (hereafter CLIL) is being referred to more and more, as this term also includes other aspects of language teaching apart from the language itself.

The term CLIL can best be explained as an “integrated approach to both teaching and learning, requiring that teachers should devote special thought not just to how languages should be taught, but to the educational process in general” (Eurydice, 7) This implies that subjects are not only “taught *in* a foreign language but *with* and *through* a foreign language” (7). Because of this approach, CLIL relates most directly to the Direct Method. In fact, CLIL basically *is* the DM with the important difference that CLIL covers an entire school curriculum whereas this method is restricted to the language classroom. Nevertheless, the same aspects are apparent in both approaches. As shown in Chapter 1, teaching a TL in the TL does not simply imply using the target language in many if not all occasions in the language classroom. Instead, the approach means using the TL as the main source of comprehensible input by means of modifying it, providing a classroom environment where learners feel safe to produce output in the language and to use this output as comprehensible

¹¹ This includes the VWO, HAVO, VMBO or MBO level.

input again. In other words, it is a total approach which, like CLIL, means teaching the language “*with and through the language*”.

The perfect link between CLIL and the DM should make it easy for language teachers to find theory pertaining to both of these principles. Additionally, considering the fact that research on TTO/CLIL is conducted *empirically* instead of purely being on a *conceptual* level shows its importance to the foreign language classroom. Subsequently, the practical application of CLIL in the Netherlands should also make the practical application of the DM easier. Moreover, teachers are able to use the pedagogy involved in CLIL for teaching the TL in the TL.

This is also exemplified by Loes Coleman and Bert Weltens, who have written an article called “Classroom English: Engels als Doeltaal én Instructietaal” which not only discusses theory behind TTO/CLIL (including Krashen’s input-hypothesis, Swain’s output-hypothesis as well as Schmidt’s ‘noticing’), but additionally translates this theory into three practical techniques to be used in the language classroom (see Appendix). The first technique discussed concerns ‘verbal strategies’, to be subdivided into ‘redundancy’ and ‘adjusted language use’. Basically these ‘verbal strategies’ correspond to teacher talk, considering the fact that they include the same kind of adjustments found in theory discussing teacher talk. However, apart from logical speech adjustments such as repetitions and providing examples, they also include syntactic adjustments which in ESL-theory were not shown to improve comprehensibility¹². The reason for these additions which were proven false to be apparent here may have something to do with the lack of attention teacher talk has been receiving in the Netherlands.

The second technique concerns ‘non-verbal strategies’, subdivided into ‘countenance’ and ‘contextual support’. Countenance logically includes body language but more importantly, rate of speech (or as they refer to it: ‘variation of speech’) and intonation. These last two are again found in ESL-theory in discussions on teacher talk as they are mostly assigned a verbal role. Contextual support basically means any other resource outside the teacher, such as input through film/video and support from e.g. blackboards and overhead-projectors.

The final technique, referred to as ‘other strategies’ consists of strategies which cannot be headed under verbal/non-verbal strategies. The subdivision of this technique consists of

¹² This subject has been discussed in Chapter 1, concerning ‘Teacher Talk’.

‘clear structure’, ‘control of meaning’¹³, ‘connecting old and new’ (building on what the teacher has done in a previous lesson) and ‘improving output’ by means of pair-work and interaction.

These three techniques should be easy for teachers to incorporate in their lessons and refer back very clearly to the theory discussed in the article on CLIL.

In addition to this article where ‘strategies’ are given to TTO-teachers in order to improve their teaching practice, Rick de Graaff and Gerrit-Jan Koopman have also produced a study concerning this topic. However, their study focuses more on observed teacher pedagogy in a couple of secondary schools in the Netherlands and to what extent this pedagogy improves learners’ language proficiency in a classroom. Incorporated in this study is an ‘observational instrument for effective TTO-pedagogy’ which basically is a list of teacher-competences, derived mainly from CLIL-theory and the components of Westhoff’s pinball machine (see figure 2 of Chapter 2). Concerning exposure to input however, the authors do not seem to focus on the input the teacher is providing learners with, but more on material the teacher has selected¹⁴. Nonetheless, under the heading ‘tuning’ it is explained that the teacher must use whatever means to make his/her produced (English) language ‘*i + 1*’ (21). Explanations and examples of means to enhance a teacher’s language then are incorporated in appendix one and three of the study.

In appendix one, concerning ‘tuning’, it is stated that the “teacher clarifies the substance of his own language use by means of (new) words, summaries, paraphrases and gestures”. In other words, the authors seem to note that the teacher here needs to make use of the verbal and non-verbal strategies included in the article above and because of it, teacher talk.

In appendix three, four tips are given to enhance “spoken language”. Apart from tips where providing pupils with ‘*i + 1*’ and using teacher talk are included, an interesting addition here is the incorporation of “[checking] if the learners have understood instructions, e.g. by asking a learner to explain what they should do”. In other words, the teacher tries to discern whether the pupils have ‘noticed’ the input given to them and moreover, provides a moment for output of the pupils which can possibly be used as feedback. This complies with what has been discussed in the conclusion of Chapter 1. The use of feedback also returns in tip no. 4, where teachers are supposed to “ask the learners for feedback [on the teachers’] own tempo

¹³ This notion basically refers back to ‘noticing’

¹⁴ This focus on material is also apparent in Willis’ ‘task-based framework’.

and use of English”. In other words, yet again the teacher provides pupils with a moment for producing output and to check whether his/her own input is ‘ $i + 1$ ’ or not as well as checking to what extent his/her rate of speech improves comprehensibility.

In short, these two articles serve as examples of practical applications of TFO/CLIL theory. Considering the attention CLIL has been receiving recently, there are undoubtedly more articles to be expected on the subject, which will probably also pertain directly to the DM and can therefore be used by teachers to improve their TL-use.

Conclusion:

There have been quite a few recent initiatives concerning language teaching which have their effect on the use of the TL in class. Whereas the task-based learning approach provides teachers with a solid framework to base their teaching on, Westhoff's pinball machine also presents the theory behind this approach. Furthermore, the TTO/CLIL approach originating from the immersion programs have been extremely influential in language teaching in the Netherlands and moreover, TL-use. This approach not only provides teachers with a theoretical foundation to work from, but there are also several articles relating to the practical application of this theory. However, a critical note must be made here concerning the usefulness of some of the tips to improve one's language teaching. This is the fact that not all verbal modifications originating from the teacher have been shown to bring about the anticipated results, which is explained in theory on Teacher Talk. Nonetheless, most of the practical tips which are brought forth are more than useful in the teaching practice and will certainly improve both the quality and quantity of TL-use.

Conclusion

Although the methodology of the Direct Method has changed throughout decades, there are certain theoretical elements which have remained. The reason for this is the fact that the hypotheses behind these theoretical elements have been proven valid when (empirical) research on them was conducted. A central aspect here is Krashen's ' $i + 1$ '-hypothesis which regards providing L2-learners with correct input. The ' i ' referred to here means the learner's current level of language competence, whereas the ' $+ 1$ ' means that which is comprehended, though not yet acquired by the learner. Comprehension, Krashen asserts, occurs here because of "extra-linguistic context or [...] knowledge of the world" (103) the learner has incorporated.

The ' $i + 1$ '-hypothesis has become a great influence on second language learning/teaching worldwide and has been the central component of immersion-programs, where pupils are 'immersed' in the second language. In other words, these immersion programs are the most basic application of the DM, as the second language becomes the classroom-language instead of the first. Unfortunately the predictions made on the initial programs have been proven invalid, which were mainly attributed to the lack of grammatical instruction. However, later programs with changing methodology did acquire the anticipated results (and beyond) and therefore became a huge success.

An aspect of Krashen's ' $i + 1$ '-hypothesis which was also an important aspect of the immersion programs is the use of 'modified speech'. This term basically means that teachers need to adjust their language (i.e. input) to make it conform to the pupil's level of competence, as well as being "a little beyond" (103) that. In follow-up to this, there has been a great deal of research conducted on aspects of modified speech, or rather 'Teacher Talk'. Craig Chaudron has included these pieces of research in the 1980s in a book on language teaching research. Interestingly, there were some ways in which teachers seemed to modify their speech that did and some that did *not* improve a learner's comprehension. For example, a lower rate of speech seemed to be very helpful on all occasions, whereas syntactic simplification sometimes acquired the opposite effect. Although Chaudron's book dates back to 1988, in the 1990s ESL-research on Teacher Talk has been continued where also more attention was given to teaching pedagogy and the role of language herein.

An important aspect of TL-use which therefore also applies to the DM is the aspect of 'noticing'. The idea here is that although teachers modify their speech in order to improve comprehension, learners may not notice all of this input directed at them. Instead, it seems

that learners only notice a part of this input, which can subsequently be improved when learners raise their awareness of the TL. This process of ‘awareness-raising’ can also be brought about by the teacher when asking pupils what he/she has just discussed or moreover, repeat what has been said. Not only does the teacher in this manner acquire an idea of what the pupils’ awareness is of his/her speech, it may furthermore give a clearer idea of what the level of language competence of the pupils is. This in turn may lead to the teacher improving ‘ $i + 1$ ’ directed at the pupils (see diagram 2 of Chapter 1).

The theory discussed above has been incorporated in important foreign language teaching methodology of recent years. Of these, three pertain directly to the use(s) of the TL and therefore, the DM.

The first teaching methodology is the task-based learning approach. In this approach, one of the three essential ‘conditions for language learning’ as argued by Jane Willis, is “exposure to a rich but comprehensible input of real spoken and written language in use” (11). Needless to say, the primary source of “real spoken” and “comprehensible” TL is the teacher. Additionally, Willis explains in her framework for task-based learning how to modify one’s speech in order to make it ‘ $i + 1$ ’ as well as expanding on occasions to use the TL in a classroom setting. Because of this, her framework works as a solid foundation to work from when using the DM.

In addition, Gerard Westhoff has also created a theoretical framework which bears close resemblance to Willis’ task-based learning framework. More importantly, Westhoff and Willis both agree on the fact that teachers are a prominent source of input and that this input must be adjusted in order for comprehension and acquisition to take place. In addition to Willis however, Westhoff also makes mention of the promising results of the third discussed L2-teaching approach, namely TTO/CLIL.

Whereas the term TTO (Education in Two Languages) only seems to imply using the second language to teach a subject, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) also goes into teacher pedagogy in order to make his/her input more comprehensible and likely to trigger acquisition in learners. In other words, learners are not just given subjects *in* the TL, but *with* and *through* the TL. This approach relates most directly to the DM, as it not only gives the TL the most prominent role inside the classroom, but expands over most of the school’s subjects. Therefore, the best manner of including the Direct Method in foreign language teaching is basically CLIL.

Considering the direct relation between CLIL and the DM, theory and research conducted for CLIL naturally also applies to this approach. In Chapter 3 two articles are discussed which provide teachers with tips and methods in order to make CLIL a success in the classroom environment. One of these articles also supplies teachers with a clear theoretical background of the practical approaches. Therefore, teachers trying to apply the DM can easily refer back to these articles as well as articles bound to appear (considering the attention CLIL has been receiving). In contrast to this, the DM may also serve as a stepping stone for both teachers and learners towards TTO or CLIL.

Discussion:

In reaction to the implementation of TTO (and indirectly, CLIL) on schools in the Netherlands, investigation on its results has been taken place a few years ago by the 'Inspectie van het Onderwijs' (Dutch Educational Inspection) as well as the 'European Platform for Dutch Education' in cooperation with the 'Network TTO'¹⁵. It probably comes as no surprise that they ascertain that in practice, interaction between teacher and pupils in the L2 is rare. Although it has been noted that a great deal of interaction in the L2 in TTO-classes is possible, pupils seem to fall back on to their mother language too easily. Moreover, when conversing with pupils about this contradiction, they think it strange that they are allowed to converse in their mother language (Edelenbos et al., 83). Needless to say, what counts for TTO-classes counts even more for regular language classes. Concerning the lower grades of secondary school (basisvorming), the Educational Inspection have noted that although the use of the DM is part of the language pedagogy nowadays, in practice only a third of the schools investigated are thought to apply this successfully. Especially the use of French and German by teachers and pupils is thought of as disappointing and in need of improvement (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 1999).

Although the article by Edelenbos et al. also notes that there is agreement on the benefits of the DM, there is a lack of studies where the effects of this principle are tested concerning foreign language teaching. In other words, Edelenbos acknowledges that although teachers are told that they are too reluctant to use the TL consistently in class, they are not told how to go about this. The reason behind this assumption probably is the fact that research is indeed lacking on the DM (or 'Doeltaal = Voertaal') in foreign language teaching, especially focused on the Netherlands. However, as noted above, research on TTO/CLIL is capable of intercepting these issues.

Why has the DM nevertheless failed in foreign language classrooms in the Netherlands? Is it because teachers do not come across theory behind this principle or any of the discussed theoretical frameworks? This seems very unlikely, as e.g. the 'Network TTO' continually tries to provide teachers with handles to improve interaction in the TL. Additionally, concerning

¹⁵ The 'European Platform for Dutch Education' is an organization which aims to improve language education by strengthening European relations, whereas the 'Network TTO' is a network of all schools participating in TTO which also aims at improving TTO-education in secondary schools.

task-based learning, it has been noted before that this theoretical framework has already been incorporated practically in many Dutch secondary schools in one way or another.

Nevertheless, there are certain factors known to interfere with the language classroom. For example, Hermans et al. conducted a study on teaching beliefs by foreign language teachers in the Netherlands and the impact this has on their language classes. These researchers interviewed two teachers with different approaches to the language classroom and the effect these approaches had on teacher-pupil interaction. It was shown by their study that teacher Henry, who was interviewed first, did not achieve much interaction between him and his pupils because of the 'expert-role' he assigned himself. Because Henry felt that learning a language meant *learning the rules* of the language and not using the language itself, he did not interact with his pupils much. Instead, he gave them grammatical instruction in order for the pupils to slowly learn how to make grammatically sound sentences. In other words, he argued: "if they don't know how to produce a sentence, how can you expect them to talk?" (13).

The teacher who was interviewed second, namely Len, had a completely different approach. He believed that *using* the language is important and that making mistakes is not at all a problem as it is part of the learning process. He, in comparison to Henry, achieved a great deal of interaction in class because of this approach.

It may have become clear that when incorporating the DM in both language classrooms, teacher Len would probably achieve more TL-interaction between him and the pupil(s) than teacher Henry would, concerning his personal teaching beliefs.

Although the beliefs of teacher Henry will probably not have much following (especially not among teachers with knowledge of SLA-theory), the issue becomes more intricate when teachers who are being acknowledged for their good teaching practice are being enabled to express their personal beliefs. These beliefs may not correspond to the theory or become open for personal interpretation, subsequently straying further away from proven facts. An example of this can be found in Joop van Schaik, who is a teacher of the French language as well as author of two French teaching-methods. Concerning the DM, there are two contributions by van Schaik in the prominent *Levende Talen Magazine*, one where a journalist of this magazine follows van Schaik's classes for a day and one where van Schaik himself explains his view on the DM-approach.

In the first article a thorough reader is able to find most (if not all) of the elements concerning the DM. For example; van Schaik interacts in the L2 in the classroom almost

continuously, trying to modify his speech continually. Moreover, he even seems to incorporate aspects of the task-based learning method, as pupils are also enabled to produce output on several occasions during class and he seems to give pupils ‘instruction’ in the manner discussed by Willis (see figure 1 of Chapter 2). All in all, van Schaik’s lessons seem to be a noteworthy example of how the DM can be incorporated in class.

Unfortunately, in the second article, van Schaik explains his teaching method somewhat generally and because of this the article becomes open for personal interpretation. Although it is quite understandable if van Schaik’s goal here mainly is to provide teachers with general tips to improve their teaching practice, these tips can be interpreted wrongly. For example; van Schaik indicates quite early in the article that teachers can be consistent in using the target language from day one when conforming to certain conditions (10). These conditions however, have nothing to do with the pedagogic abilities of the teachers themselves but instead, focus on the teacher’s language abilities or the teaching-method. Therefore, in principle any native speaker with a good teaching-method seems to be able to use the DM, which cannot be what van Schaik is trying to bring forth.

Furthermore Paul Goossen, teacher of the German language, indicates in an article appearing in the same magazine that using the TL too drastically, too much and too early has a negative effect. Therefore he argues that using the DM from day one does not seem like a good idea to him (9). Although he indicates that other teachers might be able to use it in certain classes and by using certain pedagogy, he nevertheless approaches the principle differently.

Finally Dorette Zwaans, in a column in the same volume Goossen contributed to (only 10 pages further), asserts that teaching the TL in the TL needs to be performed consistently and moreover, from day one (21). Her argument however, relies solely on the language abilities of her 4 year-old nephew, whose language abilities are completely irrelevant here concerning the fact that he is learning a first language, not a second.

Apart from the teacher’s personal interference with the DM, a contribution made by Wim Luteijn in *Levende Talen Magazine* indicates that the modernization of the Dutch educational system (i.e. the ‘2de Fase’) seems to make it more and more difficult to use the TL in the language classroom, as the introduction of ‘reading strategies, ‘guessing abilities’, ‘working independently’ etc. seem to assign the most prominent role to the mother language. This argument can be underlined looking at the work- and textbooks of foreign language methods used in the ‘basisvorming’. All of these methods take the mother language as starting point, as

most of the assignments include questions posed in Dutch and leave room to answer in Dutch as well. Although it must be noted that the DM is mainly a question of oral use of the TL, these foreign language methods do seem to make it easy for pupils to fall back onto their mother language. Fortunately, a trend can be discerned in foreign language methods nowadays where more and more attention is given to the TL.

Points for Further Research:

Although the above-mentioned teacher beliefs and teacher interpretation may be an important argument for the lack of TL-use in Dutch foreign language classrooms, there is hardly enough research conducted in order to prove the argument (in)valid. For example, the research conducted by Hermans et al. needs to be magnified, involving more teachers in the study coming from a multitude of different schools with different perspectives on language learning/teaching. In this case one may be able to discern specific trends of TL-use in language classrooms because of teacher beliefs.

Secondly, research needs to be conducted on TL-use in foreign language methods and the impact this has on TL-use by pupils in the language classroom. In other words, if work- and textbooks include many assignments where the mother language is taken as the starting point, how easy is it for pupils to fall back onto this language in the classroom?

Thirdly, research conducted on TTO/CLIL also needs to be translated to the use of the DM on schools not participating in these programs. There are many useful tips and approaches found in TTO/CLIL research which can substantially help out teachers struggling with using the DM in their language classroom. Additionally, schools considering incorporating TTO/CLIL to their school curriculum can already use these tips in their foreign language classes as a stepping stone to further implementation of TTO/CLIL.

Finally, researchers also need to strive to convert SL-research to FL-research. There are important aspects discussed in ESL-research (a.o.) which also applies to foreign language teaching. For example, research on Teacher Talk is of the utmost importance to discover how teachers can modify their speech in order to make it comply with '*i + 1*'. Therefore, studies conducted on different aspects of Teacher Talk and its usefulness are more than welcome for TL-use in foreign language classes.

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Appendix

Verbal Strategies	Non-verbal Strategies	Other Strategies
<i>Redundancy</i>	<i>Countenance</i>	<i>Clear Structure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • body language 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • synonyms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variation in speech 	<i>Control of Meaning</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variation in intonation 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repetition 		<i>Connecting old and new</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary 	<i>Contextual Support</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling 		<i>Improving Output</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blackboard 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overhead-projector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • call and response-games
<i>Adjusted Language Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • film/video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pair-/groupwork
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reality ¹⁾ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classroom language ²⁾
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maps 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • few subordinate clauses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrations etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple word-choice 		

1) 'Reality' means the use of e.g. real texts instead of adjusted ones.

2) 'Classroom language' means the use of pre-fabricated sentences to be used in class, such as 'Can I visit the bathroom' or 'I don't understand'