The Target Language in the Classroom: where are we now?

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“From the outset, the foreign language rather than English should be the medium in which classwork is conducted and managed.” DES (1988)

“The natural use of the target language for virtually all communication is a sure sign of a good modern languages course” (DES 1990)

“the lesson should be conducted through the medium of the target language....to avoid interference from the sound and syntactical patterns of the mother tongue....(and) to lessen any desire the pupils may have to engage in the process of translation” (my italics) (DENI)
National Agencies England & Wales

“pupils are expected to use and respond to the target language, and to use English only when necessary (for example when discussing a grammar point or when comparing English and the target language)” (DFEE 1999)

“Pupils should be taught to:

Use their knowledge of English or another language when learning the target language” (National Curriculum 2000)
KS3 framework (post 2000)

• Heavy emphasis on knowledge rather than skills:

‘The objectives cover all the statements of the National Curriculum programme of study but concentrate on.... acquiring knowledge and understanding of the target language.’ (p.18)

‘The linguistic aspects of the framework do not represent an argument to stop using the target langue in the classroom: the intended approach is above all pragmatic’ (p.26)
Initial EM research: teacher beliefs

• Systematic observation; interviews; questionnaires

*Statement:* “good language teachers use the L2 almost exclusively”

• Only 17% disagreed with the statement
• Vast majority of teachers equated good practice with L2 use to some degree

TL around the world

South Korea

• [Model 1]
  • Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing,
  • Cultural Aspects of English
  ▶ all through English-only Instruction

• [Model 2]
  • Listening, Speaking
  • Reading, Writing, Cultural Aspects of English
  ▶ through English-only Instruction
  ▶ 80% Use of English

• [Model 3]
  • Listening, Speaking
  • Reading, Writing, Cultural Aspects of English
  ▶ through English-only Instruction
  ▶ 60% Use of English

(Adapted from Choi, 2000)
TL around the world

United States:
• maximum use of TL; aim for 80% of lesson in L2
Classroom L1 use around the world

• Unprincipled and ad hoc:

  • 2% -5% (Kong & Zhang, 2005), 4% - 12% (Macaro, 2001), 0 – 18% (Rolin-Ianziti & Brownlie, 2002), 0% - 60% (Levine, 2003), 0% - 90% (Duff & Polio, 1990)

• **FUNCTIONS:** contrasting L1 and L2 forms, providing metalinguistic cues, translating, giving L1 explanations of previously used L2 utterances, providing instructions for carrying out tasks, prompting L2 use, commenting on social events, eliciting learner participation, classroom management (and more!)
How much is ‘pragmatic’?

• ‘maximum use’ position is a-theoretical

• need to establish principles for teacher ‘optimal use’ of L1

• Impossible without first establishing the theory behind the teaching approach
Theories behind pedagogical approaches to L2 learning

• Inter-lingual approach
• Intra-lingual approach
Inter-lingual approach

• Compare the two languages (e.g. vocabulary lists; translate phrases)
• Contrast the grammars
• Pedagogical focus most on where the two language systems diverge
• Gradually eradicate errors
• Awareness of language; knowledge of language
Intra-lingual approach

• Essential ingredients are L2 input and interaction
• Changes occur in the brain as a result of input and interaction
• Pedagogical emphasis is on 4 skills
• Attempt to simulate the ‘outside world’.
Theories supporting intra-lingual approach

- Nativist accounts of acquisition
  - modified input
  - modified interaction
  - modified (forced) output
    - teacher feedback-to-error moves

Irreconcilable?

- Memory: processing theory
- Contrastive analysis

Theories supporting inter-lingual approach
Lesson on making pancakes (lower intermediate)

• Show a video of someone making pancakes (no commentary; acts as stimulus)
• Get students to brainstorm ingredients in L1
• Get students to look up L2 words in bilingual dictionary: ingredients; processes; fillings.
• Students do gap-fill using imperatives (pour; add; mix etc.)
• In pairs students create a recipe for making pancakes in L2
Lesson on making pancakes (lower intermediate)

- Teacher begins by asking (L2) ‘do you cook at home?’ ‘do you like cooking?’ ‘have you ever made pancakes?’ ‘do you like Nutella as a filling?’
- Teacher: what ingredients do you need for making pancakes; students encouraged to ask for words they don’t know (L2: how do you say X?); to ask for clarification (L2: do you mean...?); to give confirmation signals (L2: ah ok!)
- Teacher elicits processes from students by scaffolding (you put the milk........[elicits] in the bowl)
- Eventually students record a cookery programme and write out a pancake recipe.
• Lesson 1 = **use of L1** (two theories not reconcilable)
• Lesson 2 = **codeswitching** occurs in **interaction** (two theories are reconcilable)
What is codeswitching?

• ‘Naturalistic’ Codeswitching: ‘alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent’ (Poplack 2000, p.224)

• Naturalistic Codeswitching: not sign of linguistic deficit; bilinguals have superior control of two or more languages compared to monolinguals

• Naturalistic Codeswitching not an ‘anything goes’ phenomenon but follows certain grammatical, lexical and social conventions
Bilingual Classrooms: Codeswitching or L1 use?

• ‘Naturalistic Codeswitching’ frameworks offer formal classrooms a hook upon which to hang principled rather than ad hoc L1 use

• (Myers-Scotton 1993) “Matrix language” - provides the morpho-syntactic structure to the discourse

• “embedded language” - characterized by content words rather than function words, and is adopted for a number of purposes including the more effective communication of ideas through ‘marked’ (i.e. switched) lexical items

• “intrasentential and intersentential CS”
Example of intra-sentential codeswitching (naturalistic)

Cara Xxxxx

solo una breve nota: non comparare un B.Sc. 2:1 con una laurea del vecchio ordinamento italiano. E' molto unfair.

La laurea italiana del vecchio ordinamento durava di media 7 anni, e meno del 30% degli iscritti al primo anno completava gli studi. Invece un bachelor inglese dura 3 anni e con delle percentuali di drop out come quelle italiane qui un dipartimento verrebbe chiuso immediatamente per poor teaching.

Se prendi un first class student inglese e lo fai studiare per 7 anni sarebbe preparato quanto noi. Non credo a superiorità' genetiche!!!
Examples of intra-sentential codeswitching (L2 classroom)

- regardez vous avez....Kelly, Tim j’attends....vous avez dix minutes...\textbf{ten minutes} et vous allez travailler
Examples of classroom codeswitching

• ....qu’est-ce que c’est.. non, qu’est-ce qu’on dit quand on veut dire qu’on prend le téléphone when you pick up the telephone, numéro quatre..qu’est-ce qu’on fait..?
Examples of classroom codeswitching

• St: what have you done on Monday

T: **What did you do on Monday**...(with stress on “did you do”) ok et par example la réponse c’est...je suis allé......(starts writing on board)

• T: je suis allé...presque...je suis allé ....encore une fois .... **almost there**... (hand gesture) **95%**
Examples of classroom codeswitching

• chemicals, then we have chemical weapons, 生物制品, then 生化武器 [BIOLOGICALS, then, BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS] right? so they are all man made…

Tao Guo (2007)
Examples of classroom codeswitching
(Mixture of intra- and inter-sentential codeswitching)

T: Okay, give you an example. Glucose and fructose, a sucrose will be formed. And glucose and galactose, and maltose will be formed. 行不行呀? 那這裡是，加上這個，我們有三個例子了，我們有三種的disaccharides。Okay, the last one, polysaccharides. Polysaccharides are in the form of a long chain, long chain of monosaccharides. Maybe some types, it is the branch. 它可能會有一些分支出來的。那它幾條連上很多分支再加上。For example, starch is an example. It is a branch polysaccharides, composed of two, two different kinds. 有兩種，有兩種的branch呢。那這個(...)來說，都不需要知道。

Lo Yuen Yi (forthcoming)
Codeswitching in the L2 classroom

• It only makes sense to think about whether and when it is appropriate to use codeswitching in relation to a teaching approach that is ‘broadly communicative’.
Codeswitching: what for?

- Vocabulary
- Lexical strings/collocations
- Move L2 interaction along
Codeswitching project (ESRC funded; on-going)

• Year 9 French

(One) Research question:

1. **What are learners’ strategic reactions to teacher focusing on vocabulary in L1 or L2?**
   *(Stimulated Recall of teaching session)*

Students listened to a recorded text & answered questions; new words; teacher gave information of words either in L1 or in L2
What the students said (L2 version)

• *Clip plays*: target word*[séance]* appears on screen

• *Recording*: une séance

• *Teacher*: Une séance. On va au cinéma et le film est à 8 heures par exemple, on peut dire que la séance du film est à 8 heures.

• Yeah this one I really wasn't particularly sure of as I was pretty sure it wasn't sort of talking to the dead or anything like that. Something cinema so something like seeing a film at the cinema at 8 o’clock. So it might be something like a viewing or viewing of a film. I'm not sure something to do with seeing.
What the students said (L2 version)

- **Recording:** une séance
- **Teacher:** Une séance. On va au cinéma et le film est à 8 heures par exemple, on peut dire que la séance du film est à 8 heures.
- I thought I thought I first thought of like ehm when it came first came up on the board I thought like ehm like a sea but then it kind of they said it and it sounded like sea-ance so it was more like......seance or something......... so that what it was like they would film it on like a film of what a seance would be like.
What the students said (L2 version)

• Recording: Exigeant
• Teacher: exigeant. Quelque chose de difficile c’est fatiguant, par exemple si je fais du sport aux Olympiques c’est exigeant
• Yeah I thought it might mean like excellent or something. .....In the explanation it said...at the end it said the examples.. like sport c’est exigeant so I thought it could still mean like sport’s excellence or something.
Reactions to lexical information given in L1

• *Recording: les bâtiments*
• *Teacher: the buildings*
• Ehmm I didn’t think it was really a building. I don’t know why but for some reason it came to my head kind of like because I sometimes go down to the sea I kind of think about fishing bait. Yeah ehmm I didn’t think it was about buildings. It could be the name of a building I thought but then afterwards but I didn’t think it was anything to do with buildings.
Reactions to lexical information given in L1

• *Recording: tranquil* 
• *Teacher: peaceful*
• Yeah actually that sounded quite close kinda like tranquil. It’s like the English. Like ehm I don’t know like peaceful. Yeah so that so it kind of reminds you of ehm quiet parks and things ehm. So yeah. I quite like the words that kind of sound the same in English and French. .....It’s easier it’s kind of easier to kind of ehm ... remember......Especially if like ehm kind of ehm ... describing something that you kind of remember then it sticks in your head a bit more.
Reactions to lexical information given in L1

• **Recording**: *une quincaillerie*

• **Teacher**: a hardware store, as in a place where you might buy tools to fix things at home.

• I didn’t have a clue what that meant when I first saw it. ...But ehm I probably wouldn’t have remembered it either because it’s so it’s quite such a difficult quite difficult word.

• **Why did you find it a difficult word?** Because of the French or because of the meaning in English? Or for some other reason?

• Probably both because it’s like a complicated word and it’s also not really a word I would use very often.
Reactions to lexical information given in L1

- **Recording**: une quincaillerie

- **Teacher**: a hardware store, as in a place where you might buy tools to fix things at home.

- That one I really wasn’t sure about because it seems it has really no association whatsoever. So I was just trying to particularly with things like that and trainer[?] trying to remember them. Specifically with something like *tranquille* I could have remembered quite easily because it’s similar to tranquil or peaceful so I was really trying to remember that by repeating the French and the English in my head a few times.
Some general comments

- I find the English explanations easier cos I can understand it a lot more. .....And it is easier to understand. But French it like I sometimes .. pick up new words that I might think I know and then if I wanted to and if I was really confused but thought I knew what it was I’d go look it up in a dictionary. In English it’s better but it’s just gives the English explanation... I prefer the English but the French helps a lot as well.
• The explanations in French are sometimes quite difficult because you hear words again that you don’t understand that would require more explanations and ehm I sometimes understand half of a sentence and there’s sometimes one key word that I don’t know that I’m missing out in the explanation of that word that I don’t know. ............Ehm so the English is sort of easier to think about repeating it because you sort of heard one word and then immediate hear the next one so you can make mental connection that with a couple of sentences of translation.
........I kind of thought more about the word when it was in French...... So I kind of well you could say that I understood it more sometimes but not all the times. Some words would be good in English and some words would be good in French. But the explanations ... probably better in French cos your if it’s in French already then you kind of you know... let me think how it is... You know how to kind of write it or say it. If it kind of.. it fits in a sentence. You kind of realise what it’s trying to say. I suppose.
The Teacher as Dictionary and Dictionary Designer

- Bilingual teachers can operate both as ‘monolingual and bilingual dictionaries’.
- make informed decisions not only about which language (L1, L2 or both) to provide the information in, but also what type of information to provide and how much. In other words they can be considered as ‘dictionary designers’.
- Macaro, Guo, Chen and Tian (2009)
Teacher as dictionary designer

- Learner

L1 concept

- L1 options
- L2 options

L2 concept
Co-construction of meaning

- NST
- NNST

L2 options
- Definition
- Paraphrase
- Circumlocution
- Exposition
- Contextualization
- Synonym/antonym
- Hierarchical exemplification

L1 options
- Definition
- Paraphrase
- Circumlocution
- Exposition
- Contextualization
- Synonym/antonym
- Hierarchical exemplification
Where are we now?

• Research to date on use of L1 is not very helpful to practitioners
• Need to establish pedagogical parameters: intra-lingual; broadly communicative
• Codeswitching rather than ad hoc code choice
• Intra-sentential more often than inter-sentential switching
• (for vocabulary) Teacher as dictionary designer