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Language transfer: A dead issue? - reflecting on 'reverse transfer' and 'multicompetence'

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Abstract

There has been extensive research into how L1 affects L2, commonly known as 'negative influence', but a lot less about the opposite direction, commonly known as 'Reverse or Backward' transfer. As well as the first language influences the second, the second language influences the first. The present study, therefore, attempts to examine and critically review pertinent research into the question of bidirectional influence between languages. First, it traces the conceptual framework of the notion L1→L2 effect. Second, it attempts to demonstrate how an emerging new language (L2) affects the existing L1. Third, it examines the pedagogical aspects of both directions, as manifested in L2 classroom. Special focus will be given to how the concept of "multicompetence" sees the goal of L2 learning and how language teaching should reflect such a goal. In addition, the advantages and disadvantages of using learners' first language in L2 classroom will be highlighted and specific methodological recommendations will be made.

Keywords: L1 effect on L2; reverse transfer; the native speaker as a norm, multicompetence, pedagogical aspects

1. Introduction

The issue of whether the L2 affects the L1has provided a rich new question for L2 acquisition research to investigate. Relatedly, it has profound implications not only for our conceptualization of the mind with two languages, but also for our view of all human minds. It is commonly believed that the first language (L1) has an effect on the second language (L2). Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature has shown extensive research on how the learning and use of an L2 is affected by the L1. What has hardly been investigated, however, is the influence that foreign language has on the learner's first language. The reason for this neglect may have been twofold: (a) for a long time, researchers have been interested in the non-advanced learners of L2. At the beginning stages of L2 learning the influence is mostly unidirectional, from L1 to L2. (b) L2 acquisition research has been

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dominated by English as an L2. Advanced learners of English who supplied the data for research were immigrants to English-speaking countries, and knowledge of English was vital for their integration into the new society. Therefore, the development of this knowledge provoked researchers' interest and the state of their native language, on the other hand, was less important, and did not raise the same amount of interest.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Although we can find textbooks, articles, and workshops on the art and science of teaching and learning L2, we are a long, long way from finding ultimate answers to the many difficult questions we have been asking. According to Brown (1988), we have grown accustomed to the absence of final solutions as we discover an overwhelming multiplicity of variables at play in the process of L2 learning. Specifically, there has been considerable progress in the study of native language influence during the last hundred or so years; however, because of the controversies that have accompanied this progress, the findings of transfer research must be interpreted cautiously (Oldin, 1996). Skepticism about the role of language transfer has had a long life not only among L2 teachers and researchers, but also among linguists interested in questions of language contact and language change. Some scholars have argued for the importance of transfer; some have gone so far as to consider it the paramount fact of L2 acquisition. Yet other scholars have been very skeptical about its importance. Moreover, Schachter (1994) made the point that although it is true that much uncertainty remains about many issues related to cross-linguistic influences, and it is undeniably true that researchers are far from able to predict with full accuracy when transfer will occur, it is also true that skeptics are far from able to predict when transfer will never occur.

1.2. Rationale: Cross-linguistic Influences

In discussing the state of L1 and L2 knowledge in FL learners, we need to keep in mind that there is no single scientific truth. In this connection, McLaughlin (1988: 6), correctly, pointed out that "disciplines tend to become fragmented into 'schools', whose members are loath to accept, and are even hostile to the views of other schools using different methods and reaching different conclusions. Each group becomes convinced that it has a corner on 'truth'. One philosophical position contends that truth can never be known directly and, in its totality,". McLaughlin (1988) adds that "multiple ways of seeing result in multiple truths. Scientific progress is achieved as we come to illuminate progressively our knowledge in a particular domain by taking different perspectives, each of which must be evaluated in its own right" (p.6). In this regard, Brown (1988) points out that "no single discipline or theory or model or factor will ever provide a magic formula for solving the mystery of second language acquisition" (p. xii). Keeping the above in mind, I would like to emphasize the following points: (1) viewing transfer as the single most important reality of second language acquisition is risky, though no more so than viewing transfer as a negligible factor in L2 acquisition; and (2) the learning of a language must be viewed as a very complex process of which the development of a grammatical system is only one part. Properties

of L1 and L2 certainly do have some influence on this process and may account for some aspects of the learner's interlanguage (Oldin, 1996). Other factors especially psychological ones are likely to be of much greater importance for our understanding of the process of L2 acquisition, including linguistic and non-linguistic strategies involved. This view seems to be compatible with Ellis (1985) view: "While the learner's native language is an important determinant of second language acquisition, it is not the only determinant; however, and may not be the most important. But it is theoretically unsound to attempt a precise specification of its contribution or even try to compare its contribution with that of other factors" (p.40).

1.3. Theoretical Background

1.3.1. "Transfer" as a Notion

Although language transfer has been a central issue in applied linguistics, L2 acquisition, and language teaching for at least a century, its importance in L2 learning has been reassessed several times.

There are a number of reasons for language teachers and linguists to consider the problem of transfer. As Odlin (1996) points out (1) teaching may become more effective through a consideration of differences between languages and between cultures. (2) Consideration of the research showing similarities in errors made by learners of different backgrounds will help teachers to see better what may be difficult or easy for anyone learning the language they are teaching. (3) Research on transfer is also important for a better understanding of the nature of language acquisition in any context and is thus of interest to anyone curious about what is common to all languages; that is; language universals. (4) For historical linguists, knowledge about native language influence can lead to insights about the relation between language contact and language change.

Most SLA research in the 1960s was conducted within the framework of Contrastive Analysis. In the course of the controversy over the viability of the CAH, two versions of this hypothesis have emerged: "The strong vs. the weak" versions. The idea of the strong version is that it is possible to contrast the system of one language with the system of L2. On the basis of the result of this contrast, investigators can discover the similarities and differences between the two languages in question so that they can make predictions about what will be the points of difficulty for the learners of other languages. According to the strong version, wherever the two languages differed, interference would occur. That is, language transfer is the basis for predicting which patterns of the target language will be learned most readily and which will prove most troublesome. This version relies on the assumption that similarities will be easier to learn and differences harder. On the other hand, the weak version relies on two assumptions. First, error analysis may help investigators know, through errors the learners make, what the difficulties are. Second, investigators may realize the relative difficulty of specific errors through the frequency of their occurrence. The weak version may be easier and more practical than the strong version on the basis that it requires of the linguist that he/she use his/her linguistic knowledge to explain the observed difficulties in L2 learning. The error

analysis (EA) approach is based on the assumption that the frequency of errors is proportional to the degree of learning difficulty (Brown, 1980). As a reaction to the 'product' orientation of the morpheme studies and error analysis, and the feeling that a more 'process' oriented approach was needed, researchers began to work according to the interlanguage framework, which was developed in the late 1970s and 1980s. So, rather than focusing on the first or the target language, researchers began to develop data analytic procedures that would yield information about the dynamic qualities of language change that made the interlanguage a unique system; both similar to and different from the first and target languages. Interlanguage has come to characterize a major approach to L2 research and theory. Generally speaking, the term "interlanguage" means two things: 1) the learner's system at a single point in time, and 2) the range of interlocking systems that characterize the development of learners over time. The interlanguage is thought to be distinct from both the learner's L1 and from the target language.

1.3.2. Transfer in the Cognitive Theory

Individuals working within the cognitive theory framework apply the principles and findings of contemporary cognitive psychology to the domain of L2 learning (See Bialystok, Craik and Luk, 2008; Jiang, 2007). In this regard, Lightbown (1985) pointed out that L2 acquisition is not simply linear and cumulative, but is characterized by backsliding and loss of forms that seemingly were mastered. She attributed this decline in performance to a process whereby learners have mastered some forms and then encounter new ones that cause a restructuring of the whole system. "[Restructuring] occurs because language is a complex hierarchical system whose components interact in non-linear ways. Seen in these terms, an increase in error rate in one area may reflect an increase in complexity or accuracy in another, followed by overgeneralization of a newly acquired structure, or simply by a sort of overload of complexity which forces a restructuring, or at least a simplification, in another part of the system" (p.177). On the other hand, SLA theorists have argued whether bilingual individuals have two separate stores of information in long-term memory, one for each language, or a single information store accompanied by selection mechanism for using L1 or L2 (McLaughlin 1988). In this regard, O'Malley, Chamote and Walker (1987) pointed out that if individuals have a separate store of information maintained in each language, they would select information for use appropriate to the language context. To transfer information that was acquired in L1 to L2 would be difficult because of the independence of the two memory systems. An individual in the early stages of proficiency in L2 would either have to translate information from L1 to L2 or relearn L1 information in L2, capitalizing on existing knowledge where possible. A contrast to this argument for separate L1 and L2 memory systems, Cummins (1984) has proposed a common underlying proficiency in cognitive and academic proficiency for bilinguals.

Cummins argues that at least some of what is originally learned through L1 does not have to be relearned in L2, but can be transferred and expressed through the medium of L2. L2 learners may be able to transfer what they

already know from L1 into L2 by (a) selecting L2 as the language for expression, (b) retrieving information originally stored through L1 but presently existing as non-language-specific declarative knowledge, and (c) connecting the information to L2 forms needed to express it (See Montrul, 2008; Ribbert and Kuiken, 2010). Learning strategy research indicates that students of English as L2 consciously and actively transfer information from their L1 for use in L2.

1.4. Reverse/Backward Transfer: L2 ⟶ L1

There are several ways of conceptualizing L2 influence on L1. (1) The concept of Multi-Competence (Cook, 1991); (2) The common Underlying Conceptual Base (CUCB); (3) Representational Redescription Model; (4) The Dynamic model of Multilingualism; (5) Analysis/ Control Model; (6) The Chomskyan Minimalist Program. The above approaches share the following common features: (a) at some level of the L2 users mind is a whole that balances elements of the L1 and L2 within it; (b) keeping in mind the number of people who use second languages, monolingualism can be considered the exception, not only statistically but also in terms of human potential; (c) relatedly, if monolingualism is taken as the normal condition of humanity, L2 users can be treated as footnotes to the Linguistics of monolingualism.

1.5. Focus on Multi-Competence

1.5.1. Multi-competence: A declaration of independence for the L2 user

The concept "multicomptence" was introduced by Cook (1991) to mean "Knowledge of two or more languages in one mind". It was introduced because while "Interlanguage" had become the standard term for the speaker's knowledge of a second language, no word existed that encompassed their knowledge of both the L2 and their L1 (Cook, 2003). The notion of multicompetence has added a new spin by shifting the evaluation angle of the interlanguage system (Selinker, 1972) from one being filled with deficiencies, when compared to native speakers' competence, to one that deserves to be studied in its own right. Multicompetence thus presents a view of second language acquisition (SLA) based on the second language (L2) user as a whole person rather than on the monolingual native speaker. It, therefore, involves the whole mind of the speaker, not simply their first language (L1) or their second. It assumes that someone who knows two or more languages is a different person from a monolingual and so need to be looked at in their own right rather than as a deficient monolingual. From the multicompetence perspective, the different languages a person speaks are seen as one connected system, rather than each language being a separate system. People who speak a second language are seen as unique multilingual individuals, rather than people who have merely attached another language to their repertoire. Multi competence changes the angle from which second language acquisition is viewed. To avoid implying deficiency of the part of second language speakers, Cook prefers the term L2 user to L2 learner. An L2 user is anyone who knows a second language and uses it in real life, irrespective of their language level. Particular developments from multi-competence were: (a) The re-evaluation of the use

of native speakers as the norm in favour of L2 users in their own right; (b) Seeing transfer as a two-way process in which the L1 in the L2 user's mind is affected by the L2, as well as the reverse (See Cook, 2006; 2007; 2008, 2009, 2011)

1.5.2. The Concept of "Native Speaker": Re-Evaluation

Until the 1990s it was tacitly assumed that the only owners of a language were its native speakers. The objective of L2 learning was therefore to become as like a native speaker as possible; any difference counted as failure. A working definition of a native speaker is "a person who has spoken a certain language since early childhood" (Mc Arthur 1992). The native speaker construct has, however, become increasingly problematic in SLA research. SLA research has then been questioning its faith in the native speaker as the only true possessor of language. On the one hand, it is a highly idealized abstraction. Native speakers of any language vary from each other in many aspects of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary for dialectal, social and regional reasons. On the other hand, this seemed to be one group exercising power over another. Since Boas, linguistics has refrained from value judgments about different groups of speakers. Treating the native speaker as the model for SLA is falling into the same trap of subordinating the group of L2 users to the group of native speakers, to which they could never belong by definition.

The object of acquiring a second language should be to become an L2 user, and people should be measured by their success at being L2 users, not by their failure to speak like native speakers. The L2 user is a person in his or her own right, not an imitation of someone else. Relatedly, one group of human beings should not judge other people as failures for not belonging to their group. The interest of SLA research should be 'discovering L2 users characteristics, not their deficiencies compared with native speakers" (Cook, 2003:5). The concept "Multi Competence" leads us to see the L2 user a person in his or her own right, not as an approximation to a monolingual native speaker. L2 users make up the majority of human beings, and they form a very substantial group. Accordingly, people who have native-like skills in both languages are the exception rather than the norm among L2 users. Accordingly, the use of native-speaker measure "will blind us in the future to the overwhelming majority of L2 users who are far from native – like across two languages. However, a comparison of the L2 user with the native speaker may be legitimate provided any difference that is discovered is not treated as matters of deficiency. Persistent use of this comparison led, for example, to a view that code-switching in adults or children was to be deplored rather than commended. (Is it a sign of confusion or a skillful L2 use? Two points to remember: (A) According to Kecskes and Papp (2003), two interacting factors play a decisive role in shaping the L2→L1 influence: (1) Level of proficiency and the development of a common Underlying Conceptual Base; and (2) nature of transfer. (B) The nature of the L2→ L1 effect can vary depending on the social context of the language contact situation.

1.6. Positive Effects of L2 on L1

1.6.1. Knowledge of the First Language

When people learn a second language, the way they speak their first language changes in subtle ways. These changes can be with any aspect of language, from pronunciation and syntax to gestures the learner makes and the things they tend to notice (Cook, 2003). Garfinkel and Tabor (1991) found that children in elementary foreign language programs outperformed their monolingual peers in the acquisition of basic skills. Hakuta (1986) found a correlation of bilingual proficiency with higher scores on standardized tests and tests of both verbal and nonverbal intelligence. Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1993) found that English children who are taught Italian for an hour a week read English better than those who are not. Balcom (1995) found different acceptability judgments of French passive sentences in Francophone speakers who did or did not know English. Kecskes (1998) has found beneficial effects on the development and use of mother skills with regard to structural well-formedness in Hungarian students of modern languages. Marcos (1998) found that learning a second language in an elementary school usually enhances a child's learning ability in English. Satterfield (1999) showed that knowledge of English as an L2 caused increased use of overt pronouns in non-emphatic contexts in L1 Spanish by Spanish/English bilinguals. Another study on the influence of the second language on the first language is a study conducted by Darwish (1999) in Australia on Arab migrants which showed that negative transfer from English into Arabic seems to produce a new variety of Arabic that diverges from the norms of Arabic spoken in the Arab world (see Thomas, Collier and Abbott, 1993; Arcay-Hands, 1998).

Dumas (1999) showed that regardless of race, gender or academic level, students taking foreign language classes did better in the English section of the Louisiana Basic Skills Test than those who did not. Kecskes and Papp (2003) found that Hungarian children who know English use measurably more complex sentences in their L1 than those who do not. Bialystok (2001) has found that L2 user Children have more precious metalinguistic skills than their monolingual peers. Genoz (2002) found that there was a bi-directional interaction between English and Spanish in the pragmatic Component of Spanish / Bosque L1 Speakers. Murphy and Pine (2003), also revealed that bilingual children represented the knowledge of language more explicitly than the monolinguals of the same age. Laufer (2003) showed that an experienced Russian speaker of Hebrew uses a less rich vocabulary in Russian than comparative new comers. Pavlenko (2003) showed that Russian learners of English begin to rely on expressing emotions as states rather than as process. Cook (2003) showed that Japanese speaker of English are more prone to prefer plural subjects in Japanese sentences than Japanese who do not know English. Serrano and Howard (2003) conducted a study in the United States of America on the influence of English on the Spanish Writing of Native Spanish Speakers in Two-Way Immersion Programs. They discovered some influences of the second language (English) on the students' first language (Spanish).

Kaushankaya, Yoo and Marian (2011) examined the influence of second language experience on native-language vocabulary and reading skills in two groups of bilingual speakers. English-Spanish and English-Mandarin bilingual adults were tested vocabulary knowledge and reading fluency in English, their native language. Participants also provided detailed information regarding their history of second-language acquisition, including on the age of L2 acquisition, degree of L2 exposure, L2 proficiency, and preference of L2 use. Comparisons across the two bilingual groups revealed that both groups performed similarly on native-language vocabulary and reading measures. However, in English Spanish bilinguals, higher self-reported reading skills in Spanish were associated with higher English reading-fluency scores, while in English-Mandarin bilinguals, higher self-reported reading skills in Mandarin were associated with lower English reading –fluency scores. These findings suggest that second-language experiences influence native-language performance and can facilitate or reduce it depending on the properties of the second-language writing system (see Kecskes and Papp, 2000).

1.6.2. Thought Processes

The effects extend outside the area of language. L2 users think more flexibly than monolinguals, are more aware of language in general, and have better attitude towards other cultures. Bialystock (2001) found that children who have learned a second language have a sharper view of language if they speak an L2. Yelland et al., (1993) found that they learn to read more quickly in their L1. Diaz (1985) found that they have better conceptual development, creativity and analogical reasoning (see Athanasopoulos, 2009; Cook et al., 2010; Imai & Gentner, 1997; Cook et al., 2003; Jarvis, 2003).

Current research is exploring whether certain basic concepts are modified in those who know a second language. For example, Athanasopoulos (2001) found Greek Speakers who knew English had a different perception of the two Greek words covered by the English "blue", namely (ghalazio "light blue") and (ble, "dark blue) than monolingual Greek speakers. Dewale and Pavlenko (2003) found that Japanese people who had longer exposure to English chose shape rather than substance more often in a categorization experiment than those with less exposure. This means that some concepts in the L2 users' minds may be influenced by those of the second language; others may take forms that are the same neither as the L1 or the L2. This seems to suggest that people who speak different languages think, to some extent, in different ways.

To conclude, central to Cook's argument is the way in which people's language knowledge changes when they learn a second language. He makes three main points: (1) L2 users' knowledge of the second language is not the same as native speakers' knowledge of their languages; (2) L2 users' knowledge of their first language is not the same as that of monolingual native speakers; (3) L2 users think in different ways than monolinguals. metaphorically, one could compare the language in contact in the individual's mind to two liquid colors that blend unevenly; i.e. some areas, will take on the new color resulting from the mixing, but other areas may look like the new color, but a closer look may reveal a slightly different hue

according to the viewer's angle. Multicompetence should be seen as a never-ending, complex, non-linear dynamic process in a speaker's mind (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2003). It is hoped that Cook's recommendations, "can convince students that they are successful multicompetent speakers, not failed native speakers" (Cook, 1999, p. 204).

1.7. Negative Effects of L2 on L1

Changes in the first languages have been investigated in the framework of language attrition. The increasing dominance of the L2 was presented as one of the factors responsible for the gradual disappearance of the L1 (See Ben Rafael and Schmid, 2007; Tsimpli, 2007). Many studies have looked at language loss as a societal, socio-cultural phenomenon, focusing on language shift or language death affecting entire speech communities. Few studies have looked at a language loss as an individual, psycholinguistic phenomenon focusing on process of L1 attrition in individuals (Jarvis, 2003: 82). Most of the studies in the latter position have looked at L2 effects in cases where individuals are losing their ability to function in the L1. (See Schmid, 2011, 2012; Schmid et al., 2004).

In language learning theory, psycholinguistic perspectives of language attrition are mostly linked with partial acquisition and/or non-pathological language loss. In other words, either a language system is acquired only incompletely because of cross-linguistic contact, or some of the linguistic knowledge of a sufficiently acquired language system has been forgotten (Jessner, 2003). The question of what exactly is lost and when attrition starts is difficult to answer. Of the several hypotheses that have been formulated (Schmid, 2001) is the regression hypothesis. This claims that you forget items in the same order that you learned them. What remains an issue to be explored in psycholinguistic research in whether parts of a language system can be forgotten or whether they are simply not accessible for some reasons? In recent literature on forgetting, there is no loss of memory but only "inaccessibility of information if the might cause is not used" (De Bot, 1996) (p.583). Olshtain (1986) adds the component of proficiency level when she points out that last learned forms which have not as yet been fully mastered, are early candidates for attrition. In this regard, Jessner (2003) has maintained that forgetting is a gradual process of information decay that is dependent on time.

L1 language attrition has been shown to be significantly related to length of residence in the foreign country. According to Porte (2003), it might be useful to try to visualize the process of L1 attrition on a continuum along which various stages of maintenance and loss can be located, from "intact" knowledge of the L1 at one end of the continuum to complete loss at the other. It follows that there would be various stages along this hypothetical continuum at which one would expect to find greater degrees of loss and/or progressively more dominance of the L2; these would correspond to what content and amount of the first language is no longer readily accessed. However, along the continuum, these stages might also be expected to relate to the amount of control consciously maintained by the speaker over the foreign and native languages.

Vilar Sanchez (1995) argued that L1 erosion might be encouraged by mixing or switching between languages, and it might later be manifested in occasional and momentary lapses of memory where the native speaker might have a word or expression on the tip of the tongue" and remembered it after some kind of internal or external prompting. Jervis (2003) reviewed some research studies that investigated L2 English effects on L1 Finnish. The major finding from these studies is that first generation Finnish immigrants tend to be highly successful in maintaining their Finnish proficiency. They also tend to be quite proficient in English. The third generation Finnish immigrants in English speaking countries, tend to be essentially monolingual English speakers with only a limited knowledge of Finnish.

1.8. Implications for language teaching

The idea of multi competence as the compound state of a mind with two grammars has many implications. The starting point for language teaching should be the recognition that the second language user is a particular kind of person in their own right with their own knowledge of the first language (L1) and the second language (L2), rather than a monolingual with an added L2. An L2 user is a person who uses another language for any purpose at whatever level (Cook 2002). Multi competence has two major implications for language teaching. The first is about the question of what the final goal should be for language learners. The multicompetence viewpoint sees the goal of learning as becoming a successful L2 user. Language teaching therefore should reflect this: the goal of language learning should be based on what successful L2 users can do; not what monolingual native speakers can do. Also, teaching materials should show positive examples of L2 use and L2 users. The second implication is for the use of the first language in the classroom. If the first language can never truly be separated from the second language in the mind, it makes no sense to forbid the use of the first language in the language classroom. Cook argues that banning the use of the first language will not stop learners from using it to help with their language learning. It will only make its use invisible to the teacher. Instead, Cook suggests that teachers should think about how they can make use of both languages in suitable ways.

Cook (2001) stated that over the last century, the use of the first language has been largely taboo in second language teaching. In the strongest form, L1 use is banned, and in the weakest sense, it is minimized. However, he advocates a more positive view: maximum L2 use. Since multi competence means that the L1 is always present in the user's minds, it would be artificial and sometimes inefficient to avoid its use. Language is not compartmentalized within the mind, so there is little reason they should be in the classroom. Some reasons for using the L1 in the classroom are to convey and check the comprehension of lexical or grammatical forms and meanings, to give directions, and to manage the class. These things may be difficult or impossible to do without resorting to the L1.

The issue of the place of mother-tongue in FL instruction is one of the controversial topics in the field of foreign language teaching. Many arguments have been raised and the various language teaching methods (conventional and non-conventional) hold different fluctuating opinions.

Some recommend while others condemn the use of mother-tongue in the FL classroom. There are two extremes which are represented by the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method. The former, as its name suggests, makes liberal use of mother tongue. It depends on translation and considers the first language a reference system to which the foreign language learner can resort so as to understand the grammatical as well as the other features of the foreign language. The latter- (the other extreme)- tries to inhibit the use of mother tongue. It depends on using the foreign language in explanation and communication in the language classroom and excluding the first language and translation altogether.

Those who condemn mother-tongue use view that optimal FL learning can be achieved through the intralingual tackling of the various levels of linguistic analysis as this helps provide maximum exposure to the foreign language. It is true that providing maximum exposure to the foreign language helps a lot in learning that language. But this, with confining oneself to the foreign language only, may be done at the expense of understanding and intelligibility or in a routine and non-creative way. With careful and functional mother tongue use, intelligibility can be achieved and the time saved (by giving the meaning in the mother-tongue) can be used for practice. Therefore, mother-tongue use does not mean wasting time that can be better used for providing maximum exposure to the foreign language. Disregarding the mother tongue and considering it "a bogey to be shunned at all costs" is a myth. Those who recommend nothing but English in English lesson neglect many important facts: First, they have forgotten that FL learners translate in their minds and think in their own language and this cannot be controlled: "The teacher who says: I forbid the use of the pupil's own language in my class, nothing but English in the English lessons is deceiving himself. He has forgotten the one thing he cannot control - what goes on in the pupil's mind, He cannot tell whether, or when, his pupils are thinking in their own language. When he meets a new English word, the pupil inevitably searches in his mind for the equivalent in his own language. When he finds it, he is happy and satisfied, he has a pleasurable feeling of success". (French 1972: 94). Supporting this idea, Finocchiaro (1975) says: "We delude ourselves if we think the student is not translating each new English item into his native language when he first meets it (p.35). Second, they have also forgotten that "the unknown (a second language pattern) cannot be explained via something less known (the second language)" (Hammerly, 1971) (p.504). Third, they have forgotten that the mother-tongue is first in terms of acquisition and proficiency and so FL learners cannot escape its influence: "The mother-tongue is so strongly ingrained that no amount of direct method drill can override its influence. Therefore, according to this line of thought it is better to capitalize on the students' knowledge of (mother-tongue) than to pretend it is not there" (Grittner, 1977) (p.165). Fourth, they have forgotten that there are individual differences among students and that the weaker students may have difficulties in grasping a point in the foreign language. They don't advise FL teachers what to do in cases where attempts at English-English explanations have failed.

In a study conducted by Latke-Gajer (1984), she tried to look for a solution for what she observed while teaching English. The problem is that students, to understand an utterance in the foreign language, translate each word separately and then add together the meaning of individual words. This is harmful as it does not enable students to grasp the meaning of more complex statements, especially those that contain idiomatic expressions. She decided, in this study, to introduce English-English explanations of new words and expressions. She started the experiment with her advanced students by giving them a list of words to be explained in English at home and then they compared their explanations with the definition in Hornby"s dictionary. Although the experiment proved successful, especially with advanced students, it was not possible to totally eliminate Polish (as a mother-tongue) from the lessons. It was necessary to use it to explain several difficult and complicated grammatical patterns so that the weaker students could understand. With the beginners it was impossible to use this same method. For them, she suggests using different ways such as: opposition, describing pictures and using games.

The mother tongue cannot be totally excluded or disregarded. There are many situations in which a few words in the mother tongue will help clarify something students may not have comprehended in English. It is a myth to believe that "the best criterion for effective target language teaching is the absence of the mother-tongue in the classroom. Although the need for a target language environment in the classroom is controvertible, this does not imply, however, that the mother tongue has no role to play in effective and efficient language teaching. Where a word of Arabic can save Egyptian learners of English from confusion or significant time lost from learning, its absence would be, in my view, pedagogically unsound." (Altman, 1984) (p.79).

Absence of the mother tongue may result in meaningless and mechanical learning situations. This contradicts the recent research findings which stress that the two-way type of communication should be the ultimate goal of instruction and the tool which ensures better teaching results. With total exclusion of the mother tongue the teaching - learning situations may degenerate into a mechanical process in which "one may memorize (learn how to repeat) a phrase or a sentence in a foreign language, without knowing what it means. In such a case, one could say the person knows it (knows how to say it), but we could also say that the person does not understand what he or she is saying (comprehend its meaning)." (See Portocarrero and Burright, 2007).

It is pedagogically important to emphasize the element of meaningfulness in the teaching learning process. Students become motivated and active if they understand what is involved and if they know what they are doing. Therefore, it is important not to disregard the learners' need for the comprehension of what they learn or exclude the mother tongue because it is their right that they should make sense in their own terms of what they are learning. It is also important to use the learners' native language so as to avoid misunderstanding and achieve intelligibility (See Sparks et al., 2008).

Mother tongue plays a vital role in diminishing or at best eliminating the psychological factors that have an inhibiting effect on FL teaching and

learning. It has been noticed that the non-conventional methods of language teaching make use of the mother tongue and translation in FL/SL teaching and learning. They emphasize that mother tongue employing removes the fear of incompetence, mistakes and apprehension regarding languages new and unfamiliar. One point is that, to overcome the problems of dissatisfaction and avoidance, FL teachers should permit some mother-tongue use. Students, having linguistic inadequacies, can get confused and become hesitant about their oral participation. They may abandon a message they have started because a certain idea or a thought is too difficult to continue expressing in the foreign language. To overcome the feeling of dissatisfaction and psychological avoidance, FL learners should come to terms with the frustrations of being unable to communicate in the foreign language and build up, cognitively and effectively, a new reference system which helps them communicate an idea. This reference system is the mother tongue which is indeed very important for enhancing the FL learners' feeling of success and satisfaction. Another point is that mother-tongue use helps create a climate that alleviates the learners' tension, insecurity and anxiety. It makes the class atmosphere comfortable and productive and helps establish good relationships between the teacher and his students. However, it must be kept in mind that mother tongue should be used as little as possible, but as much as necessary.

2. Conclusion

Multi competence has two major implications for language teaching. The first is about the question of what the final goal should be for language learners. The multicompetence viewpoint sees the goal of learning as becoming a successful L2 user. Language teaching, therefore, should reflect this: the goal of language learning should be based on what successful L2 users can do, not what monolingual native speakers can do. Also, teaching materials should show positive examples of L2 use and L2 users. The second implication is for the use of the first language in the classroom. If the first language can never truly be separated from the second language in the mind, it makes no sense to forbid the use of the first language in the language classroom. Cook argues that banning the use of the first language will not stop learners from using it to help with their language learning. It will only make its use invisible to the teacher. Instead, Cook suggests that teachers should think about how they can make use of both languages in suitable ways.

The problem does not lie in whether mother-tongue has a place in FL teaching/learning or not, but in how much of it is permitted. In this respect, it can be said that there are many factors determining the quantity to be used. The quantification will differ according to the maturity level of the learners and their linguistic level. It also depends on the competence of the teacher, the material to be taught and the availability of teaching aids. Another point is that it is the individual teacher who sensitizes when to switch codes and when not to. It is also the teacher who can decide the pragmatic quantity to be used because what is workable in a certain class may not be so in another.

It is important to emphasize the fact that mother tongue should not be used in the wrong way. It is desirable in cases where it is necessary, inevitable and where otherwise valuable classroom time would be wasted. We do not want the FL teacher to use the mother tongue freely and to automatically translate everything on the learners' book. This unlimited use is so harmful that it discourages the learners from thinking in English (the language they are learning) and so it will not be taken seriously as a means of communication. "Translating can be a hindrance to the learning process by discouraging the student from thinking in English" (Haycraft, 1979, P.12). Students in most cases think in their mother tongue and lean too much on it. This makes them acquire and develop the habit of mental translation. They interpose the mother tongue between thought and expression developing a three-way process in production and expressing their intentions: Meaning to Mother tongue to English Expression. They always think, while trying to express themselves (in the foreign language), in their mother-tongue and all their attempts to communicate in the foreign language are filtered through the mother-tongue: "The mother-tongue is not relinquished, but it continues to accompany - and of course to dominate the whole complex fabric of language behavior.... all referent whether linguistic or semantic are through the Mother tongue". Grittner 1977) (p.81). This is pedagogically dangerous as it makes the FL learners believe that, to express themselves in the foreign language, the process is mere verbal substitution of words of the mother-tongue to their equivalents in the foreign language and this is an extremely a tiring way to produce correct sentences in the foreign language and creates no direct bond between thought and expression. The non-existence of this bond results in: hindering fluency in speech and proficiency in productive writing. Interposing the mother tongue between thought and expression hinders the intralingual associative process which is necessary for promoting fluency and automatic production of FL discourse: "The explicit linkage of a word in one language with a word in another language may interfere with the facilitative effects of intra-language associations. Thus, for instance, if a student repeats many times the pair go: also, the association between the two will become so strong that the French word will come to the student's mind whenever he uses the English equivalent and inhibit the smooth transition from 'go' to the other English words, a skill necessary for fluent speech".

FL teachers should guard against mental translation. This can be achieved by permitting the learners to express themselves (in speech or writing) within their linguistic capacities and capabilities. This means that the student, for instance, should first practice expressing given ideas instead of trying to fit language to his free mental activities and "if he is freed from the obligation to seek what to say, he will be able to concentrate on form and gradually acquire the correct habits on which he may subsequently depend". It is important to familiarize the learners with the fact that no word in one language can have or rightly be said to have the same meaning of a word in another language. FL teachers should provide more than one native equivalent for the FL word; give the meaning on the sentential level and in various contexts (See Nakamoto, Lindsey and Manis, 2008).

Cook (1999) also advocates more L2 user representation in the textbooks and materials teachers use in class. Just as there may be gender or ethnic bias in textbooks in general, there is a bias towards native speakers in ESL and EFL textbooks. As Cook explains, "the status of L2 users is in even more need of redress, because they are virtually never represented positively" (p. 200). Many times, the L2 user is represented as ignorant or incompetent. Appearances of successful L2 users would be helpful as they provide positive models and could contribute to the motivation and confidence of the students. Taken to the extreme, advanced learners and users of the L2 may not be much different from a native speaker in language use. However, it is important that these advanced L2 user models be provided to students because they are multicompetent, like the students, and unlike monolingual native speakers. Similarly, non-native speaker teachers and teaching materials that include successful L2 users may boost morale by providing attainable goals.

Another model that could be provided to the L2 learners is a non-native speaker teacher. Cook (2002) points out those students are more likely to identify with and to be able to emulate non-native speaker teachers than native speakers. Also, these teachers would be able to share their own experiences of learning the language, and may be more sensitive to the difficulties faced by the students. A non-native speaker teacher (NNST) is an L2 user who has acquired another language; a native speaker teacher (NST) is not. Hence the NNST can present a role model for the students, has learnt the language by a similar route to the students and can codeswitch to the students' own language when necessary. The NST's only substantive advantage may be a greater facility in the target language, but as a native speaker not as an L2 user.

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