

Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms

Jim Cummins

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

University of Toronto

Three inter-related assumptions regarding best practice in second/foreign language teaching and bilingual/immersion education continue to dominate classroom instruction. These assumptions are that: (a) the target language (TL) should be used exclusively for instructional purposes without recourse to students' first language (L1); (b) translation between L1 and TL has no place in the language classroom; and (c) within immersion and bilingual programs, the two languages should be kept rigidly separate. Research evidence provides minimal support for these assumptions and they are also inconsistent with the instructional implications of current theory in the areas of cognitive psychology and applied linguistics. Based on current research and theory, a set of bilingual instructional strategies are proposed and concrete examples are provided to illustrate how these strategies can be used together with monolingual strategies in a balanced and complementary way.

Trois postulats interreliés concernant les pratiques exemplaires en matière d'enseignement de langue seconde/étrangère et de programmes d'enseignement bilingue/immersif continuent de dominer les stratégies pédagogiques en classe. Selon ces postulats, (a) la langue cible (LC) doit être utilisée exclusivement à des fins d'enseignement sans recourir à la langue maternelle (L1) de l'élève; (b) la traduction entre L1 et LC n'a pas sa place dans un cours de langue; et (c) dans les programmes d'enseignement bilingue et immersif, les deux langues doivent être maintenues rigidelement séparées l'une de l'autre. La recherche fournit peu d'appui à ces postulats lesquels contredisent les implications pédagogiques des théories courantes dans les domaines de la psychologie cognitive et de la linguistique appliquée. Sur la base des recherches et des théories actuelles, un ensemble de stratégies pédagogiques bilingues est mis de l'avant et des exemples concrets sont décrits pour illustrer comment ces stratégies peuvent être utilisées, d'une manière équilibrée et complémentaire, en tandem avec des stratégies unilingues.

Introduction

This paper argues for reconceptualization of the empirical and theoretical rationales underlying much contemporary second/foreign language teaching and

Address for correspondence: Modern Language Centre, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), 252 Bloor St. West, Toronto, ON M5S 1V6. E-mail: jcummins@oise.utoronto.ca.

bilingual/immersion programs. Instructional policies are dominated by monolingual instructional principles that are largely unsupported by empirical evidence and inconsistent with current understandings both of how people learn (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2000) and the functioning of the bilingual and multilingual mind (e.g. Herdina and Jessner, 2002; Cook, 2007). I argue that when we free ourselves from exclusive reliance on monolingual instructional approaches, a wide variety of opportunities arise for teaching languages by means of bilingual instructional strategies that acknowledge the reality of, and strongly promote, two-way cross-language transfer.

I address this issue in the context of “multilingual classrooms”. I am using this term in a broad sense to refer to (a) “mainstream” and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classrooms that focus on English as the target language for students who are learning English as an additional language, and (b) bilingual and second language (L2) immersion classrooms that use two or more languages for instructional purposes. These classrooms may serve either linguistic majority students (e.g. English-speakers in French immersion) or linguistic minority students (e.g. Ukrainian first language [L1] speakers in the Edmonton English-Ukrainian bilingual program, or Spanish speakers in U.S. bilingual education contexts). They may also serve students whose home language is other than the two languages of instruction in bilingual/immersion programs (e.g. Chinese L1 students in French immersion). Although the focus is on “multilingual classrooms” in the senses outlined above, research conducted in L2 and/or foreign language classrooms is also relevant to the argument articulated in the paper and so this research is also discussed.

Three inter-related monolingual instructional assumptions are the focus of analysis:

1. *Instruction should be carried out exclusively in the target language without recourse to students' L1.*

As one implication of this assumption, bilingual dictionary use is discouraged. I term this the “direct method” assumption.

2. *Translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the teaching of language or literacy.*

In the context of second and foreign language teaching, use of translation is typically identified with the discredited grammar/translation method that sought to teach languages primarily by means of translation of texts and learning of grammatical rules. In bilingual/immersion programs, use of translation as an instructional strategy is typically equated with the concurrent translation method that utilized immediate translation across languages, with the result that students “tuned out” their weaker language and consequently learned very little of that language. I term this the “no translation” assumption.

3. *Within immersion and bilingual programs, the two languages should be kept rigidly separate.*

This assumption was initially articulated by Lambert and Tucker (1972) in the context of the St. Lambert French immersion program evaluation and since that time has become axiomatic in the implementation of second language immersion and most dual language programs. I term this the “two solitudes” assumption.

These three assumptions reflect what Howatt (1984), in his history of English language teaching, referred to as the “monolingual principle”. This principle emphasizes instructional use of the target language (TL) to the exclusion of students’ L1, with the goal of enabling learners to think in the TL with minimal interference from L1. This principle initially gained widespread acceptance more than 100 years ago in the context of the *direct method* and has continued to exert a strong influence on various language teaching approaches since that time (Howatt, 1984; Cook, 2001; Yu, 2001). According to Yu (2001), “[t]he direct method imitated the way that children learn their first language, emphasizing the avoidance of translation and the direct use of the foreign language as the medium of instruction in all situations” (p. 176). The primary focus is on the development of listening comprehension and speaking ability (rather than reading and writing skills) and “correct pronunciation and inductively acquired grammatical knowledge are insisted upon” (p. 176).

These assumptions were reflected in the audiolingual and audio-visual approaches that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and are also apparent in the implementation of communicative language teaching in many contemporary contexts. Cook (2001, p. 404) points out that:

Recent methods do not so much forbid the L1 as ignore its existence altogether. Communicative language teaching and task-based learning methods have no necessary relationship with the L1, yet . . . the only times the L1 is mentioned is when advice is given on how to minimize its use. The main theoretical treatments of task-based learning do not, for example, have any locatable mentions of the classroom use of the L1 Most descriptions of methods portray the ideal classroom as having as little of the L1 as possible, essentially by omitting reference to it.

Cook (2001, p. 413) argues for judicious use of the L1 in the teaching of second/foreign languages but cautions that despite the legitimacy of using the L1 under certain conditions, “it is clearly useful to employ large quantities of the L2, everything else being equal”.

Turnbull (2001) responded to Cook by acknowledging that while there is a place for teachers to use students’ L1 in second and foreign language teaching, there are major disadvantages when teachers rely too extensively on the L1. Specifically, when teachers who may not be highly fluent in L2 are given the

“green light” to use students’ L1, then L2 use in the classroom may decline significantly on the part of both teachers and students.

The exchange between Cook and Turnbull carries on a debate that has been active and ongoing in the literature on second language pedagogy. The research literature relevant to the three assumptions outlined above is reviewed in the following sections. What is important to highlight here, however, is that despite the continuing academic debate on these issues, policy and practice operate as though the “monolingual principle” had been established as axiomatic and essentially “common sense”. Cook (2001, p. 404), for example, points out that most teaching manuals consider the avoidance of L1 “as so obvious that no classroom use of the L1 is ever mentioned”. Similarly, in the Canadian context, there has been virtually no policy-oriented discussion of the “two solitudes” assumption in French immersion programs. It is simply assumed that the two languages should occupy separate instructional (and cognitive) spaces.

The Direct Method Assumption

Research in both foreign and second language contexts highlights the fact that instructional practice frequently involves both the TL and students’ L1. Duff and Polio (1990), for example, found high variability in the extent of L1 use in the foreign-language classroom, ranging from 10% to 100%, while Turnbull (2001) reported that TL use in four Grade 9 core French classrooms ranged from 9% to 89%. He pointed to the superior performance of students in the classrooms where teachers used French more frequently as suggestive evidence that more TL use is associated with higher achievement. He also reviewed several large-scale studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s showing a relationship between the proportion of teachers’ TL use and students’ TL achievement but he cautions that these studies do not necessarily support a linear relationship between TL use and the development of TL proficiency. A number of other variables such as teachers’ TL fluency and their general instructional expertise might have contributed to these findings. However, it does seem reasonable to infer from these findings that a considerable amount of communicative exposure or comprehensible input is a prerequisite for progress in acquiring the TL.

Turnbull points out that under some circumstances (e.g. explanation of a difficult grammatical concept) use of the L1 may be efficient but he emphasizes that “it is crucial for teachers to use the TL as much as possible in contexts in which students spend only short periods of time in class on a daily basis, and when they have little contact with the TL outside the classroom” (2001, p. 535).

Other research findings in foreign-language teaching contexts suggest a broader range of functions for the L1. Anton and DiCamilla (1998), for example, investigated the social and cognitive functions of L1 use in the collabora-

tive speech of adult beginner learners of Spanish engaged in a writing task in the TL. They reported that the use of L1 enabled learners to construct effective collaborative dialogue in the completion of meaning-based TL tasks.

In foreign-language teaching contexts, recourse to students' L1 is typically represented by researchers (and often by teachers' themselves) as a failure brought about by instructional conditions. Duff and Polio (1990), for example, responded to the low levels of TL use they found in many classrooms by suggesting ways in which L2 use could be increased. Cook (2001, p. 405) points out that teachers "resort to L1 despite their best intentions and often feeling guilty for straying from the L2 path". This reflects the extent to which the monolingual principle has been internalized as common sense by policy-makers and teachers, despite the fact that classroom practice often falls short of this standard.

The direct method assumption has been challenged much more actively in the context of second language instruction directed at speakers of minority or subordinated languages. Cautions on the part of researchers regarding L1 use frequently give way to advocacy of L1 use when the focus shifts from the foreign-language classroom, where learners predominantly speak the majority language as their L1, to L2 teaching contexts where speakers of minority or subordinated languages are attempting to learn the dominant societal language. The lack of empirical support for monolingual instructional approaches in the education of language minority students (e.g. Cummins, 2001; Gene-see, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders and Christian, 2006) has focused attention on the ideological roots underlying this approach. Phillipson (1992) challenged the following five inter-related assumptions underlying much English language teaching in global contexts:

- English is best taught monolingually.
- The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker.
- The earlier English is taught, the better the results.
- The more English is taught, the better the results.
- Standards of English will decline if other languages are used for any significant amount of instructional time.

Auerbach (1993) elaborates on these assumptions in the context of teaching English to adults in the North American context. She argues that although exclusive use of English in teaching ESL is typically seen as a natural and commonsense practice, there is, in fact, minimal pedagogical evidence supporting this approach. She reviews evidence showing that "L1 and/or bilingual options are not only effective but necessary for adult ESL students with limited L1 literacy or schooling and that the use of students' linguistic resources can be beneficial at all levels of ESL" (p. 9). Like Phillipson, she highlights the fact

that the monolingual principle is rooted in a particular ideological perspective which serves to reinforce inequities in the broader society.

Lucas and Katz (1994) attempted to reframe the contentious debate about language of instruction (English-only versus bilingual) for minority students in the United States by highlighting the fact that the incorporation of students' L1 need not be an all-or-nothing phenomenon. In a study of nine exemplary K–12 programs in which English was the primary language of instruction, they found multiple ways in which students' L1 was used in the classroom for instructionally useful purposes. They point out that this was the case even when teachers did not speak the language(s) of their students.

For example, teachers can have students work in groups or pairs of students with the same native language. They can utilize LM [language minority] students as linguistic resources for the class or involved LM community members in classroom activities. (p. 558)

The following are among the bilingual instructional activities documented by Lucas and Katz (1994) that do not require teachers to know the home languages of their students.

- At one site the teacher devised a group writing assignment in which students used their L1. At another site, students read or told stories to each other using their L1 and then translated them into English to tell to other students.
- Students from the same language backgrounds were paired together so that students who were more fluent in English could help those less fluent.
- Students were encouraged to use bilingual dictionaries as a resource to understand difficult text.
- Students were encouraged to discuss school work and get help at home in their native languages from family members.
- Books in students' L1s were provided and students were encouraged to read them.
- Awards were given for excellence in languages that are not commonly studied (e.g. a senior award in Khmer language ability).

The lack of credibility for any strong version of the direct method assumption is reinforced by several studies of dictionary use. Research consistently supports the efficacy of bilingual dictionary use for vocabulary learning as compared to monolingual dictionary use or simply learning from context alone (Luppescu and Day, 1993; Prince, 1996; Laufer and Kimmel, 1997; Laufer and Shmueli, 1997).

In summary, the empirical evidence is consistent both with an emphasis on extensive communicative interaction in the TL (ideally in both oral and

written modes) and the utility of students' L1 as a cognitive tool in learning the TL. As acknowledged by both Cook (2001) and Turnbull (2001), albeit with different emphases, there is no inherent contradiction between these positions and no empirical justification for any absolute exclusion of students' L1 from TL instruction.

The No Translation Assumption

This assumption follows logically from the direct method assumption. If students' L1 is excluded from the classroom, clearly translation from L1 to L2 or from L2 to L1 has no place. It is consequently not surprising that there has been minimal research on the potential instructional uses of translation in the classroom. This lack of interest in the potential classroom uses of translation contrasts with the documentation of bilingual students' often highly developed skills as language brokers translating for parents in various contexts outside the classroom (Malakoff and Hakuta, 1991; Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner and Meza, 2003). Studies carried out by Malakoff and Hakuta (1991) demonstrated that translation skill is widely found among bilingual children by late elementary school. They speculate about potential pedagogical applications, noting that "[t]ranslation provides an easy avenue to enhance linguistic awareness and pride in bilingualism, particularly for minority bilingual children whose home language is not valued by the majority culture" (p. 163).

Other studies carried out among Spanish-speaking students in the United States have similarly pointed to the sophisticated abilities of many students to interpret English language texts for their families (Orellana *et al.*, 2003; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez and Shannon, 1994). Manyak (2004) extended this research into the school context by documenting the range and functions of cross-language activities occurring in a combined Grade 1/2 classroom in California. Although the classroom was officially an English immersion classroom, the teacher encouraged students to use their L1 as a social and intellectual resource. The claims Manyak makes on the basis of his research are paraphrased below.

1. Translation promotes the acquisition of English

Each morning, the teacher, Ms. Page, and students met on the rug for the "Daily News," during which time students volunteered to share news from their lives and Ms. Page scribed their accounts on a large sheet of lined paper. Although most students shared their news in Spanish, Ms. Page wrote in English, asking the students for help in translating their peers' words. The class then read the news together. Manyak points out that "[b]y allowing the children to share their personal narratives in Spanish, Ms. Page enabled even the most limited English-speaking students to participate in the Daily

News” (2004, p. 14). Furthermore, children’s English was enhanced by encouraging them to translate their own and their peers’ Spanish narratives into English—they were challenged to produce comprehensible output in English.

2. *Translation promotes biliteracy development*

Students were encouraged by Ms. Page to read and write in the language of their choice during much of the school day. Just as they had translated oral narratives, many students also engaged in translation of written text. For example, during the class’s writing workshop, “many students composed bilingual books by translating stories written in one language into the other” (Manyak, 2004, p. 15), thereby developing literacy in both languages simultaneously (see Reyes, 2001, for another example of the spontaneous development of biliteracy among Spanish-speaking students in the primary grades).

3. *Translation promotes identities of competence*

Manyak points out that the interactional spaces created for translation established bilingualism as a highly esteemed ability in the class. This was especially apparent on those occasions when English-speaking students from another Grade 1 class were combined with Ms. Page’s class for integration purposes. After reading storybooks to the class, Ms. Page would give students the opportunity to take on the personas of the main characters and to answer other students’ questions from the character’s perspective. Bilingual students would frequently field questions in English and Spanish and translate their answers to meet the needs of the non-bilingual students in the audience. These public displays of linguistic agility evoked admiration from peers while facilitating students’ understanding of literature. Manyak also points out that the collaborative meaning making across languages improved the sometimes tense relations between Latino/Latina and African American students at the school.

Manyak acknowledges that Ms. Page’s own bilingualism facilitated the students’ translation across languages but he points out that monolingual teachers can also engage in this kind of pedagogical practice by utilizing the bilingual resources of students in the classroom as well as through collaboration with colleagues, paraprofessionals and community members who speak students’ home languages. He summarizes the benefits of translation as follows:

As I have illustrated, these acts of translation played a key role in making activities accessible for very limited English speakers, fostering the children’s language and literacy development, promoting interpretive discussions of children’s literature among students of different language back-

grounds, and positioning bilingualism as a special emblem of academic competence. (2004, p. 17)

The Two Solitudes Assumption

The two solitudes assumption is expressed clearly by Lambert (1984, p. 13) in discussing the medium of instruction in French immersion programs:

No bilingual skills are required of the teacher, who plays the role of a monolingual in the target language . . . and who never switches languages, reviews materials in the other language, or otherwise uses the child's native language in teacher-pupil interactions. In immersion programs, therefore, bilingualism is developed through two separate monolingual instructional routes.

Although these strictures have been relaxed from the time of the initial St. Lambert experiment (Lambert and Tucker, 1972)—for example, the same teacher frequently teaches both the French and English parts of the day in Grades 4 through 6—the principle of linguistic separation remains largely unchallenged within French immersion theory and practice.

For reasons outlined above related to the importance of promoting extensive communicative interaction and comprehensible input in the TL, it does seem reasonable to create largely separate spaces for each language within a bilingual or immersion program. However, there are also compelling arguments to be made for creating a shared or interdependent space for the promotion of language awareness and cross-language cognitive processing. The reality is that students are making cross-linguistic connections throughout the course of their learning in a bilingual or immersion program, so why not nurture this learning strategy and help students to apply it more efficiently.

Lambert and Tucker (1972) were among the first to note that students in French immersion programs engaged in a form of contrastive linguistics where they compared aspects of French and English, despite the fact that the two languages were kept rigidly separate for instructional purposes. Considerable subsequent research has documented convincingly the enhancement of metalinguistic awareness that bilingual students experience as a result of processing two languages (see Cummins, 2001, for a review). If students in bilingual/immersion programs spontaneously focus on similarities and differences in their two or three languages, then they are likely to benefit from systematic encouragement by the teacher to focus on language and develop their language awareness. Unfortunately, rigid and complete separation of languages makes this kind of cross-language instructional focus impossible.

Among the bilingual instructional strategies that are excluded by the two solitudes assumption are the following:

- *Focus on cognates.*

The academic lexicon of English is derived primarily from Latin and Greek sources (Corson, 1997) and there are thousands of words with cognate relationships that are common between English and romance languages such as French and Spanish. Systematic cross-linguistic exploration of the structure of the Graeco-Latin lexicon of both English and French as a means of expanding vocabulary knowledge in both languages would seem to be an obvious instructional strategy in French immersion programs (e.g. Nagy, Garcia, Durgunoglu and Hancin-Bhatt, 1993; Tréville, 1996).

- *Creation of dual language multimedia books and projects.*

As outlined below, the creation of bilingual books or projects and the sharing of this work with a wide audience through the world wide web strongly reinforces students' sense of self and fuels sustained engagement with literacy (see, for example, thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/, the Dual Language Showcase, as well as www.multiliteracies.ca, the Multiliteracies web site). In the context of French immersion and other bilingual programs that rigidly separate the two languages, this type of project becomes impossible and so students rarely, if ever, get to showcase their bilingual literacy skills. By contrast, a bilingual instructional strategy that focused on promoting cross-language transfer and the development of language awareness might encourage students to write initially in their stronger language and work from that language to the TL (at other times the reverse strategy might be employed, going from TL to L1). Thus, Grade 4 students in French immersion might write a story or carry out a group project initially in English (working on it during the English instructional periods) and then work from there to French with support from the teacher and peers. Auerbach (1993, p. 20) cites the research of Strohmeier and McGrail (1988) who reported that adult students who explored ideas initially in their L1 (Spanish) and wrote first in that language "went on to write pieces in English that were considerably more developed than their usual ESL writing".

- *Sister class exchanges.*

The technology is readily available in most North American and European schools to enable students to engage in technology-mediated sister class exchanges using L1 and L2 to create literature and art and/or to explore issues of social relevance to them and their communities (e.g. Social History of Our Community, Voices of our Elders, etc.). Students can also create movies, audio CDs, and/or multilingual web pages in collaboration with their sister classes (see Cummins, Brown and Sayers, 2007, for case studies and elaboration of the pedagogical foundations of these projects). In the case of French immersion programs, communicative interaction in the TL (French)

can clearly be enhanced by partnering with students in a French-speaking region or country. However, these students are likely also to be learning English and to want communicative interaction in that language. Thus, both languages are likely to be involved in any such exchange. Depending on the arrangements worked out by the teachers involved, students might use L1 or L2 or both languages to communicate with each other and to create a joint project (e.g. a bilingual newsletter where students help edit each other's writing). Regardless of the specific arrangement, any bilingual sister class exchange is likely to be problematic for educators who adhere to the two solitudes assumption.

Theoretical Perspectives

Three theoretical perspectives that are not easily reconciled with the monolingual principle are briefly sketched below. The first derives from cognitive psychology research (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2000) and highlights the centrality of building on students' prior knowledge in order to promote optimal learning. If students' prior knowledge is encoded in their L1, then their L1 is clearly relevant to their learning even when instruction is through the medium of L2. The second theoretical perspective highlights the interdependence of literacy-related skills and knowledge across languages and the fact that cross-lingual transfer is occurring as a normal process of bilingual development (e.g. Cummins, 1981). Rather than leaving this process to unfold in a potentially sporadic and haphazard manner, it seems reasonable to teach for two-way cross-lingual transfer (L1 to L2, L2 to L1) in order to render the process as effective as possible. The third theoretical perspective challenges the monolingual norm that has characterized much of the research in bilingual education and L2 learning, instead advocating a dynamic systems view of multilingualism (e.g. Herdina and Jessner, 2002) and introducing the notion of "multi-competence" (Cook, 2007) to highlight the fact that L2 users have different mental structures from monolinguals.

Engaging prior understandings

The volume written by Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000) entitled *How People Learn* synthesizes research evidence regarding how learning occurs and the optimal conditions to foster learning. A follow-up volume edited by Donovan and Bransford (2005) examines the application of these learning principles to the teaching of History, Mathematics and Science. Bransford and his colleagues emphasize three major conditions for effective learning:

- engaging prior understandings
- integrating factual knowledge with conceptual frameworks
- taking active control over the learning process through meta-cognitive strategies

The role of prior knowledge is particularly relevant to the issue of teaching for cross-linguistic transfer because if prior knowledge is encoded in students' L1, then the engagement of prior knowledge is inevitably mediated through L1.

Donovan and Bransford (2005, p. 4) point out that "*new understandings are constructed on a foundation of existing understandings and experiences*" (emphasis original). Prior knowledge, skills, beliefs and concepts significantly influence what learners notice about their environment and how they organize and interpret their observations. Prior knowledge refers not just to information or skills previously acquired in a transmission-oriented instructional sequence but to the totality of the experiences that have shaped the learner's identity and cognitive functioning.

This principle implies that when students are being educated through a second language (either in second/foreign language instruction or in bilingual/immersion programs) instruction should explicitly attempt to activate students' prior knowledge and build relevant background knowledge as necessary. However, monolingual instructional approaches appear at variance with this fundamental principle of learning because they regard students' L1 (and, by implication, the knowledge encoded therein) as an impediment to the learning of L2. As a result, these approaches are unlikely to focus on activation of students' prior knowledge. In cases where monolingual approaches do acknowledge the role of prior knowledge, they are likely to limit its expression to what students can articulate through their L2.

Interdependence across languages

The interdependence hypothesis was formally expressed as follows (Cummins, 1981):

To the extent that instruction in L_x is effective in promoting proficiency in L_x, transfer of this proficiency to L_y will occur provided there is adequate exposure to L_y (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn L_y. (p. 29)

In concrete terms, what this principle means is that in, for example, a French immersion program in Canada, instruction that develops French reading and writing skills is not just developing *French* skills, it is also developing a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the majority language (English). In other words, although the surface aspects (e.g. pronunciation, fluency, etc.) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages. This common underlying proficiency makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy-related proficiency from one language to another.

There is extensive empirical research that supports the interdependence of literacy-related skills and knowledge across languages (see reviews by Baker, 2001; Cummins, 2001; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders and Christian, 2006). Thomas and Collier (2002), for example, found that immigrant students' L1 proficiency at the time of their arrival in the United States is the strongest predictor of English academic development. In recent years, a number of different terms have been proposed to refer to the notion of a common underlying proficiency. Baker (2001), for example, discusses the *common operating system*, Kecskes and Papp (2000) propose a *common underlying conceptual base*, while Genesee *et al.* (2006) favour a *common underlying reservoir of literacy abilities*. Whatever terminology is employed, the construct includes both procedural and declarative knowledge—knowing how and knowing that.

Five major types of cross-lingual transfer can be specified that will operate in varying ways depending on the sociolinguistic and educational situation:

- Transfer of conceptual elements (e.g. understanding the concept of photosynthesis);
- Transfer of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies (e.g. strategies of visualizing, use of graphic organizers, mnemonic devices, vocabulary acquisition strategies, etc.);
- Transfer of pragmatic aspects of language use (willingness to take risks in communication through L2, ability to use paralinguistic features such as gestures to aid communication, etc.);
- Transfer of specific linguistic elements (knowledge of the meaning of *photo* in *photosynthesis*);
- Transfer of phonological awareness—the knowledge that words are composed of distinct sounds.

The central point here is that learning efficiencies can be achieved if teachers explicitly draw students' attention to similarities and differences between their languages and reinforce effective learning strategies in a coordinated way across languages. For example, if the teacher is explaining the meaning of the term *predict* in science (taught in English) within a French immersion program, it makes sense to explain the meaning of the root (from the Latin *dicere* meaning 'to say') and the prefix (meaning 'before') as well as drawing students' attention to the fact that the root and prefix operate in exactly the same way in the French word *prédire*.

Multilingualism as a qualitatively different system from monolingualism

A number of theorists have emphasized that bi- and multilingualism represent dynamic cognitive systems that are qualitatively different from the cognitive

systems of monolinguals. Herdina and Jessner (2002), for example, proposed that the presence of one or more language systems influences the development not only of the L2 but also the development of the overall multilingual system, including the L1. This perspective goes beyond the notion of interdependence across languages, discussed in the previous section, by highlighting the fact that the entire psycholinguistic system of the bi- and multilingual is transformed in comparison to the relatively less complex psycholinguistic system of the monolingual. Jessner (2006, p. 35) expressed this point as follows:

But in contrast to the hypotheses of Cummins, and Kecskes and Papp, all of whom describe a kind of overlap between the two language systems, DST [dynamic systems theory] . . . presupposes a complete metamorphosis of the system involved and not merely an overlap between two subsystems. If this is applied to multilingual development, it means that the interaction between the three systems results in different abilities and skills that the learners develop due to their prior learning experience.

This theoretical perspective represents an elaboration of constructs originally proposed by Grosjean (1989) and Cook (1995) that highlighted qualitative differences between the mental systems of monolinguals and multilinguals. Cook's term *multi-competence* encapsulates this theoretical orientation. It refers to the presence of two or more languages in the same mind and highlights the fact that multi-competence is not comparable to monolingual competence in each language.

The theoretical constructs elaborated by Cook (1995) and Jessner (2006) are not in any way inconsistent with the notion of a common underlying proficiency (CUP). The CUP construct was addressed to the explanation of a different set of issues and clearly does not aim to provide the kind of elaborated cognitive model envisaged by dynamic systems theory. What all these constructs share is a recognition that the languages of bi- and multilinguals interact in complex ways that can enhance aspects of overall language and literacy development. They all also call into question the pedagogical basis of monolingual instructional approaches that appear dedicated to minimizing and inhibiting the possibility of two-way transfer across languages. In short, the two solitudes assumption within bilingual/immersion programs is fundamentally at variance with current understandings of bi- and multilingual mental functioning.

Teaching for transfer: A case study of bilingual instructional strategies

An example from a research study conducted in the greater Toronto area (Cummins, Bismilla, Chow, Cohen, Giampapa, Leoni, Sandhu and Sastri, 2005) illustrates the instructional possibilities that emerge when bilingual students' L1 and prior knowledge are acknowledged as important resources for learn-

ing. Several months after her arrival in Canada from Pakistan, Grade 7 student Madiha Bajwa authored with two of her friends, Kanta Khalid and Sulmana Hanif, a bilingual Urdu-English book entitled *The New Country*. The 20-page book “describes how hard it was to leave our country and come to a new country”. Both Kanta and Sulmana had arrived in Toronto in Grade 4 and were reasonably fluent in English but Madiha was in the very early stages of English acquisition.

The three girls collaborated in writing *The New Country* in their “mainstream” Grade 7/8 classroom in the context of a unit on the theme of migration that integrated social studies, language and ESL curriculum expectations. They researched and wrote the story over several weeks, sharing their experiences and language skills. Madiha’s English was minimal but her Urdu was fluent, Sulmana and Kanta were fluent and reasonably literate in both Urdu and English. In composing the story, the three girls discussed their ideas primarily in Urdu but wrote the initial draft in English with feedback and support from their teacher (Lisa Leoni). When the English draft was finalized they translated it into Urdu.

In a “normal” classroom, Madiha’s ability to participate in a Grade 7 social studies unit would have been severely limited by her minimal knowledge of English. She certainly would not have been in a position to write extensively in English about her experiences, ideas and insights. However, when the social structure of the classroom was changed in very simple ways that permitted her to draw on her L1 concepts and literacy, Madiha was enabled to express *herself* in ways that few L2 learners experience. Her home language, in which all her experience prior to immigration was encoded, became once again a tool for learning. She contributed her ideas and experiences to the story, participated in discussions about how to translate vocabulary and expressions from Urdu to English and from English to Urdu, and shared in the affirmation that all three students experienced with the publication of their story as a (hard copy) book and on the world wide web (www.multiliteracies.ca). The fact that instruction was conducted in English and the teacher did not know Urdu or the other home languages of students in her multilingual classroom was not an impediment to the implementation of bilingual instructional strategies.

The fusion of affective, cognitive and linguistic processes in the creation of dual language texts is reflected in the label *identity texts* that we have used to refer to students’ bilingual writing (Cummins *et al.* 2005). This term describes the products of students’ creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space orchestrated by the classroom teacher. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts which can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form. The identity text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences

(peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, the media, etc.) they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences. Although not always an essential component, technology acts as an amplifier to enhance the process of identity investment and affirmation. It facilitates the production of these texts, makes them look more accomplished, and expands the audiences and potential for affirmative feedback.

Translation is an integral part of creating dual language identity texts. Translation also plays an important role in enabling bilingual and newcomer students to participate actively in instruction. Students who engaged in creating dual language identity texts were asked how they felt about using their L1 in the classroom and the extent to which they felt L1 use might help with reading and writing in English (Bismilla, Cummins, Leoni and Sandhu, 2006). The following written comments reflect newcomer students' insights into both the role of prior knowledge and cross-lingual transfer in L2 learning (spelling and punctuation original):

When I allowed to use Hebrew it helps me understand English I thinking in Hebrew and write in English. If I read in English I think in Hebrew and understand more.

When I am allowed to use my first language in class it helps me with my writing and reading of english because if I translation in english to urdu then urdu give me help for english language. I also think better and write more in english when I use urdu because I can see in urdu what I want to say in english.

When I am allowed to use Urdu in class it helps me because when I write in Urdu and then I look at Urdu words and English comes in my mind. So, its help me a lot. When I write in English, Urdu comes in my mind. When I read in English I say it in Urdu in my mind. When I read in Urdu I feel very comfortable because I can understand it.

Figure 1 shows how Madiha illustrates the strategies she uses for learning English in content areas.

Despite their still limited English, these newcomer students insightfully describe what happens inside their heads as they grapple with the learning of English. Their responses accurately reflect the quantitative research on cross-lingual interdependence. They highlight the transfer of concepts and strategies across languages and forcefully call into question the prevalence of monolingual instructional assumptions that essentially deny students access to their L1 as a resource for learning.

In short, this research problematizes the exclusion of translation as a viable pedagogical strategy in L2 teaching contexts. Under conditions of student engagement in substantive projects to which they are committed (e.g. writing

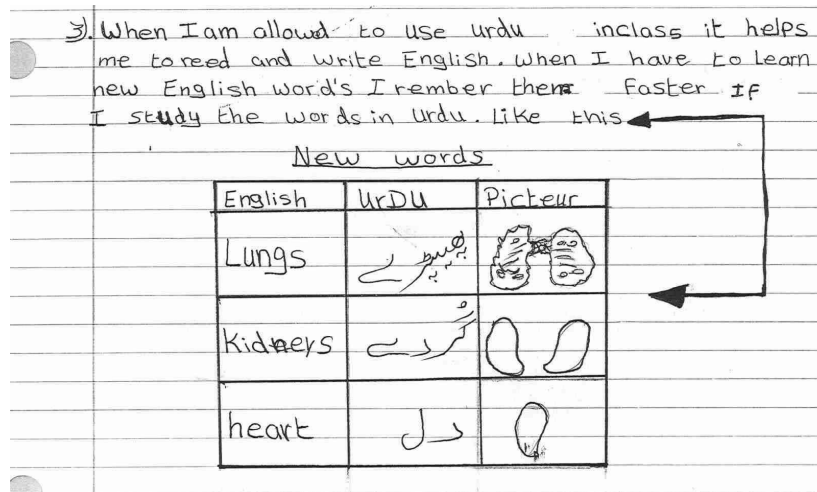


Figure 1: Madiha’s illustration of strategies for learning English

identity texts, projects written up in two or more languages, etc.), translation from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1 can be a powerful tool to develop language and literacy skills and increase metalinguistic awareness. Our observations and video recordings of Kanta, Sulmana and Madiha discussing their story show frequent discussion of translation equivalents in English and Urdu. Sulmana notes that writing the story in both languages made her realize that she had forgotten some words in Urdu and it motivated her to read more books in Urdu at home. Kanta highlights the fact that L1 use and translation helped both her, and Madiha in particular, become conscious of the very different structures in Urdu and English:

It helped me a lot to be able to write it in two languages and especially for Madiha who was just beginning to learn English because the structure of the two languages is so different. So if you want to say something in Urdu it might take just three words but in English to say the same thing you'd have to use more words. So for Madiha it helped the differences between the two languages become clear.

Conclusion

The arguments presented in this paper to rethink exclusive reliance on monolingual instructional strategies in second/foreign language teaching and bilingual/immersion programs are not intended to encourage regression to predominant use of translation nor to dilute the centrality of promoting L2 communicative interaction in both oral and written modes in L2 classrooms. Rather

the paper is intended to promote examination of the basic tenets of language learning and teaching in light of new insights in cognitive psychology and applied linguistics, together with the possibilities for enhancing communicative interaction and literacy development opened up by technological advances (e.g. easy access to multimedia publication and cross-cultural communication; see Lotherington, this volume). The assumptions identified in the paper — *direct method*, *no translation* and *two solitudes* — are problematic because, in their strong forms, they are unsupported by empirical data and inconsistent with current understandings of the workings of the bi- and multilingual mind. They also operate to exclude some extremely powerful opportunities for L2 learning and use from the classroom. As illustrated by Manyak's (2004) research and the Cummins *et al.* (2005) case study, implementation of bilingual instructional strategies in the classroom can promote identities of competence among language learners from socially marginalized groups, thereby enabling them to engage more confidently with literacy and other academic work in both languages. Bilingual instructional strategies can also promote identity investment among both majority and minority students in bilingual/immersion programs by encouraging them to express themselves through both of their languages by means of collaborative multimedia projects that are accessible to a wide audience.

The basic proposition of the paper is that students' L1 is not the enemy in promoting high levels of L2 proficiency; rather, when students' L1 is invoked as a cognitive and linguistic resource through bilingual instructional strategies, it can function as a stepping stone to scaffold more accomplished performance in the L2.

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