ENGLISH IN ENGLISH? LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

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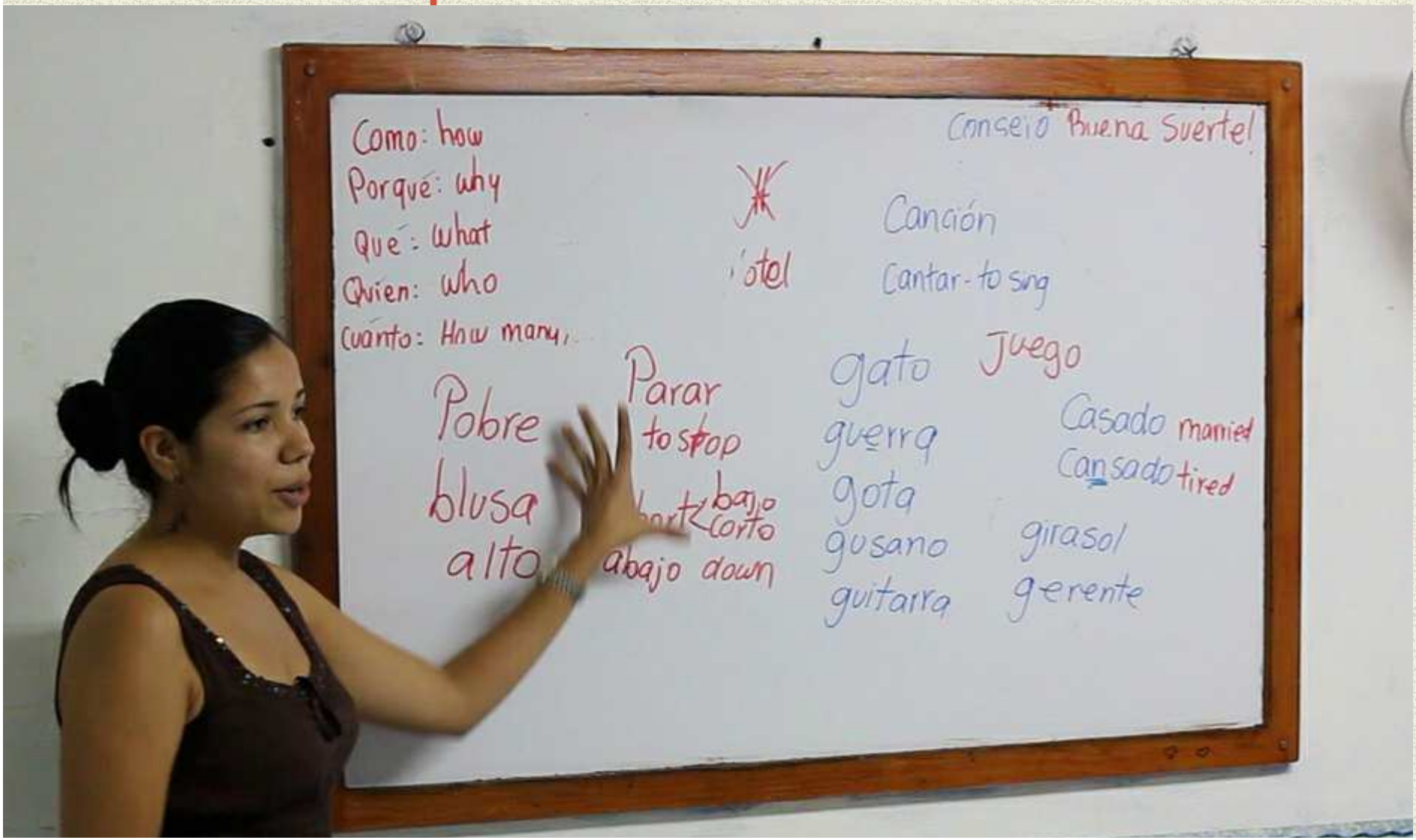
你好
HELLO

L1 + the Target Language (TL)
Is this acceptable?



Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Israel

English: TARGET LANGUAGE (TL)

Hebrew or Arabic (but also Amharic or Russian etc.):

Students' L1

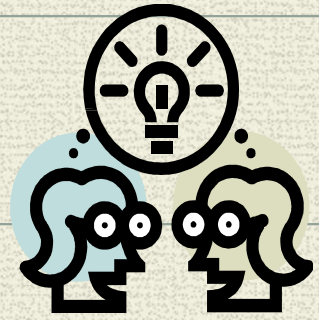
Question: Can/Should the L1 be part of the TL classroom environment?

Dilemmas:

No L1 Some L1, Mixed Codes L1 + TL Mostly TL

Does it apply to all learners?
Young learners? Older more proficient?
And what does it have to do with teachers who are native or non-native English speakers?

Reflect & Share



1. Do you think that when teaching EFL **English** should be used
- All the time
- Most of the time
- Sometime?

Why?

2. How often do you use the learners' L1 when teaching English?
- All the time
- Most of the time
- Sometime
- Never

How do you feel about it?

If you do use the learners' L1:
What purpose(s) do you use it for?

Let's talk about it

- Background to the L1/ TL debate
- Research on the linguistic choices of EFL teachers teaching young learners- Hebrew & Arabic L1
- Finally: Determining personal Policy:

English in English?

The virtual approach (zero L1 use)

- Language teaching pedagogy ignores or even suppress bilingual or multilingual options
- Predominantly monolingual policy:
- **'Good language teaching' = exclusive (or nearly exclusive) TL use**.
- Impacts teacher education,

  teacher evaluation,

  teachers' self-efficacy

Theoretical background

- EXCLUSIVE TL USE (Virtual position) originated in immersion programs (Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009)
- Comprehensible Input (Krashen 1982)
- Pedagogical Assumption: Increased exposure will lead to better language proficiency
- Phillipson (1992) & Pennycook (1998): the dominance of the virtual (non-L1approach) impacted by the dominance of and preference for native English speaker teachers (colonialism)

However:

No causal relationship found between exclusion of the first language and improved learning (Cummins, 2007)

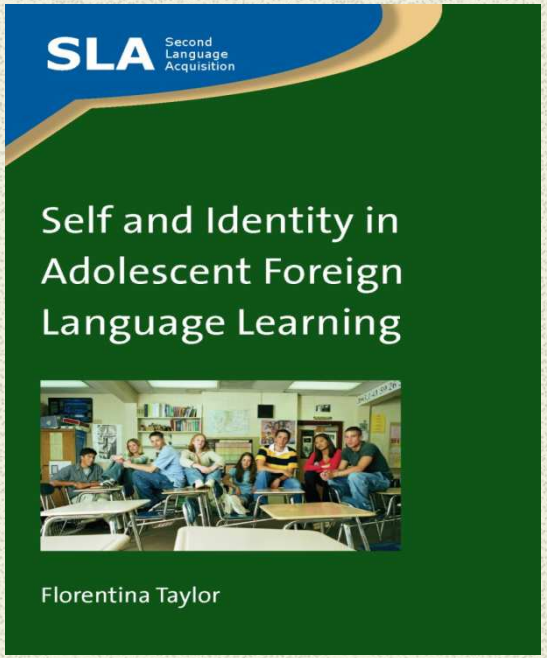
Exclusive TL assumptions and ensuing methodology are being contested

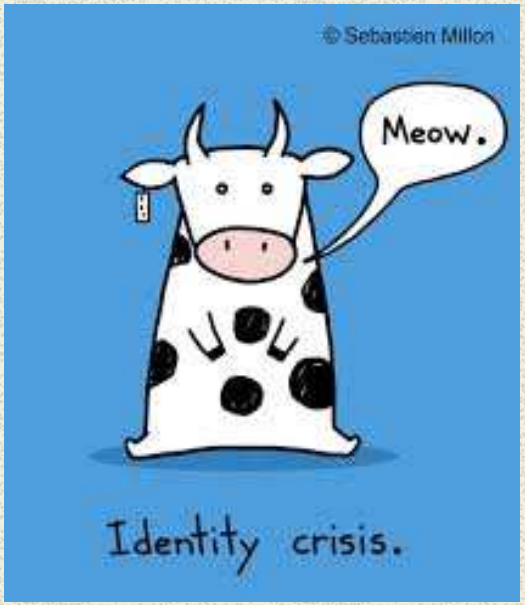
Reality has changed

- Globalization, mixed codes, hybrids and fusion of a number of languages (Canagarajah, 2007).
- Recognition of the benefits of multilingualism
- Pluraligualism (The Common European Framework of Languages – CEFR)
- Language teaching can benefit by paying attention to the L2 users and utilizing their L1 (Blyth, 2003; Cook,1999)

IDENTITY (Norton, 2013)

- Language as a major force in identity construction
- Ignoring L1 may lead to an identity crisis





Sociolinguistic Pedagogical & Critical Perspectives

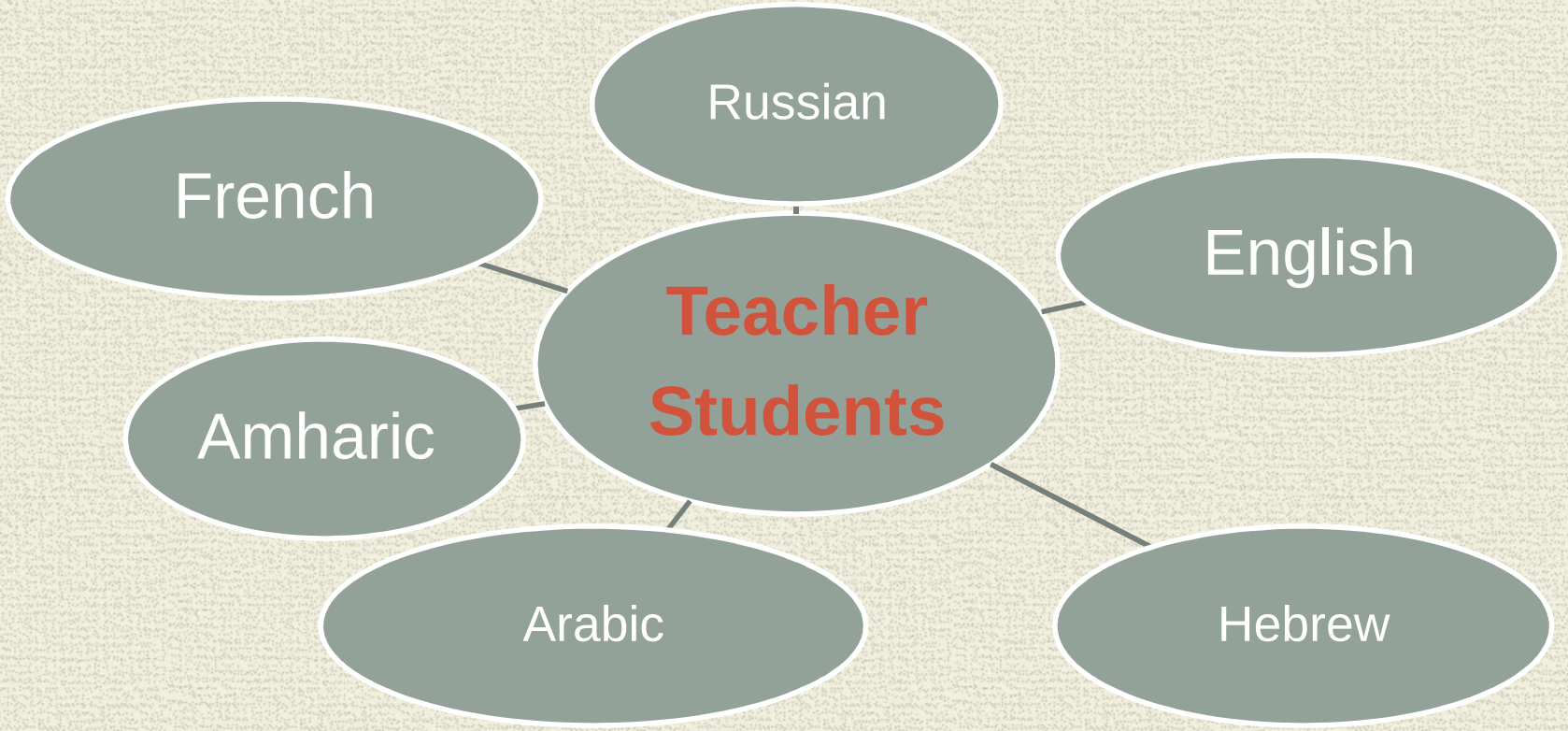
- Code switching: a natural phenomenon at all language proficiency levels
- Selected code switching in the language classroom reflects authentic language use

- **Macaro (2005): Continuum**

No L1 use _____ **Maximal L1**

Language teaching/learning environments

potentially multilingual



Should this linguistic potential be ignored or legitimized as one of the tools for teaching the new language? If, so, to what extent and for what purpose?

Research on L1 use

- Acknowledges the positive role of the mother tongue in the classroom: Use of L1 helps in acquiring L2
- What for? Teachers use the L1 for a variety of purposes
- How much? Great variation in terms of the quality and quantity of L1 use

(Dörnyei and Kormos,1998; Macaro, 2005; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009)

More on Teachers & TL/L1 use

- Differentiate between advanced and less advanced learners in this respect.
- Likewise, degree of group heterogeneity was seen to impact teachers' L1 use, as it was implemented to assist the weaker students to keep up with their studies, especially with abstract notions and new ideas (Crawford, 2004)
- L1 versus TL choices did not correlate with the teachers' proficiency level

Possible L1 functions:

- Classroom management (instructions, prompts)
- Language analysis (grammar)
- Cross-cultural discussion
- Explaining errors
- Checking for comprehension
- Creating a non-threatening learning environment
- Teaching in mixed level classes
- Discussing abstract notions

(For example: Auerbuch,1993; Rolin-Ianziti, 2002; Schmidt, 2003)

What do the teachers say?

- Often unaware of the scope and nature of their L1 use
- Noticeable gap between the teacher's self-perceived (mostly underestimated) L1 use, versus the higher observed use reported by the students or even the teachers themselves based on recorded data (Levine, 2003)
- *"I sometimes feel like I'm a little too free with English and am actually surprised as I consider how much I've used this week. I do feel a definite obligation to avoid English as much as possible…"* (Edstorm, Spanish teacher, 2006, p. 280)

Teachers' reasoning for L1 use

- A moral obligation to their students
- Additional goals as a language teacher - discussions which requires L1 use
- The ease of use at particular moments, "my laziness" (Edstrom, 2006: 288).

Previous research on L1 use by EFL teachers in Israel

- **EFL Teacher candidates** (L1 Hebrew and L1 Arabic) asked to reflect on their L1 language use in the EFL classroom
- **Results**: uniform perspectives: Using L1 for clarification; communication, managerial purposes. No difference fr Hebrew Arabic speakers
- **Reasons provided for common perspectives**: status as a novice; components of the teacher education program; the 'culture' of EFL teaching (Orland-Barak &Yinon, 2005)

The research samples in the available research

Mostly adult learners (university) or older school children

*This research

- Attempted to explore the language patterns of teachers of varying linguistic backgrounds teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to young learners and the attitudes of their young learners towards their studies.

Sample:

- 6 teachers teaching EFL to young learners in Hebrew and Arabic medium schools.
- 286 young learners: speakers of Hebrew (114) and Arabic (182)

- *Inbar-Lourie, O. (2010). English only? The linguistic choices of teachers of young EFL learners. *International Journal of Bilingualism, 14*(3), 351-367.

ענבר-לוריא, ע' (2014) שימוש בשפת האם בהוראת אנגלית ללומדים צעירים. בתוך: ס' דוניצה-שמידט וע' ענבר-לוריא (עורכות). *סוגיות בהוראת שפות בישראל חלק ב'* (עמ' 127-152). תל-אביב: הוצאת מופ"ת.

Research Questions

- What is the nature of teachers' use of the students' L1 in young EFL classrooms?
- Is this use reflected in the learners' attitudes towards learning English and their perceptions of their English knowledge?
- Can different tendencies be detected for different first languages? (Hebrew vs. Arabic)

Sample: 6 EFL Teachers

Teachers	L1	Students' L1	Teaching experience
Shula*	Hebrew	Hebrew	15 yrs
Natasha	Russian	Hebrew	35 yrs
Vera	Arabic	Arabic	4 yrs
Rim	Arabic	Arabic	11 years
Eman	Arabic	Arabic	15 yrs
Miri	Hebrew	Hebrew	2 yrs

***Homeroom teacher**

Research tools: Teachers

1. **Classroom observations**
2. **Questionnaire**
3. **Semi-structured interviews**

Research Tool: Students

Attitude and self-assessment Questionnaire

(Hebrew & Arabic, Likert scale, 3 levels)

1. **English learning in school context**

example: when the teacher speaks to me in English I understand what she is saying

2. **English outside the school context**

example: I can understand most of what is being said in English on TV

3. **Self assessment in the form of can do's**

example: I understand the words we studied in English

FINDINGS

- Observations: accumulated % of L1 use per teacher
- Placed teachers on a continuum 1-5 where 1=20% and 5=100% of L1 use in the EFL classroom

Teacher	% L1 use
Vera (Arabic)	75.6% (4)
Natasha (Hebrew)	74.3% (4)
Shula (Hebrew)	59.3% (3)
Rim (Arabic)	56.8% (3)
Miri (Hebrew)	28.7% (2)
Eman (Arabic)	6.8% (1)

Observations: Three patterns

1. **Massive L1 use**
2. **Combined L1 +L2 (code-switching)**
3. **Mostly L2**

Teachers' Portraits

Massive L1 Use: Nigel

- L1 Arabic. Teaching experience: 4 years; mixed Arabic-Jewish city.
- Differential L1 use policies: Young vs. older learners (from grade 4)
- Teacher's role in the low grades: to provide exposure; develop positive attitudes towards the language to facilitate future studies: "I want them to love the language in order to be successful in the future."
- Fun activities, songs, games.
- Starting from grade four uses the TL for instructions and tasks.

Nigel

- Uses Arabic for classroom management
- Positive feedback is provided in English, the TL, “because this is how it should be done, isn’t it?”
- Code-switches between the L1 and TL when introducing or reviewing material or when giving instructions.
- "Give me a sentence with the word [Arabic] elephant [English]", and "Circle the letter ‘e’ in the word [Arabic], please [English]”.
- TL: formulaic greetings and repetitions.
- The board English only, and together with an ‘English corner’ in the classroom a visual English learning environment is created.

Massive L1 use: Natasha

- Natasha is a veteran teacher, most of her teaching experience in the former Soviet Union.
- Classroom management issues.
- Children's L1: Hebrew Russian Arabic but all fluent in Hebrew.
- Natasha constantly code-switches: English/Hebrew:
- "What is [Hebrew] bells [English]"
- Giving instructions is mainly done in Hebrew, but some of the instructions are then translated into English.

Natasha

- The L1 provides the child with a “sense of achievement”. Using the learners’ mother tongue can not be avoided when teaching learners of this age.
- Uses the L1 for about 75% of the lesson.
- A learner-centered, rather than language-centered, approach for young beginning learners.
- Struggling with class management problems which may also account for this massive use, though to no avail…

Combined L1 +L2: Rim

- Arabic as a mother tongue. 11 years experience, (9 in a Hebrew speaking school). Now teaches young speakers of Arabic (1st and 3rd grades) in an Arab town.
- Her approach and method are very similar to those of Natasha's and Nigel, but to a somewhat modified extent in terms of L1 use.
- Emphasizes the emotional attachment the children have towards their language and therefore attempts to introduce the new language through the mother tongue. Positive reinforcement is expressed only in the L1 (contrary to Nigel): "I think that the positive feedback is in Arabic because it touches the heart more".

Rim

- Rim sees her role as promoting the affective factors, attitudes and self confidence.
- Differentiates between language teaching goals and use in the first versus the third grade
- Uses English in her teaching and for some of the managerial tasks but L1(Arabic) use seems essential:
- *I use Arabic for two reasons; the first is to make it easier for the pupils to understand the language since I want them to understand what is said during the lesson. The second reason is that there is no choice but to use Arabic. How would the pupils learn the language if I don't use Arabic?*

Combined L1 +L2: Shula, homeroom teacher

- Hebrew speaker, teaches grade 1.
- Need to use the TL as much as possible but "exposure to the L2 should be natural."
- Makes use of the L1 for facilitating comprehension and handling discipline problems.
- TL – uses as much as possible in asking questions and giving instructions, employing code switching strategies:
- "I am writing [Hebrew] a number [English]. You say it in English". Translates and repeats the same sentence in both languages.
- "Let's say it three times [English]. Let's say it three times [Hebrew]". Positive feedback is given in the TL ("thank you! Excellent! Very good! Super sweethearts"), while reprimanding takes place in L1.
- .

Shula

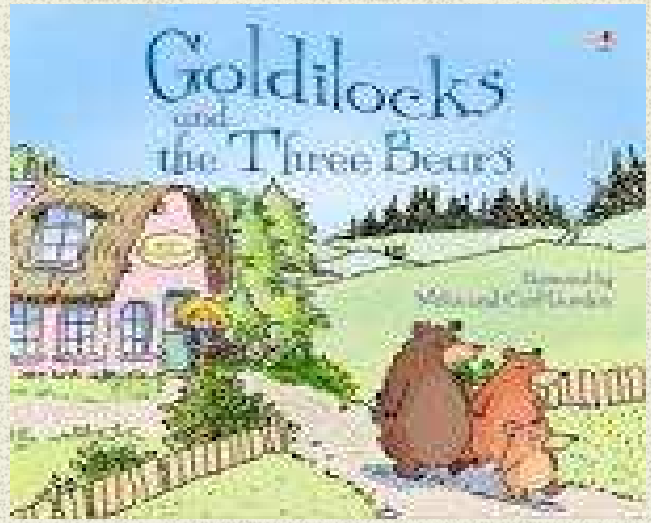
- Well aware of the interests of her students: their favorite singers and TV shows.
- Academically links the pupils' knowledge to knowledge gained in other subject areas, such as math and science, and also introduces new concepts through the TL.
- For example: understanding the notion of constructing a model structured according to a color scheme (English).
- Perceives English teaching as a means to access and reinforce content, and gears her linguistic choices towards implementing this approach.

Mostly L2: Miri

- *Miri* is a Hebrew speaker who has been teaching for 2 years.
- Avid believer in the benefits of TL exposure regardless of the learners' age:
- "*I don't think that I should use less English when teaching young learners*",
- Clearly illustrated in her teaching: rarely mixes the L1 Hebrew with the TL English.
- Uses some L1 for disciplining, checking comprehension or explaining new material.
- The lesson is very textbook-focused with partial learner participation.
- Unlike Shula Miri is either unaware of or does not believe in the possibility of linking the TL to other areas, to the children's previous knowledge or their L1.

Miri - Limited Use of L1

- Goldilocks זהבה ושלושת הדובים
- Does not refer to the children's background knowledge
- Misses the opportunity to compare the title in both languages and the source of the girl's name



Mostly L2: Eman

- L1 Arabic. 15 years experience. Teaches in the same school as Rim in an Arab town.
- Concerned as to the lack of exposure to English in the Arabic-speaking environment. Increased TL use in the EFL classroom:
- *It is important to expose the pupils to the English language and to use it as much as possible because it is the most important thing while teaching a foreign language… I think that the use of Arabic should be done only in certain cases, such as, explaining new material and translating vocabulary*.
- Rarely uses Arabic uses English the entire lesson.
- Rejects the idea that the L1 needs to be utilized with young learners for creating empathy towards the language, and for constructing positive relations
- "*Sometimes when the pupils don't understand what I say in English, I explain it in Arabic*".
- To avoid teacher's L1 use a proficient learner acts as translator.

Common purposes for L1 use:

Instructional: facilitating comprehension; explaining grammar; new words; concepts;
Managerial: classroom management (instructions, discipline); providing negative feedback;
Relating to affective factors: encouraging; comforting

Teachers' reported L1 use

Teachers seem to have a clear rationale for the degree to which they use L1 in their EFL teaching

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Arabic and Hebrew

- No differences were detected in terms of patterns of use.
- Differences seem to orient from individual rather than group perceptions
- Reinforces previous findings

Students' verbal comments: limited L1 use

Miri (2) along the continuum, narrow textbook-based methodology

- "I *wish Miri would teach us and give us homework and not only animals and colors*"
- *"I don't feel like studying this subject [English] because I feel like I can't connect to it"*
- *"Please, I want English to be just a tiny little bit easier"*

However: Students' verbal comments in Eman's class

Eman (very little use of L1, meaningful teaching)

"The English language changes the students in the school and changes the children in the sense that they speak English and understand stories in this language".

Shula (homeroom teacher mediocre use, embedding)

"I like English a lot. It's interesting and I wish we could have a lesson every day"

Use of L1 is only one of the variables which impact students' attitudes

Students' verbal comments: Extensive use of L1

Differences for two classes where the teachers' L1 use is graded as massive but different methodology:

- in Natasha's class (rote learning, repetition): " Boring"
- In Vera's class (code switching, lively)

  "I love English very much because I love and understand my teacher Vera"

Discussion

- Varied use of L1 among EFL teachers of young learners
- L1 functions: similar to older learners yet more emphasis on affective considerations and uses, viewing L1 as “a bridge to L2”
- L1 use patterns are part of teachers’ pedagogical beliefs rather than a function of the teacher's language proficiency.

Implications

- **Reconsideration of the role of L1 in achieving meaningful instruction**
- **Need to reconsider the criteria for assessing 'who a good language teacher is'**
- **Special consideration when teaching young learners. What takes precedence – achievements or affective factors?**

Tenets for L1-TL use (Levine, 2003)

- *Optimal Use Tenet:* accepts the role of the L1 in the FL class;

However:

- *Marked L1 Tenet:* sees L1 use for pedagogical functions as a marked (less frequent) code compared to the TL
- *Collaborative Language Use Tenet:* the active role students need to take in using both their L1 and the TL in the multilingual classroom environment (Levine, 2003, p.355).

So should the L1 be used in teaching EFL? It depends….

- Look around you: what is the context? Different considerations for different learner groups
- One size does not fit all

L1?

- Use of L1 is the second choice in the EFL classroom: But It is definitely NOT BANNED and can be used but judiciously, sensibly
- See what role it plays in motivation, in identity maintenance, in facilitating learning of the TL
- Different policies for beginning and advanced students
- For heterogeneous classes

And last but not least

- Try to build up the learners' linguistic abilities in English but remember:

- Language learning is a process and some L1 use is required and justified

Language IS Life…

- Don’t be afraid to use the learners’ languages for meaningful teaching when and if needed
- It is part of our real authentic modes of communication