

EFFECTIVE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING
IN CHINESE FOREIGN LANGUAGES INSTITUTES

By

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ABSTRACT

Whether or not the mother tongue is to be used in the language classroom has long been a subject of heated argument among language teachers in China. The great success of the communicative approach in second language teaching seems to have strengthened some peoples' belief that the mothertongue should be completely avoided in language teaching. It is, therefore, of great importance in China, and perhaps of interest to foreign language teachers in other countries as well, to analyse the situations of foreign language teaching and learning, including the difference between second language and foreign language teaching, in order to see whether controlled use of the mother tongue can in fact make teaching and learning effective and efficient.

Chapter 1 reviews the major language teaching methods and approaches now in use within and outside China. These methods and approaches are categorized in accordance with the ways of the learning they represent, and the advantages and problems of these methods and approaches are analysed.

The differences between foreign language learning and second language learning are examined in Chapter 2. Since foreign language learners have different aims and objectives, a different environment and possibly different motives, their ways of learning are bound to be affected. Theories of language learning --- compound and co-ordinate bilingualism, independent and interdependent bilinguals, acquisition and

learning, --- are also discussed in relation to the influence of these theories on language teaching as well as the reasons why people use the mother tongue in foreign language teaching. However, it is the teacher's responsibility to select the appropriate techniques for presenting and practising the target language. In the case of foreign language learning the use of the mother tongue is not only possible but can be effective and efficient.

Chapter 3 focuses on the foreign language teaching situation in China. It includes a description of and comments on the changes in methods in the last 50 years as well as some important arguments in academic circles associated with the issue of the use of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching.

Chapter 4 describes the author's investigation in the form of questionnaires sent to foreign language teachers and observations of foreign language classrooms. Answers to the questionnaires appear to confirm the existence of the problems in the use of the mother tongue. Analysis of the observations reveals possible solutions to the problems.

Practical suggestions about the actual use of the mother tongue in the foreign language teaching are offered in Chapter 5. For teaching, it seems possible to use the mother tongue to teach/explain : 1) new concepts; 2) abstract ideas; 3) different points; 4) target language grammar; 5) translation skills; and 6) target language culture. Mother tongue is also very helpful for teachers in their compiling of teaching materials.

On the other hand, students can use mother tongue in their learning; it helps them practise as well as gather historical and cultural background information.

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INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, the foreign language (FL) teaching in China has experienced great changes in its methods and emphases, especially after 1977 when the open door policy was introduced, a great deal of research on FL teaching within China and studies of the methods and approaches now in use in other countries have been carried out to accelerate the improvement. All this in general has no doubt improved FL teaching in China and made it more efficient and effective.

However, appropriate ways for teaching cannot be found overnight and some problems and arguments are bound to appear during the process of reformation. Among them is the argument concerning whether or not mother tongue (MT) is to be used in the language classroom. Some teachers believe that the mother tongue should be completely avoided in language teaching because the success of the communicative approach in the second language (SL) teaching seems to have proved the possibility and necessity of using only the target language (TL). On the other hand, some other teachers maintain that to make teaching effective and efficient the mother tongue should be used because FL teaching is different in many aspects from SL teaching. (The term 'second language teaching' in this paper means the target language taught within the country where the language is used for most purposes including education while the term 'foreign language teaching' means the target language is taught in the countries other than those where the language is used in this way).

Teachers who advocate the exclusive use of the target language argue that the FL learners have a different environment and different aims and objectives from SL learners. Therefore the learners are bound to have some different characteristics in their learning and are able to use the mother tongue to help their FL learning.

Apparently both sides have reasons for their beliefs, yet it seems that unless the argument is settled it is difficult, if not impossible, to make any further improvements in the field without causing confusion. The issue is, therefore, of great importance in China, and perhaps of great interest to foreign language teachers in other countries as well since so far no satisfactory answer has been reported. It is the intention of this paper to analyse both SL and FL teaching and the differences between them, with particular emphasis on the issue of the use of the mother tongue. Special attention will be paid to whether the success of the communicative approach in the SL teaching does prove the necessity of the non-use of the mother tongue and whether different environments, aims and objectives make a difference in the ways of learning and teaching.

The analysis begins with the examination of pedagogical methods and approaches, with special reference of the use or non-use of the mother tongue in each of them. The problems and advantages of each method or approach will be attached to the discussion. Other factors that might influence learning or teaching will be explored, although emphasis will be laid on those factors that the teacher can change or

influence by his/her efforts.

The research on the difference between FL and SL learning will mainly consist of two parts, concerned with the language learning environment and the impact of bilingualism. The aims and objectives of FL and SL learners will be examined and compared and the approaches needed to achieve these aims and objectives will be discussed. The discussion of bilingualism will focus on the mental learning systems of the bilingual in the environments of both FL learning and SL learning, in order to find out whether a learner can actually learn a new language without the help of the old one he/she has already mastered.

The FL teaching situation in China will also be examined with reference to the past few decades as well as in accordance with the author's own teaching experience. Arguments about the emphasis of the teaching and the balance of the different skills will be presented and discussed so that the solutions possibly drawn from the analysis of this paper will be meaningful and useful in China. Owing to the limitations of time and other conditions, the investigation has been confined to FL teaching in Chinese Foreign Languages Institutes although these represent only one kind of FL teaching in China. Since the needs of the students and some other features of the FL teaching discussed in this paper may not be the same as those of other kinds of FL teaching in China, the solutions put forward in this paper are not necessarily applicable to other teaching establishments.

Also included in the research are the analyses of the

questionnaires and the observation charts. Both the questionnaires and the observation charts are specially designed for the purpose of finding out whether or not the mother tongue is actually in use in the FL classroom. If it is, the observation chart helps to clarify in what way the mother tongue is used and how much it is used, while the questionnaire explores the general attitude of the language teachers towards MT use, its effectiveness and the possibility of using the target language to replace it.

Chapter 1

ADULT LANGUAGE LEARNING

It was not until late 19th century that the teaching methodology became a subject for study and research. It had been taken for granted that teaching and learning, especially adult teaching and learning, should be straight forward in presenting knowledge. Knowledge of the subject matter, therefore, was the sole concern of teaching and learning and the only qualification required of the teacher. However, the situation changed in late 19th century when people started to realize that the presentation of knowledge on the teacher's side and the application of the knowledge on the students' side were as important as the knowledge itself and the different ways of teaching and learning could bring about quite different results. The teaching methodology thus became a special kind of art and a requirement of teacher training.

1.1. Different Ways of Learning

Teaching methodology also becomes important in the adult language learning and teaching in which field many teaching methods and approaches have since developed. It is necessary to examine each of the methods and approaches in a detailed way and see whether the use of the mother tongue involved actually helps or impedes the learning.

1.1.1. Learning by Translation

Learning by translation (that is, the grammar-translation method) is a traditional way of language learning.

It has been part of language learning for so long that it can not be traced back to its origins to find the pioneers of this method and where and when it started. Nevertheless, with an analysis of the nature of this learning method, it is not difficult to see the reasons and theories behind the method.

According to Cliff H. Prator and Marianne Celce-Murcia (1979), the method can be summed up as follows:

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
7. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother language.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

(p.3)

In this kind of learning, translation is the aim of the learning as well as the means of learning. The emphasis is obviously on the written language rather than the spoken language. The reason for this seems to be that for centuries, formal learning was limited to the learning of written forms of the language, because for a long time, education was only available for the privileged few who were so proud of it that consciously or unconsciously they meant to keep education as it was. This certainly influenced FL teaching and learning a great deal. Both teachers and learners paid

less attention to expressing their ideas in another language (which was basic and had to be done anyway), than to expressing the beauty of their language in another language.

This method could certainly achieve reasonably well the limited objectives demanded. In order to be able to translate, the learner had to know grammatical rules, to be able to read and analyse the target language according to rules learned and to produce sentences in his/her mother tongue or vice versa. It is necessary to point out that here the aural-oral skills (namely interpretation) had not been given up completely, though the skills were not taught nor practised either. It was just assumed by those who used the method that the spoken language had been learned simultaneously and automatically.

The strong point of this kind of learning is that it built up a balanced relationship of words, sentences, and grammar between the mother tongue and target language which is quite useful to FL learners for the practical application of the language in their future work (see 2.1.1., Aims and Objectives), and that it requires students to be accurate. The problem is that the nature of communication nowadays is more direct (face to face) rather than indirect (writing to each other). That the learners have the competence to produce written language does not necessarily mean that they automatically possess the competence to produce it orally. Aural-oral skills also need special training, though of a quite different kind.

The disadvantage of this method is that the environment

makes it very difficult for the learner to practise the target language since the target language was basically taught in the mother tongue. The learner could hardly find any chance to communicate in the target language to anybody except perhaps to his/her textbook in some of the specially designed exercises. This discouraged the learner and handicapped his/her learning. The use of the mother tongue here is at least excessive, if not totally wrong.

1.1.2. Learning by Exposure to the Language Environment

As the social environment demanded more aural-oral skills, the grammar-translation method could no longer meet society's needs. People started to wonder if there were better ways of teaching and learning. Towards the end of the last century, some theorists and language teachers began observing and analysing the learning procedure, that is, studying it scientifically. Among them was Wilhelm Viëtor, a professor at the University of Marburg, Germany. His findings and ideas later became the basic principles of the direct method which include:

1. Language is made up of sounds, not letters; therefore, speaking should be the first aim. The training of the ear and tongue should precede that of the eye.
2. Connected discourse---not isolated words---should be used, because the expressions given should be full of meaning.
3. Language should be learned in a natural way as a child learns its native language. The grammar-translation method should be discarded.
4. Students should learn grammar inductively.

(Childers, 1964, p. 34)

Based on these principles, the direct method developed as a total reaction towards the grammar translation method.

Cliff H. Prator and Marianne Celce-Murcia (1979) describe the use of the direct method as follows:

1. Lessons begin with a brief anecdote or dialogue in the target language, and in modern conversational style.
2. This material is first presented orally with actions or pictures.
3. The mother tongue is never, never used (i.e. there is no translation).
4. The preferred type of exercise is a series of questions in the target language based on the anecdote or dialogue, and answered in the target language.
5. Grammar is taught inductively; rule generalization comes after experience.
6. Verbs are used first, and systematically conjugated much later.
7. Advanced students read literature for comprehension and pleasure.
8. The culture associated with the target language is also taught inductively. (p.3)

By using this method, the teacher could expose the learners to a fairly appropriate language environment, the same (it was hoped) as children when they learned their first language. The psychological theory behind this method also recognised that "Language learning was more than the learning of grammatical rules and the inefficient acquisition of somewhat imperfect translation skills" (Dodson 1967, p.44). It stressed that language learning should include skills such as how to speak properly. It advocated the idea that learning a foreign or second language should be like the acquisition of the first language of a child who learns it inductively. The method employs every means possible to help the learners get involved in the target language and its culture.

This method has never developed fully, nor entirely accepted by most language teachers in schools. Though it seems appropriate for those theorists and language teachers

believing in the direct method to give priority to the spoken language, it can hardly justify the fact that it is done at the expense of ignoring the written forms of the language. Furthermore, the direct method has not taken into consideration the difference in environments between first language acquisition and foreign language learning, nor the difference in the learning conditions of adults and children. Clearly, adult learning differs from that of children in some respects.

The direct method forbids the use of the mother tongue in teaching. This gives the learner a hard time since he/she can not associate the learning with a major part of his/her old knowledge, which is the basic principle of meaningful learning. In accordance with the method, the learner has to start from scratch and build up a completely new language system which takes a great deal of time and energy. The complete non-use of the mother tongue also tends to separate the two languages gained. This may not matter much in the case of SL learning, but in FL learning it seems to matter a lot. The FL learner needs to have two way (from the mother tongue to the target language at the same time or vice versa) communication in their future work. SL learners may need one way communication (the target language at one time and the mother tongue at another) more frequently (see also 2.1.1.).

1.1.3. Learning by Memorization

Memorization here means learning by heart. It is one of the basic ways of learning. Almost all kinds of learning are more or less associated with memorization.

No matter what one learns, one has to memorize it (though through many different ways) before one can apply the knowledge freely and really efficiently to whatever situation may occur. However, it was the audio-lingual approach which went to the extreme and took memorization as the main means of learning. The Audio-lingual approach, though the original idea could be found in the works of Bloomfield (1933), was developed mainly from the experience of special U.S. army training during the World War II. At the time, a group of special agents were trained to speak foreign languages to be translators and interpreters. They were taken into an environment in which no mother tongue was ever used. Everybody there who had the chance to be associated with the trainees was a competent TL speaker. The target language was analysed as a system within which bits and pieces of the language could be singled out and categorized for the convenience of the learner. The language was then taught piece by piece as part of the system in accordance with the degrees of difficulty. No grammar or anything of that nature was taught and the meanings of the actual sentences were explained with the help of performance and pictures. In this way the army succeeded in training the agents to be able to listen to, understand and speak a target language with reasonable ease in a very short time (usually three months to a year) (Childers 1964). This, however, proved very little in itself, for in this case the intelligence and motivation involved were much higher than that of the average in schools. Moreover the environment was much better than that in schools.

However, encouraged by this success, the theorists continued studying a language as a formal system of sounds and structures. Comparison was made of the similarities and the differences of the sounds and structures between the mother tongue and the target language. Sentence patterns were formed and sequenced according to the degrees of difficulty decided by difference (or distance) from the relevant patterns in the mother tongue. Basically believing that learning is a kind of conditioning, the theorists were convinced that if the learners were drilled often enough with these patterns they would be eventually able to use the language. This approach "stressed a natural order in teaching the language skills: a progression from listening to foreign language speech patterns, to active speaking, reading, and writing. It stressed that language learning was the process of forming certain speech habits, and that there should be a maximum of structural pattern learning and a minimum of isolated word study and grammar analysis." (Childers, 1964, p.47)

Since the approach is now not as frequently used as was fashionable, it is perhaps necessary to look again at typical classroom behavior (Cliff H. Prator and Marianne Celce-Murcia 1979):

1. New material is presented in dialogue form.
2. There is dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases, and overlearning (i.e., it is believed that language learning is habit formation).
3. Structures are sequenced, and taught one at a time.
4. Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills.
5. There is little or no grammatical explanation: grammar is taught by inductive analogy

- rather than deductive explanation.
6. Skills are sequenced---listen, speak, read, write.
 7. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context.
 8. Teaching points are determined by contrastive analysis.
 9. There is much use of tapes, language labs, and visual aids.
 10. There is an extended pre-reading period at the beginning of the course.
 11. Great importance is attached to pronunciation, with special attention being paid to intonation.
 12. The cultural background of the target language is stressed.
 13. Some use of the mother tongue is permitted.
 14. Successful responses are immediately reinforced.
 15. There is a great effort to prevent student errors.
 16. There is a tendency to manipulate language and disregard content.

According to the reported results, the approach in general proved to be more efficient not only in aural-oral skills but also in reading, though not necessarily in writing than the grammar-translation method (see Childers 1964, Healey 1967 and Rivers 1968). While laying emphasis on listening and speaking, the audio-lingual method paid attention to the development of all the four language skills of the learners. Nevertheless it had not yet moved beyond rote learning, which, by rejecting the active participation of the learners, impeded some types of learning. On the other hand, the use of the language is always an activity of creation. The simple recitation of what had been memorized is not enough in many cases for the language learners. This is partly the reason why the approach was replaced later, for memorization can only be part of learning, not its main medium.

The mother tongue was used in the audio-lingual

approach to provide the learner with the mother tongue version of the texts (not always, but whenever the teacher felt it necessary). This helped the students understand the TL version better and also gave more time for drilling.

1.1.4. Learning by Understanding

The importance of the active participation of learners was taken into consideration when the cognitive theorists M. Wertheimer, K. Koffka and others contributed their learning theory, partly as a reaction to behaviorism. They "view learning as a purposive, explorative, imaginative, and creative enterprise." (Bigge, 1982, p.96). Chastain (1971) reports Ausubel's observation that learning must be meaningful, so that active mental process can help learners acquire large bodies of knowledge. Learning without understanding can progress only very slowly. The significance of this theory lies in that here the learning, for the first time, is seen as moving beyond memorization. The learner, instead of being a passive knowledge receiver, becomes an active participant.

In accordance with the idea that all languages share certain 'universals or similarities', Noam Chomsky developed his generative- transformational linguistic theory, in which he analysed the language structure tree at two levels--- that of the surface structures and that of the deep structures. (Brown 1980). This theory, when applied to the language teaching, enables the learner to look into the target language and associate it with his mother tongue. Thus the new knowledge makes more sense to the learner, which in turn motivates him for a more active participation

in the learning. In this way the learner also finds it much easier to master and to retain new knowledge. The following are the basic principles of the cognitive approach as used in the classroom:

1. There is emphasis on communication, or communicative competence (i.e., being able to use the language).
2. Language acquisition is seen as rule (not habit) formation; deductive explanation of grammar is preferred.
3. Pronunciation is de-emphasized, since it is considered futile for most students to try to sound like native speakers.
4. Group work and individualized instruction are encouraged.
5. There is a renewed interest in vocabulary, especially the expansion of passive vocabulary for reading purposes.
6. The teacher is viewed as a facilitator rather than a figure of absolute authority.
7. The importance of comprehension---especially listening comprehension---is emphasized.
8. Errors are seen as an inevitable by-product of language learning; systematic study, interpretation, and---where possible---remediation are of concern.
9. The written language skills (reading and writing) and the spoken language skills (listening and speaking) are viewed as being of equal importance, rather than the former secondary and the latter primary.
10. Repetition in and of itself is discouraged; silence is recognized as useful and often necessary.
11. There is contextualization of all teaching points through the use of audiovisual aids, stories, or other appropriate means.
12. The use of the mother tongue and translation are permitted.
13. There is increased interest in the affective domain: the attitude of the teacher and student are seen as important, human sensitivity crucial, and the quality of interaction a significant variable.
14. Bilingual-bicultural proficiency is seen as an ideal goal. (Cliff H. Prator and M. Celcè-Murcia 1979, p.4)

It is not difficult to see from these principles why the cognitive approach was so readily accepted by many language teachers, for it not only provided the guidance

for teaching activities, but also led to the mutual understanding of the teacher and the students. If such an approach is adopted the class is no longer a dull, tedious torture to the learner but an interesting, fruitful environment in which the learner exerts him/herself to gain as much as possible. This approach is especially successful for teaching activities at the advanced level where more understanding, production and creativity are required.

The problem with this approach is that it is still at the level of teaching the forms of the language, not its functions. The learners may be quite at home with the rules and be able to produce grammatically perfect sentences but be unable to use the language appropriately. Thus the learner, though theoretically competent in a language, often in reality failed to say what he/she meant by using wrong forms under different circumstances.

The use of the mother tongue in this approach is important for when understanding is essential in class activities the approach depends on MT explanations to help the learner gain a thorough understanding of what is taught. Moreover, the approach encourages association and even comparison of the mother tongue and the target language. To a certain extent learning depends on, and is limited by, the mother tongue.

1.1.5. Learning by Using the Language

The idea of learning by using the language is not a new one. People have long practised this idea in language learning. Many migrants have learned their new language at their work, shopping centre or bar. Yet it is only recently

that theorists and teachers have worked out an approach to learning a language by using it in formal teaching. Nevertheless, the approach has brought about changes of great importance and significance. In applying the approach to the formal language learning, the teacher now pays much more attention than before to the needs of students. Previously the language teacher taught students what he/she thought to be necessary, which in reality was not always what students needed.

Another point is that for a fairly long period of time in the past the language teacher only taught students the forms of a language not the functions of the language. The students, though having learned the forms of the language, did not really know how to apply these forms in practical circumstances. The communicative approach, in reaction to the old methods and approaches, adopts the notional-functional syllabus which categorizes, and presents to students, the forms of the language according to the functions of that language in the social language behavior. In this way the students learn both the functions and the forms of the language at the same time. The functions, on the other hand, are sequenced according to the frequency of these functions used in daily life. In other words, the most often used everyday language is taught first regardless whether the forms are simple ones or the complex ones. The language is taught in such a way that the students know from the very beginning that under certain circumstances they should use certain forms and not others. Thus the approach breaks down the old idea of systematization of a

language. It does not follow the principle of teaching the easier structures first and then the more difficult ones.

For this kind of teaching, face to face communication is required, so the students sit in a U shape with the teacher at the head of it. The teacher brings up a topic closely related to the everyday life of the TL society and presents to the students various forms of the language that are likely to be used for the functions associated with the topic. The students then practise the forms and discuss the topic with the teacher providing the necessary words and common sentence structures. This description is based on the author's observation of the classes in Migrant Education Language Centre of Australia in which the communicative approach is used. Pair work, group work, role play and games are encouraged to make the situation more realistic.

The real significance of the change lies in that the approach makes it possible for the students to lengthen the actual learning by continuing their study after class in real life. In other words, learning is no longer limited to situations naturally occurring within the classroom. The students continue their learning either by applying the forms to real life situations (since they have learned the functions at the same time) or by organizing some activities themselves in which they practise the language learned. With traditional methods students could not converse with others until late in the learning period.

The advantages of this communicative approach are obvious. The constant use of the language learned helps students memorize and have a better chance to use the

language properly or to be corrected. The approach also makes sure that the students will eventually be competent not only grammatically, but also communicatively.

(c.f. Stevick, 1980, p. 87).

Nevertheless, the communicative approach depends in part on some features of the environment outside the classroom. In the case of FL teaching and learning where the target language is not used for communication outside class, the effectiveness and efficiency of the communicative approach will be in question. Although the principle of teaching the functions of the language to students still applies, the advantage of the continuity of input after class does not exist.

The use of the mother tongue is allowed with the communicative approach because it helps the students understand better and it saves time so that students can have more time to practise what they have learned (which is one of the important features of modern language teaching). SL teachers sometimes use only the target language, but this is either because the students come from different countries or because the teachers are monolingual themselves.

1.2. Other Factors That Might Influence Learning

Apart from different ways of learning, other factors could influence learning, too. The learner's intelligence, his/her health and his/her language aptitude can, to a certain extent, influence and affect learning. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss these factors. However, there are other factors that a teacher can do something

about if he/~~she~~ really cares to try.

First of all the teacher can motivate the students. An adult learner always has a motive to learn a new language, be it integrative or instrumental. It is hard to say which motive is more effective. It is not however, the kind of motivation that is important to the teacher but the question of how to keep the learner motivated that concerns the teacher. Either motivation can lead the learner to an active participation in what he/she is learning. It has long been acknowledged that it is far better if students are interested in the learning than if they are forced to do it and only receive 'passively' the knowledge passed on to them by the teacher. At tertiary level, students usually choose to study a language. Nevertheless, some might base their decisions on the false assumption that learning a language is comparatively easier than other subjects. This kind of willingness or interest in the subject will decrease very rapidly later when they meet difficulties. It is therefore the teacher's job to maintain and if possible increase their interest.

With this in mind, the teacher can try and make his/her class as interesting as possible and not just give dry lectures and isolated knowledge which will bore students. It is essential to pay attention to the fact that students cannot concentrate for very long on one thing. Even adult students, who are better than school pupils, in this respect cannot concentrate intently for a whole hour without their minds drifting away now and then. Such day dreaming is even more likely if the lecture itself is

not very interesting. High pressure does not necessarily work best, for it soon makes the learners feel so tired that they cannot continue studying. Alteration of high pressure and relaxation makes the best use of time with of course the premise that students are also learning the subject during the period of relaxation.

The importance of variety of activities lies in that it can help students concentrate because here curiosity functions. Their eagerness to know what is going to happen urges the students to concentrate, often without knowing it themselves. Though they can not concentrate for very long on one activity, students can continuously focus on each activity for a short time. Modern methods, especially the communicative approach, follow this theory and employ a lot of activities to help teaching---games, pair work, group work, role play, to name just a few. In the section of 'learning by using the language', some of the advantages of these activities were discussed, particularly, making the situation more realistic and increasing the need of the learners to communicate.

Actually these activities have achieved more than that. They have also achieved very good results in increasing the students' interest. Psychologically, students no longer feel the learning is only a hard chore. They feel much more secure than before. Emotionally the students can now, to a certain extent, enjoy learning. It is no longer a dull subject, but something quite near to their life. And like life, it is not always easy and sometimes requires great effort, but is nevertheless full of variety and therefore

quite enjoyable. Physically students are less likely to feel tired since the activities can make them totally involved so that they do not even realize how much they have already put into learning. Once the burden has been removed the students' interest will simultaneously increase and this usually in turn leads them to a more active participation in the activities. So far as the variety of activities is concerned, it is not limited within any particular method. Any teacher can make use of it and in fact many have been using it for years, consciously or unconsciously.

In addition, if a teacher can make sure that students understand what he/she is talking about, their interest is likely to be maintained or increased. In classroom practice, it is impossible for all students to understand all of what the teachers said. However, certain things such as instructions and rules and some important explanations---without which the students will be at a loss about what to do---must be understood and understood totally by students. In general there is a level of understanding below which students will lose interest. Once some students fall behind the others it is very hard for them to catch up. It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that students understand the instructions and explanations. If the target language can not do the job, the teacher should switch to the mother tongue if possible (see also 2.2.5), and 3.2.3)

However, motivation is not the only factor. The learning strategy also influences, to a great extent, the time spent on learning and the achievement gained. Obviously in learning the more time one spends on a

particular item the better chance one has to master it. Yet in formal learning, one cannot continue learning for ever. The time is usually set for three or four years and hence the time to learn can be changed on the basis that he/she saves time when learning other items. Generally speaking, students' achievement is associated with factors like time spent on learning, proper strategy, intelligence, interest and likelihood of forgetting. Of these factors, intelligence and interest can be considered as being fixed. Thus the achievement will mainly depend on time spent on learning, proper strategy and likelihood of forgetting. These aspects are at least partly under the control of the teacher.

In SL learning, if the communicative approach is adopted, that is, trying to help students learn through using the language, then the time spent can again be divided into time spent in class and time spent outside the class. One of the main reasons for the great success of the communicative approach lies in the fact that by learning through using the language it has actually lengthened the learning time by asking the learners to practise the language outside classroom. Since, at least in classes observed in Australia the communicative approach teaches the learner mainly those forms that they can use immediately in their daily life and therefore they can readily review, there is no need for the teacher to worry about the likelihood of forgetting. The approach makes best use of the environment. In many cases the time spent outside the classroom can almost offset the likelihood of

forgetting and the time spent in class becomes pure achievement (this is true up to a certain level because of the existence of fossilisation which will be discussed in 2.1.2).

But the case in FL learning is quite different. There is no extension of learning time outside of the classroom. On the contrary, there is only discouragement in the environment to make students feel the uselessness of what they are learning. FL learning has to depend a lot on the recurrence of the language forms to overcome the likelihood of forgetting. This recurrence, it is hoped, makes it possible for the learner to review while learning new knowledge. This is why some teachers insist on the systematic organisation of the syllabus. Since they have to wait until the end of the learning period for real communication, it is better and easier for them to start with the easier language items and gradually come to the more difficult items. In this way, it is believed to have more chance for recurrence since the easy ones are more likely to appear in the texts than the more difficult items. However, systematic organisation of syllabus cannot totally offset the likelihood of forgetting, and therefore the value of achievement is reduced. This is, according to some teachers, why FL teaching cannot be as efficient as SL teaching.

For the individual learner, the time spent and the likelihood of forgetting can also be fixed by circumstances. His achievement then depends on the strategy he adopts. Generally speaking, his learning strategy should meet his teacher's teaching strategy which, nevertheless, should

accommodate itself to the learning strategies of the majority of the class and not simply follow reportedly successful methods. A teacher can recommend a new method and can even influence students to like a particular method, yet before they are convinced, he/she should not try to push too hard, for if the learners have no confidence in a method, or they are averse to it they cannot perform as well as they should and at the same time they can lose their confidence in the teacher which may lead to problems. On the other hand, once the teacher decides to use a particular method and the students persevere in their old ways of doing things, it can also mean disaster to them. It is important that the teacher and students cooperate in learning.

1.3. Summary

In line with modern linguistic theory, specifically, Stevick's communicative competence, (see p. 19), there is a tendency in language teaching to pay more attention than in the past to the actual communicative ability and to spend less time on the learners' knowledge of grammar and their ability to produce correct, appropriate, idiomatic sentences with precise accents. Instead of only concerning the forms of the language as people did when using the grammar-translation method, the direct method, the audio-lingual method and the cognitive approach, the theorists and the teachers now pay much attention to the functions of the language which in many cases do not have a one-to-one relationship with the forms. Systematic organisation of syllabus together with the idea of language package to pass on to the learner, is no longer the ideal way of teaching nor the necessary way of language acquisition

learning. Meaningful learning and the active participation of the learners has become another important feature of the modern language teaching. The teacher-centred classroom is now giving way to the student-centred classroom. (Altman,1978,p.1).

However, none of the methods discussed above rules out the use of the mother-tongue in classroom except the direct method. This fact in itself shows the importance of mother tongue in the language teaching. It also illustrates the assumption of many people that the learning of a second or a foreign language is based on the knowledge of the first language and does not start from scratch. Most of the methods and approaches either depend on the mother tongue to explain the meaning of the target language or use the mother tongue to help the learners understand the target language better, together with visual aids and performance. In the case of communicative approach, though some of the teachers using the method rule out the use of the mother tongue, this may well have occurred because these teachers are monolingual themselves or because the students come from different countries and speak different languages. That is, not because the mother tongue is not helpful but because the teacher has no choice.

It can also be seen from the above discussion that there is no single perfect method ready for any teacher to employ. Problems like situation limitation, mother-tongue interference, cultural background knowledge and cultural differences, the relation between the forms and functions of the language, have not really been solved yet. It is the teacher's responsibility and duty to choose, among other

things, the method or the combination of the methods which will make the best use of the environment, the students' interest, and their time, and to carry out his/her teaching efficiently and smoothly.

Chapter 2

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Some people (for example, M Pienemann & M Johnston, "Towards an Explanation Model of Language Acquisition", ALAA Congress, August 30, 1984) do not distinguish FL learning from SL learning. They assume the two cases are the same since both concern the learning of a new language. According to these people, the differences, if there are differences, are trifling and do not affect the basic teaching conditions. However, the differences between FL learning and SL learning are much greater than they seem to be. These differences cannot only affect the teaching methods and learning strategies but on some occasions decide for the teacher what to do and what not to do, especially when it comes to the question of whether the mother tongue is to be used.

2.1. Differences in Learning Situation

The learning situation is the first to influence the learner. The teacher has to consider such factors as the purpose of the learning and the conditions of the environment. In this way the teacher knows what students need and hence manages to find the most appropriate way to teach.

2.1.1. Aims And Objectives

For most SL learners, the purpose of learning is to be accepted by the native community, permanently or

temporarily, as members of the community. Their needs are to communicate with the other members of the community, exchange ideas, carry out social intercourse and act appropriately in social activities. SL learners want to learn how native speakers express their ideas, and to express their own. However, SL learners do not have to learn how to translate such expressions back to their own language. These needs come from the requirement of survival, a basic human instinct. This does not mean that the learning cannot be based on instrumental motivation. SL learners also need to make use of the target language so that they can find a better job (in case of migrants) or gather more information (in case of visitors) or make their study easier (in case of students) and so on. In many cases SL learners do not have to compare the expressions of the two cultures and languages (for the purpose of translation and interpretation). Their learning is generally confined to the language and culture of the target language, though social adjustment involves some association of both cultures and languages.

However, for FL learners, it is quite different. Most of them are not learning the target language for the sake of survival. The learners do not face the problem at least during the learning period. They are interested in the language because they want to broaden their view and the way of thinking by exchanging ideas with members of the other community. Thus, FL learners have to base their learning on the knowledge of their mother tongue without which they can not develop and broaden their minds (in the

sense that language, to some extent, influences the way with which people see the world and reality (Trudgill, 1974). Therefore FL learners have to learn not only the ways to express the culture and history associated with the target language, but also the ways to express that of their own in the target language. This is particularly true with the foreign languages institutes in China, whose graduates will become interpreters, translators, government officials or tour guides. Their work requires two-way communication, that is, from the target language to the mother tongue and from the mother tongue to the target language. It is important for FL learners to know, through learning a language, the people using the target language, their history, traditions and customs as well as the application of the target language to expressing the learners' own culture, their achievements and their ideas. They have to learn not only the concepts and their labels existing in the target language, but also the best way to express the concepts that do not exist in the target language but exist in the mother tongue. This is why they want to build up a system of one concept with two labels, for in this way not only can the two languages interweave in their minds, but also the totality of the concepts that they have learned can fuse to become one body, ready for them to use at any time.

Clearly the mother tongue plays an important role in FL learning. Without the use of the mother tongue it is not likely that FL learners can achieve the expected goal, because for FL learners, to be able to communicate in the

target language alone is not enough; they have to interpret (and translate for the same reason) one language into another and this obviously needs the association of the target language with that of the mother tongue.

However, the above discussion by no means suggests that SL learners do not associate the target language with the mother tongue at all. Most language learners make the association automatically, but SL learners do not have to build up a system of one concept with two labels to the same degree as the future translators.

2.1.2. Social Environments

The environment for SL learners is quite different from that of FL learners. SL learners are often fully exposed to the TL environment. It is therefore easy for them to make use of television, radio and newspaper in the target language. Their work, their living and their social functions, in many cases, all require them to listen to, speak, read and occasionally write in the target language. This gives SL learners a much better chance to master the target language than FL learners. This extra input lengthens their learning time and to a certain extent, changes their learning strategy. The SL learners do not have to depend on memorisation in the classroom. They can improve their language outside the classroom as well as in the classroom.

However, this kind of environment does not always prove to be advantageous. There exists a danger---fossilization. Fossilization can be very misleading. The fact that some migrants, after living in Australia for decades, still can

not speak proper English proves the existence and the danger of fossilization. This, of course, also involves factors other than the learning environment, but it shows fairly well the importance of guidance and the necessity of training.

FL learners are not as lucky. They are surrounded by people who speak their mother tongue, which discourages their desire to use the target language. Their learning very much depends on the class hours and their own practice after class. FL learners have to deliberately attach the new labels to the concepts which already have labels in use, not for the sake of communication but for the sake of practice. And this practice is usually confined to the review of the vocabulary, sentence structure and grammatical rules. It involves little real or even realistic communication. For many FL learners, it is not until after they accomplish the learning that they start using the target language in real communication, while during the period of learning, they just try their best to absorb the knowledge given to them, memorize and store it and fight against the likelihood of forgetting it. Obviously in this kind of situation, the learners' progress cannot be as great as that of SL learners.

It is worth mentioning that the environment of the FL learners in China at tertiary level is slightly different from that of FL learners in Australia. There, students gather only when they have a class or an activity with a similar function. After class they go home and do their home work and practise individually. This might be

appropriate for the students of other subjects for whom independent meditation is required, but it is certainly not appropriate for the language students who need to converse and to practise the knowledge they have learned. In China, the college students are required to stay on campus during the week and live in students dormitories which divides, in case of the languages institutes, according to the language they study and the grade they are in. This provides the conditions for the students, together with their teachers, to form a small community of their own. Within their small world, the learners can speak the target language to each other if they want to, or organize all kinds of activities that will help their learning. This is, of course, not without problems. The mother tongue, with which the learners can in fact communicate, constantly invades the area, distracting the inhabitants with its convenience, readiness and willingness to serve. Only those who have very strong willpower can resist the distraction and persevere while those who have not as strong willpower as others are often tempted to ignore, partly, the chances they have and frequently turn to the mother tongue for help. This kind of environment is not as helpful as that of the SL learners, but it seems to be more helpful than that of the FL learners in the west.

This idea of a small community also explains partly the fact that many Chinese students want the teacher to dominate the class. In addition to the traditional belief that the teacher knows best how to pass on his/her knowledge to the students, language students in China expect the

teacher to tell them more of the target language, of the rules that will help them to understand what they are learning, and to leave practice activities for themselves to organize after class. The learners believe that they have the capacity, the opportunity, the time and the environment to do it. This reflects the students' appreciation of the value of the class time, and the teacher's time, not simply the traditional belief.

Generally speaking, the environment does not help FL learning. Unlike SL learners who can practise the target language naturally outside the class, FL learners have to practise consciously with efforts both in and outside the class. The more target language the learners use the better the result is. However, this does not necessarily suggest that FL learners should learn the target language without the help of the mother tongue at all. As mentioned above, the use of the mother tongue in a sense gives the learners more time to practise and hence improves the result.

2.1.3. Learning Environments

As discussed in the last subsection, the Chinese students usually form their own community and hence organize all kinds of activities to improve their learning conditions. However, since they share the same mother tongue---which is true of most FL learners---they still tend to speak in their mother tongue when they want to communicate with each other, especially if the message they want to get across is urgent or if it is so important that no misunderstanding is allowed.

In other words, the students under such circumstances can consciously 'practise' the language learned but they cannot^t use it as if it were the only means with which they could communicate. SL learners do not have this kind of problem. In Australia, at least, they usually come from different countries and the only means of communication among students is the target language. This again is connected with the need to communicate in the target language.

Another disadvantage of sharing the same mother tongue is that the learners in this way share the same interference from the mother tongue. This leads to an odd phenomenon. Very often the students can produce a sentence which can not be understood by the native speaker of that language, but can be perfectly understood by his fellow students, and they notice nothing wrong with the sentence, that is, the sentence seems grammatically faultless. For example, language students in China tend to overuse the personal pronoun which very often leads to vagueness. They very often make sentences like "Exact scoring means that answers from testees must be exactly as they are expected", because in Chinese, it is possible to use pronoun this way without causing vagueness. Since many Chinese FL learners make such mistakes (because of the MT interference), they tend not to notice them. Those who share the same mother tongue tend to have the same way of thinking and the learners may not realize that what is common sense in one culture or language, is not necessarily common sense in another, and therefore native speakers find it very difficult to understand these

learners. Moreover, when FL learners learn the target language, they can only learn the general rules for producing sentences and paragraphs. But when they come to actual production of sentences, the learners unconsciously fill in the gaps in their knowledge with Chinese sentence structures. This will, of course, further complicate the situation. The students in this case can communicate rather 'fluently' among each other, but the sentences they produce are not TL sentences, but somewhere in between the mother tongue and the target language. To a certain extent, it can help students practise vocabulary and some other skills but in a very limited way. After all the students can not communicate with native speakers, using such sentences (sentences with English words, but mixtures of English and Chinese sentence structures). Yet if the students continue to practise like this, they will soon form a habit of producing such sentences which will be very difficult to correct.

Unfortunately the best correction comes from native speakers of the target language, who are very often not available for FL learners. Teachers who share the same mother tongue with the learners can help to a certain extent both in and out of the classroom, especially at the beginning and the intermediate stages. At more advanced levels, however, it is very hard for the teachers to correct. It is not that they are no better than the students but that at that stage, students can speak fairly fluently and produce, instead of one or two single sentences, a series of sentences. Not only is it not very appropriate for their

learning to interrupt the conversation frequently, but also teachers may only feel the awkwardness of the sentences but not really be able to explain the reason for this, nor to provide better formed sentences with the intended meaning.

On the other hand, sharing the same mother tongue has its advantages too. First of all the teacher is likely to know where the problems are and how they can be dealt with most efficiently, on the basis of past experience. Here the interference is the same for all the students, though different in degree. Unlike the SL teachers who have to deal with the interference of various kinds in class, the FL teachers can concentrate on one set of interference which concerns all the students in their classes. The teachers therefore can spend more time and energy on these problems than the SL teachers who have various kinds of interference to deal with. Since only one set of interference is concerned in this case, the FL teachers are likely to do more research and study about the students, the cultural back-ground and their traditions, which is likely to lead to better ways to teach the target language and treat the problems.

If the FL teacher shares the same mother tongue with his/her students---which is true in many cases and true in most cases in China---he/she can also make use of this fact (of sharing the same mother tongue) by contrasting the languages, the two ways of thinking and two different sets of customs and traditions. By doing so the teacher helps students know where and how the transfer is possible, and where and how negative transfer should be avoided. This is

especially true when the MT culture and the TL culture are quite different and the students have to learn many new concepts of the culture when learning the target language. The students very often cannot even imagine why the speakers of that language have certain seemingly 'illogical' concepts and ideas. (For example, the non-existence of attributive clauses in Chinese sentence structure is considered as "illogical" by some Australian students of Chinese). By series of comparisons between languages and cultures the learners can gradually see the reasons and acknowledge these concepts and ideas as 'logical', which is the first step towards the common sense and idiomatic use of the target language. The author and his colleagues tried this idea back in China and the result was satisfactory. The teaching was effective and efficient.

Another advantage of sharing the same mother tongue is that it helps the teacher get the message across clearly and effectively. There are certain things at times that the teacher wants to explain and has the students understand every word of what he says. In this circumstance the target language can not meet his needs. He can and must employ the mother tongue to do it. It is not the main task of the teacher to input the language into students but to help students to understand, practise and use the language. (see also 3.2.3.) At times it is likely to be more efficient to use the mother tongue for explanations so that the teacher and the students can spend more time on practice rather than use the target language to explain the points over and over again and spend most of the time in explaining

with little time left for practice and use of the language in class.

This helps extend to non-verbal expression. Within a culture many gestures have a particular meaning and the language teacher has long since started using the gestures to help convey the meaning of the language. It is quite acceptable to do this within a culture. Nevertheless if the students came from different cultures, as SL learners may, there may rise a danger that some of the students may misunderstand the meaning by misunderstanding the gesture, for some gestures represent one idea in a culture and quite another in another culture; some can even be offensive or mean quite the opposite. The same thing happens to the symbols and even pictures. They, too, may cause confusion or disturbance in the learning.

Sharing the same mother tongue is also an advantage to the students when they practise the target language. Especially at the beginning stage, when the students' TL knowledge is quite limited, those who do not share the same mother tongue have but to confine their conversation within the few topics they have learned and repeat it over and again. This soon makes the students feel tired and bored. Yet those who share the same mother tongue can talk about more topics by now and then switching back to mother tongue to get over the difficult sentences and continue to conversation. Sometimes FL learners even speak pidgin to bridge the gaps and struggle to achieve more communication (the issue of pidgin will be further discussed in 5.2.2). All this aims to remedy the disadvantage they have as a

function of the environment. The author and his colleagues' experience have proved this approach to be valid and valuable for the students as it helps students to a certain extent.

2.1.4. Conversation

Much has been discussed in the previous subsections about the environments of SL and FL learners. This subsection emphasises what they talk about and how they talk.

As mentioned above, SL learners have an immediate need to use the language learned outside the classroom and thus the learning time available is greater than that of the FL learners who have no such needs. What the latter have is deliberate practice and not conscious use of the language. Yet even this cannot be carried out very smoothly. If the two cultures are similar, there is no great problem involved, for the conversation the students have may include the same content the native speakers have. However, if the two cultures have great gaps between them (like the Chinese and the English) then there are barriers that prevent the students from having a conversation. The students have to use a language to describe, not its own, but another culture, which is in itself very awkward. The life and life habits are different. Yet in order to practise the language learned, the students have to produce sentences foreign to the language. Take the Chinese students as an example, it is more appropriate to teach them the term 'chopsticks' before the terms 'fork' and 'knife' than vice versa because chopsticks are something they use every day

and hence are easier for them to use in practice. Fork and knife, on the other hand, are further away from their life and somewhat difficult for them to use for practice. There is no doubt that FL learners should learn the terms like 'fork' and 'knife' (and also the table manners in the English-speaking countries), but it is equally important to learn, among other things, the expressions of the concepts that exist only in their own culture. As he/she learns these expressions, the learner can use them in his/her everyday life. Although this use of the target language is a little bit awkward and the sentences may sound a little foreign, it is, as the communicative approach proves it to be, the best way to maintain what the learner has learned as well as to master certain use of the words and structures. After all the language students in China are more likely to discuss the 'down fall of the gang of four' and the 'four modernizations' than the 'barbeque' or 'boomerang throwing'. The learning of the expressions of the concepts in the learners' own culture is not irrelevant to their aims and objectives (see 2.1.1.). As a FL learner, he/she has to learn these expressions sooner or later.

The expressions of the concepts that exist only in the target language culture are of course also to be learned, gradually. Since the learning of these concepts requires much effort, it is likely that the students will have difficulty in learning them. These concepts, however, are harder for FL learners than for SL learners, because the latter see more of the culture and hence gains more background knowledge to understand the concepts while the

former has to try ~~their~~ best to imagine the culture according to the teacher's description. Very often it is quite difficult for the teacher to explain all this simply in the target language, yet he has to make sure that everybody understands all this. Without understanding them, the students can not really learn the concepts, let alone master and use them in the target language. It takes hours for the teacher to explain certain cultural background knowledge in the target language and the students may understand only 80% or even 50% of what he/she said. However, he/she can, by employing the mother tongue, do it in a few minutes, and achieve the same or even a better result. Moreover, the sentence structures and the vocabulary the teacher uses in TL explanation will probably never be used by the students. Very often the terms the teacher uses to explain the concepts may even cause confusion and misunderstanding.

This, however, does not suggest that the teacher should turn to the mother tongue whenever he/she has to explain anything that is important or whenever he/she wants the students to understand fully. That can lead the students into bad habits which are difficult to correct as learning progresses. There are explanations that can be easily understood by the students and they should be presented in the target language, but where explanations would be too difficult for the students it might be more efficient for the teacher to turn to the mother tongue.

2.2. Difference in Ways of Learning

There have long been heated discussions about the problems of how bilinguals learn their second/foreign language and how they store the knowledge and what are the processes and procedures that are operating in the bilinguals' minds when they use the languages to communicate.

2.2.1. Compound And Co-ordinate Bilinguals

In 1954, Ervin and Osgood put forward the concepts of compound bilingualism and coordinate bilingualism in their discussion of the problem, and since then many investigations have been carried out on the issue. Among them were Lambert, Havelka, and Crosby, 1958; Jakobits and Lambert, 1961;

Kolers, 1963; and others (see the review by Macnamara, 1967).

According to Jakobovits (1970), the compound bilingual is a person who is "supposed to have a single meaning system hooked up to two different input (decoding) and output (encoding) channels corresponding to the bilingual's two languages". (p. 165-166) The processes of his mind work in two languages as shown in Figure 1.

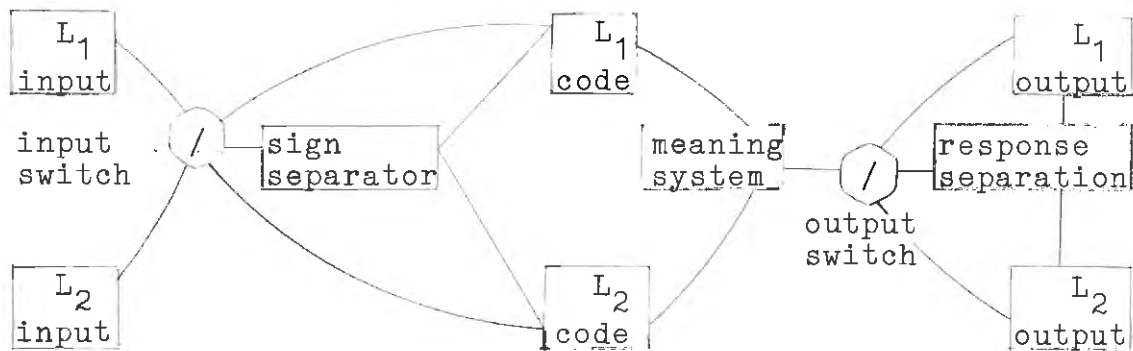


Figure 1: the Meaning System of Compound Bilingual

(adapted from - Jakobovits, 1970 p. 174)

This kind of bilingual, Jakobovits points out, is most probably the result of learning the target language as a foreign language. The compound bilingual acquires the language "in the same environmental setting as the first, and using the first language as the indirect channel of acquisition. In this kind of psycholinguistic system every word in the second (foreign) language was a mere replica of a word in the first language with a one-to-one correspondence in meaning between the two translation equivalents." (Jakobovits, 1970, p. 166) In other words, the bilingual here is learning another set of labels for the concepts he has already learned and has possessed a set of labels. Even for those concepts and objects that exist only in one culture, he tends to find the equivalents in the other language, though in many cases he fails. Nevertheless, the compound bilingual always manages to find some way to express the idea by explaining or describing it, because the system he has is a "fused" one (Weinreich, 1953) in which he has only one meaning system. All the terms and knowledge must finally fuse, though through different codings, into that system and thus make sense to him.

The coordinate bilingual, on the other hand, has a different system which separately "possesses two independent meaning systems corresponding to his two languages." (Jakobovits, 1970, p. 166) This is the case of the SL learner who acquires the target language with the help of the environment that is different from the one in which he acquired his first language, linguistically and culturally.

"There is no one-to-one relation between the two meaning systems". (Jakobovits, 1970, p. 166) His mind work process can be described in the figure below:

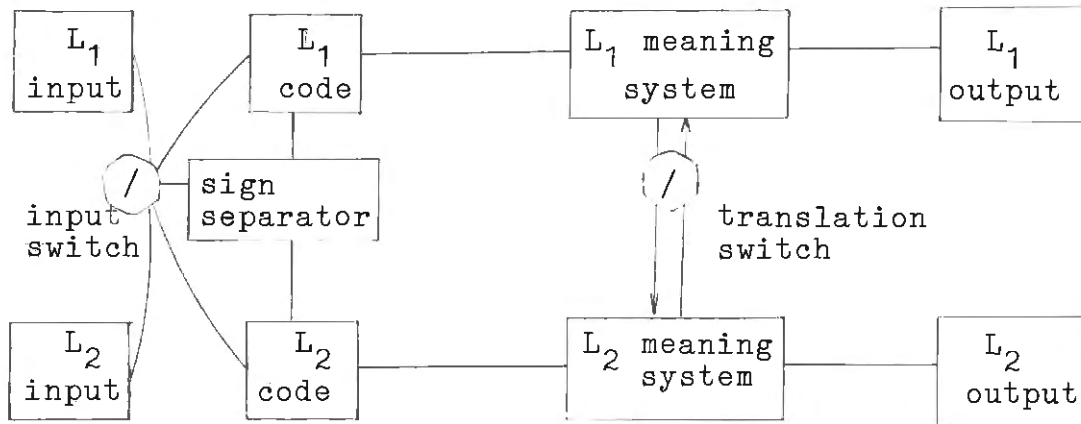


Figure 2: the Meaning System of Co-ordinate Bilingual

(Adapted from Jakobovits, 1970, p. 174.)

The coordinate bilingual, when learning another language, starts learning a set of concepts somewhat new to him because when the environment changes, everything changes accordingly. Even a table might be a little bit different in shape or be made from different materials. Of course for these simple objects he/she can still easily refer back to his/her mother tongue, but for more complicated concepts it is difficult to do so, and there is really no need for him to do it either. The coordinate bilingual, or the SL learner, usually has no need to translate in any circumstances. He either uses the second language to communicate, as the migrants do in their work, or the first language to communicate, as the migrants do in their home. Very seldom does he serve as an interpreter or a translator and when it happens, as the author and many other teachers have observed,

he tends to be very slow and often fails to find the exact equivalents but goes around the problem by explaining the idea.

Lambert, Havelda, and Crosby (1958) also did some investigation on this aspect of bilingualism. The experiment involved three groups of French-English bilinguals; the first group was unicultural compound bilinguals who learned French in school by the indirect method through the medium of English. The second group was unicultural coordinate bilinguals who learned French by the direct method and often used it in a setting different from the setting where they habitually used English; and the third group was bicultural coordinate bilinguals, native speakers of French who lived in the bicultural setting of Canada. Jakobovits summed up the result as "the semantic distances between translation equivalent terms were largest for bicultural coordinates and smallest for the unicultural compounds (a statistically significant difference), with the unicultural coordinates falling near the unicultural compounds and not significantly different from them." (1970, p. 166-167)

This, together with the author's observation, suggests that there is a difference between the SL learner and the FL learner (namely the compound bilingual and coordinate bilingual) in the kinds of knowledge in their minds. The difference is derived from the different needs, different environments and different methods of teaching. The teacher, on the other hand, often tries to maintain, consciously or unconsciously, the difference in order to meet the learners' needs and suit the requirement of the environment (and it is

quite appropriate for he/she to do so). Obviously the association with the knowledge in mother tongue is inevitable for the purpose of achieving the goal. In other words, the teacher has to use the mother tongue to a certain extent so that he/she can help the learners build up a knowledge system with the two languages balanced and ready to employ.

However, the theory of compound and coordinate bilingualism was challenged in 1970's because the distinction between the two kinds of bilinguals is very subtle and therefore can not be proved in the real learning situation. For example, since practically every adult language learner relates the target language to his/her mother tongue, more or less, it is impossible to find the subtle line which distinguishes the compound and coordinate bilinguals. The theory is in fact representing a continuum developing from one kind of learning to another, rather than the dichotomy the theory intends to distinguish. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the difference exists, at least between the two ends of the continuum and the difference is sufficient to merit the teacher's attention and the adjustment of teaching to the needs of the learners.

2.2.2. Independent And Interdependent Bilinguals

As mentioned in the last section, some criticism has been made of the theory of compound-coordinate bilingualism. A theory which attracted less immediate interest was proposed in 1963 as an alternative to the theory of compound-coordinate bilingualism when Koler (1963) presented

the idea of independent and interdependent bilingual memories. The argument then focused on memory storage, namely, whether bilinguals have only one memory storage in which the two languages learned are therefore interdependent, as suggested by Lopez and Young (1974) and Rose, et al. (1975), or whether some bilinguals may have two memory storage systems in which the two languages learned are independent of each other, as proposed by Kolers (1963), and Tulving & Colotla (1970). All of them did some investigation and felt that the results supported their ideas.

P.D. McCormack (1977) from Carleton University reviewed these and some other investigations---the results, the settings, the samples and the interpretations. As a result of his examination, he pointed out:"...sufficient data have been collected to enable us to conclude that the single-store position makes most sense, both in terms of parsimony and in terms of its predictive and explanatory power." (p. 64)

If this conclusion is correct, then the validity of the often expressed idea that one of the main tasks for a language teacher is 'to help students think directly in the target language' (a statement repeatedly made during the author's interviews with the language teachers from the foreign languages institutes in China) is in doubt. Since there is only one meaning system (or one memory storage) available for both languages, the only conclusion is that no translation can possibly be involved in the bilingual's mind when he uses either language. The effort involved is to put the idea into the language the bilingual intends to use and not the one he does not want to use. Therefore,

there is no such thing as thinking directly in the target language, since thinking in this sense can occur without language. Thinking is the process of putting ideas together within the meaning system or the memory storage. The bilingual may then express the ideas in either particular language.

For the mother tongue, the effort involved in expressing ideas is negligible and usually automatic. In the case of the target language, however, especially at the elementary stage, the learner (the bilingual to be) has to make this processing from idea to expression consciously. As he learns more and becomes more familiar with the target language, the transformation becomes easier, until the learner reaches the point where the target language becomes totally available in the bilingual's mind whenever he/she wants to use it. Ideally, the bilingual can reach the stage when he/she can transform his/her ideas into the target language as easily as into the mother tongue, though this is not always possible in practice, as Nelson Brooks (1964) pointed out: "We should not expect anyone to maintain two languages in equal balance at all times, for the reason that the individual's language behavior is inevitably linked to that of the person with whom he is speaking and with the situation in which they find themselves. Depending on the shifts in these variables, one language or another will dominate." (p. 42). FL learners are likely to find that their mother tongue will dominate indefinitely while SL learners may find that the target language can dominate after a certain period of time, given appropriate conditions.

In talking with Australians of Chinese origin who have lived in Australia for ten to twenty years, the author finds that some of them cannot talk in Chinese as freely as they do in English. However, whether in the case of FL learning or that of SL learning, the effort involved in the transformation of idea into linguistic expression seems to depend on the amount of knowledge and not really the method of learning.

It is not difficult to see from the above discussion that the controlled use of the mother tongue will not harm FL learning, and therefore the mother tongue ought to be used whenever necessary. In other words, so long as the mother tongue helps achieve better understanding (as it is quite likely to do, according to the analysis of the previous subsections), it is only appropriate to use the mother tongue. The idea that the use of the mother tongue will block the thinking of the learner seems to have no foundation.

2.2.3. Acquisition and Learning

As discussed above, the theory of compound-coordinate bilingualism lays emphasis on the system of thought processes while the independent-interdependent bilingualism theory lays its emphasis on memory storage. Although the theories are not universally accepted and are far from 'complete', they certainly give a clear description of the differences between FL and SL learning. Aside from the system of thought process and the memory storage, more recent idea concerns the actual environment and the purpose of the person learning the language as presented by Krashen (1977a and 1977b) who

suggested a distinction between learning and acquisition of a language. According to this suggestion, children acquire their first language by being exposed to the natural language environment. They pay more "subconscious attention to function" (Brown 1980, p. 93) than to the forms of the language. In other words, they pay more attention to the ideas represented by the forms of the language than the forms themselves. So long as the children can pass on the messages it does not bother them if they have made a few mistakes in grammar or phonology. The natural environment will gradually direct the children towards the approximation of the correct use of sounds, words, and sentences, through the means of mainly self-correction and some correction imposed by the others. Children in this sense do not 'formally learn' the language but acquire it naturally.

Adults, on the other hand, pay more "conscious attention to forms" (Brown, 1980, p. 93) or expressions of a language than the ideas these forms represent since the adults have been familiar with these ideas for a long time. The adults tend to monitor consciously their language behavior with great effort. The effort spent on the forms of the language behavior is what Krashen called 'learning' (1977a and 1977b). It is much like any kind of formal learning, usually with help of a teacher.

Nevertheless, this theory does not exclude the possibility of adults' acquiring, usually partly, another language. In fact SL learning involves quite a lot of language acquisition. When SL learners use the language outside the classroom, not for the purpose of practising the language

but for the needs of their daily life, they actually acquire bits and pieces of that language by overcoming the difficulty to get the message across. This acquisition also happens when SL learners talk with their friends--- again the purpose of talking should not be, at least not mainly, for the purpose of practising the target language.

The FL learners do not have much of this privilege. They are mainly involved in learning rather than acquiring. Acquisition can happen perhaps at the advanced stage when they can really enjoy reading novels in the target language or talking to TL native speakers. Even in this case it is a mixture of learning and acquisition for the purpose of reading and talking is almost always both enjoyment and practice; very seldom is the use of the target language enjoyed alone. Some people tend to think that the communicative exercises can change the learning into acquiring since the students really get involved in the roles they play and enjoy doing this kind of exercise. This again is still the mixture of learning and acquiring. The exercises make the learning easier and more natural by joining it with acquisition; yet the exercises can not thoroughly change the nature of learning. The consciousness of practice itself expresses the idea of learning rather than acquiring. The efforts put into monitoring the forms and the attention paid to the correction of expression can also prove the mixture to be true.

However, the theory of acquisition and learning helps distinguish the ways of gaining the knowledge of a language and makes the analysis easier by separating the two different

kinds of environments and purposes of learning and acquisition.

2.2.4. Grammar in Foreign Language Learning

FL learners have only quite limited input of the target language, confined to the classroom use and their chances of using the target language are even more limited. FL learners, therefore, have to depend much on the systematic organization of the language learning syllabus, so that they are less likely to forget what they have learned.

The important aspect of systematic organization of syllabus is that FL learners have to learn grammar. SL learners can, to a certain extent, pay less conscious attention to the grammar than FL learners because the environment, the context and the actual use of the language can help them understand and produce the language. FL learners, however, have to understand the text literally without any visual help. Whether learners are listening to a story or reading a scientific report, they have to understand the ideas through analysing the sentences, that is, they have to understand every word of the sentence heard or read in order to understand the whole story or the report. There is no native speaker around to simplify the language for the FL learners. The environment very often deprives the learners even of a picture of the story setting or procedures in the scientific experiment. In other words, FL learners listen to the tape-recordings more than to the native speakers who, while talking, give all kinds of

gestures or draw pictures to help the audience understand. The only help they can turn to is grammar which enables them to work out the meaning of the sentences. Especially those rules that are different from that of their mother tongue, must be understood and learned by students fairly early and thoroughly because the students in this case depend almost purely on these rules for the correct production of the target language.

FL learners have to depend much on the grammar also because they have quite limited input of the target language. These learners tend to try to make best use of the limited input and work on it to gain language competence, part of which is the learning of the rules and the correct use of them. SL learners may learn the grammar inductively since they are immersed in the TL world and have enough input to draw rules from. FL learners, on the other hand, learn grammar deductively and then apply the grammar to the use of the language in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and thus, gain the language competence. In classroom teaching, the teacher may occasionally use the inductive method to teach some simple rules to the students, but generally speaking the use of inductive method in FL learning is quite limited.

There is a tendency nowadays, especially in the field of SL teaching, to advocate giving a secondary/minor role to grammar. The reason behind this trend is that traditional grammar attends only to the form of the language, not the function of the language which is more important than the form. Some students who learned the language

through the grammar turned out to be unable to use the language correctly under certain circumstances. The sentences they produced were correct grammatically but not idiomatically. This is certainly true in many cases. Nevertheless, it does not follow that the fault lies in teaching grammar to the students. The fact that grammar does not include some functions of the language does not prove grammar to be invalid. It merely shows that grammar learning alone does not constitute language competence; it only forms part of language competence. In other words, students should not only learn grammar, but also at the same time learn the functions and the practical use of the language. These two aspects of learning are complementary to each other, not contrary to each other. Only after the students have gained both the functions and the forms can they really be said to be competent in that particular language.

Another argument against the teaching of grammar is that there are so many exceptions that these rules are practically useless. What is worse, the prescriptive grammar always falls behind the actual use of the language. By the time it is written, some of the rules are already out of date. This, again, is not the fault of teaching grammar. Exceptions mean that there are more tasks that students have to conquer. The fact that grammar works in more cases than not proves its usefulness. If no rules can be drawn from the exceptions students have to learn the exceptions separately. This is better than learning the whole language that way. Even in the learning of functions of the language some rules can be followed. For instance, when other people

have helped one in some way, it is a rule for one to say 'Thank you' to them; it does not matter whether they were paid to do the job or it was their duty to be helpful. In fact there are perhaps more rules for the functions of a language than that for the forms of a language. The fact that a complete set of rules has not yet been described does not mean that they will not be described in the future. In any case rule-governed learning seems to be much more efficient for adults than ignoring these rules.

The constant re-examination of the pedagogical grammar is important and necessary for language theorists and teachers. A pedagogical grammar can never be a completely accurate reflection of the actual grammar in use, but provided that most of it is valid, it is good enough for teaching grammar.

Since the learners' dependence on grammar is one of the characteristics in FL learning, the teaching of grammar becomes very important in FL teaching. The factors like which language should be used to teach the grammar and how much time should be spent on it need to be carefully considered. All this will be discussed in Chapter 3, associated with the practical teaching situation in China.

2.2.5. Language in Classroom

The discussion in the previous subsections in this chapter focused on the influence of the learners' needs, of their environments and of their thought processes of learning. However, there are other factors which, though not as important as those discussed above, are sometimes decisive for the choice of the method used in FL teaching.

As mentioned above, SL learners may not share the same mother tongue while FL learners usually do. SL learners therefore have to communicate with each other in the target language. This is to their advantage and can help them master the language. Nevertheless it is not as appropriate for the teacher, for he/she in this case has no choice but to use the target language all the time in class. In other words he/she has to use a variation of the technique of direct method, willingly or otherwise. Especially at the elementary stage, it can be very difficult for the teacher to communicate with the students. Performance and visual teaching aids may help to a certain extent, but to make sure that students understand what he/she said involves a lot of repetition and checking---the evidence of the inefficiency of the direct method. This, however, is unavoidable because it is impossible for the teacher to have a good command of all of the mother tongues of his/her students; the fact that nationalities of SL students (since they are mainly either migrants or students who are going to study in the TL country) are changing every year makes the situation even more difficult for the teacher to cope with. Therefore the use of the target language all the time in this case ought not to be interpreted as the best strategy in teaching, but as the only way the SL teacher can find in the circumstances. This is also partly why the difference between SL teaching and FL teaching is so important, for sometimes the best way for one is not necessarily the best way for the other.

The FL teacher, on the other hand, usually has a choice

of using either of the two languages in his/her teaching, depending on the needs of the occasion. Generally speaking, with the combination of the behaviorist and cognitive theories of learning, it seems that language learning mainly involves 'understanding + memorization + practice'. Hence the most effective and efficient way of teaching is likely to be that the teacher should help students understand the language and its rules in the shortest time so that more time can be left for practice and memorization. This is partly why in the modern classroom (student-centred classroom) the students spend the most of the time doing all kinds of exercises instead of the teacher explaining for most of the time as was the case in a traditional classroom. Under most circumstances the mother tongue can achieve the goal of helping students understand the language and its rules in the shortest time while the target language sometimes has much difficulty in accomplishing it. If the concepts or the rules are easy and not very complicated and the students can understand the TL explanations it is perhaps more efficient to do it in the target language, for it at the same time gives students some language input as a side-product. However, when the explanations become difficult for the students, for example, some new concepts that do not exist in their mother tongue, it is perhaps more efficient to do it in the mother tongue so that the students can really understand the explanations, not half of them, nor yet a vague idea that has the opposite meaning to the explanations.

As the environment decides the language the SL teachers have to use, the environment allows the FL teachers to have

a choice of their own in using the mother tongue or the target language. The actual language used depends on the individual teacher as well as the needs of the students, the purpose of the particular item to be taught and the students' level. When used appropriately, the mother tongue can make the teaching more effective and efficient and make the change for the students less sudden and less uncomfortable.

From the above discussion, it is not difficult to see the differences between FL learning and SL learning. The learners have different needs, and environments that will decide what they are going to learn and how they are going to learn the language. In case of FL learners the relation of the new knowledge (the target language) to the old one (the mother tongue) seems to be important and relevant to their needs. The use of the mother tongue becomes one of the features that distinguishes FL learning from SL learning. Though the theory of compound and coordinate bilingualism is no longer popular, there does exist a difference between the people learning in different environments as a foreign language or a second language. The learners do tend to develop the mastery of different kinds of knowledge and functions. However, the language learners all in a sense depend on the mother tongue for their TL learning. The difference between the FL learner and SL learner is in degree. FL learners also depend on grammar to balance the inappropriateness of the learning situation caused by the limited input.

All these factors influence learning and teaching methods. Since FL teachers have a choice of using either

the target language or the mother tongue in their teaching, it is only appropriate and relevant for them to consider carefully which should be used for certain purposes and when it should not be used. It seems that no single solution can meet all the needs, or suit all the environments. Different occasions must be treated differently, each according to its own situation. The total avoidance of the MT use seems to be not appropriate in the case of the FL teaching, nor does over-indulgence in the MT use. A balance must be established which can make both the teacher and the students comfortable and efficient in their teaching and learning.

Chapter 3

THE SITUATION IN CHINA

The necessity of the MT use and the difference between the FL and SL learning has been discussed already in this paper. This chapter is devoted to the situation in China, the changes in teaching methods, the arguments about certain language items and the possible use of the mother tongue in FL teaching in foreign languages institutes in China.

3.1. Changes in Teaching Methods Over the Last 50 Years

During the twentieth century, language teaching methodology in China has experienced a lot of changes. There were three trends of approaches developing simultaneously. The first is the FL teaching of scientific terms for the students of science and social science in the universities and colleges (not including the students in the foreign languages departments of these universities and colleges). The method used to teach these students changed only from the grammar-translation method before 1930's into the grammar-translation + reading method around the 1950's and has remained the same since then. Upon their graduation students need to be able to read journals and experimental reports concerning their fields in the foreign languages with the help of a dictionary. These students should also be able to translate useful information from the journals and reports into their mother tongue, when necessary. Generally speaking most universities and colleges have met the students' needs and achieved the goal they set for

themselves.

The students majoring in the foreign language, on the other hand, are quite different. Their needs are obviously more demanding than those of science and social science, but among them are also two different kinds of needs, that of students in foreign languages departments in universities and colleges and that of students in foreign languages institutes. The needs of the students in the universities share a feature of research, either in the literary works of the target language or in gathering scientific information. Compared with the students of science and social science, these students in the foreign languages departments pay more attention to aural-oral skills since one way or another they need these skills upon their graduation. Their needs, nevertheless, also require the students to be accurate in their understanding of the language as well as their production of the language, especially the written language. Therefore the method used to teach these students changed from the grammar-translation method into a mixture of audio-lingual + grammar-translation with very strong emphasis on accuracy in language production. The teachers in the foreign languages departments of the universities pay almost equal attention to the four skills, with reading and writing skills slightly more emphasised.

The least of the three trends are the students in the foreign languages institutes who are to become interpreters, tour guides, FL teachers and translators. Since these are the students most concerned in this paper, the changes in the foreign language institutes will be discussed in more

detail.

Compared with the universities and colleges, the foreign languages institutes are young and seemingly open-minded. These institutes were among the first to adopt the direct method in FL teaching in the 1950's. It was then that the idea became established that foreign language should be taught in the foreign language. Some people who accepted the idea argued that, if the teacher could not guarantee that the students spoke the target language outside the classroom, he/she should at least guarantee that they did inside the classroom; in this way the students could learn the foreign language appropriately and would be unlikely to forget it. (just as the direct method theorists would have argued). The direct method was then accepted totally. The languages were taught sentence by sentence and the teaching of grammar was practically forbidden. Much attention was paid to the aural-oral skills while little attention was paid to the written language. Upon their graduation the students could speak with reasonable fluency in the target language but with low accuracy in their ability to write, as well as to speak.

A few years of trying the direct method discouraged the teachers, because the results did not turn out to be the same as they expected. Therefore in 1960's there was a tendency in the foreign languages institutes to return to the grammar-translation method. Many teachers started using the mother tongue again in the classroom and paid much more attention to the grammar, if not so much to the translation. Accuracy was regained and, as before, at the expense of reduction of

oral fluency. However, grammar-translation method never returned to the classroom in its full form. The teachers still paid much attention to the aural-oral skills to meet the students' future needs.

In late 1960's and the first half of the 70's, the audio-lingual approach overwhelmed the foreign languages institutes. Apparently without giving up the stress on grammar to maintain the accuracy, the teachers in the foreign languages institutes again laid much emphasis on the aural-oral skills, and pattern drills as well of course. It is now hard to trace what happened exactly at the time, but somehow the method was either partially misinterpreted or developed by some Chinese FL teachers, for the approach developed by the language theorists was not the 'practice' of the approach in Chinese classrooms. For example, the audio-lingual approach, as mentioned above, allows the use of mother tongue to a certain extent and in many circumstances provides the MT version to help students understand the target language; but in Chinese audio-lingual classrooms, mother tongue was excluded at the earliest possible stage, from which arose another trend, that of using the target language alone in the classroom. According to the practice of the language teachers using the audio-lingual approach in other countries, the teacher and the students should lay equal stress on the four skills in accordance with their natural order, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing; but the Chinese teachers practising the approach advocated the priority of aural-oral skills to such an extent that they would not let the students see the written forms of the

language until after the class. The idea was that in this way students could concentrate more on the aural-oral skills so that they would be fluent speakers. So fluent speakers the students became at the end of their study, but at what expense! The students had very little accuracy for though grammar was taught the students gained very little from it. They first of all could not understand the rules fully when these rules were explained in the target language, and the little they understood could not be applied appropriately to what they had learned, because in speech, a speaker can more readily, correct, through various means, the misinterpretations of his/henhears than can a writer those of his/henreaders. In addition, because the students were mainly taught orally their spelling was very poor and so was their ability to produce sentences in written form.

Several years of teaching proved the result of the approach to be unsatisfactory and the tide went back a little towards the direction of paying equal attention to the four skills and to an emphasis on grammar, specifically the structure and rhetoric of the language. However, for one reason or another, the idea of using the target language alone in class was still strongly held by some teachers and students. It seems that they believed the criteria that can best judge a teacher's work is whether he/she uses the target language all the way through the class. At present it seems that this kind of belief is very influential (based on the interviews with the teachers from various foreign languages institutes and observations) because it can not only influence the inexperienced teachers.

to accept the belief without thinking about it, but can also cause the experienced teachers not to express their misgivings by implying that these teachers are not doing the job as a competent FL teacher should do. The implied meaning of this accusation is that these teachers are not competent themselves, that they can not use the target language to explain the difficult points clearly, or speak the target language fluently for a period of two hours (the usual hours a Chinese FL teacher spends with students each day). To a FL teacher this kind of accusation is enough to ruin his career and nobody can afford to allow this to happen.

When a young Chinese teacher of English was asked what he would do if his students asked him to explain the English word 'socialism' to them, he said: "I'll do it in English. I know it's inefficient and it might confuse the students rather than make it clear to them, but I have to do it to show that I can do it in English. I'll come to the Chinese equivalent after I give them the English definition." (The author's interview with the young Chinese teacher). This attitude is quite typical among the young teachers and the feeling is shared by many, though not as many will admit it. Many informal talks with these teachers show this to be the case. The psychological pressure resulting from the influence of this belief can harm actual teaching. It forces the teachers to use the target language all the time, regardless of the circumstances and the situations, and the results and the effects.

The capacity to use the target language throughout the

class is quite different from the need to do so. In China the overwhelming majority of teachers in the foreign languages institutes are capable of using the target language throughout the class. This can be proved by the present way of teaching and the fact that most teachers use the target language alone in most of their class periods. The difference lies in that some teachers can use it efficiently and effectively, but some can not. Some teachers choose not to use the target language all the time because they find that the MT use at times benefits students more than the TL use, as will be discussed later in this chapter. The MT use in this case by no means proves that these teachers are not capable of using the target language to do the same thing. It only proves, if it proves anything at all, that these teachers believe that they have improved their way of teaching by finding some better way to do the job.

Actually, the real incompetence lies in the teacher's wasting of students' time by boasting about his/her knowledge of the target language, without helping students really understand what they are supposed to understand. This applies especially to those who are not capable of explaining certain items clearly in the target language to students---which is true of most FL teachers who are non-native TL speakers to a certain extent---but who obstinately try to do so. It is necessary for these teachers to realize that this way of teaching is harmful rather than helpful to the students.

However, this 'audio-lingual' approach did help improve

teaching in China in some other aspects. In using this method, the teachers started teaching vocabulary of target languages in context instead of in isolated lists, as they did before. Students could now learn the vocabulary and the structures in a interesting and meaningful way, which in turn motivated them and made the learning less hard but more enjoyable than before. Various visual aids also came onto the teaching stage to help students understand the texts, due to the fact that these teachers tended to abandon the use of mother tongue at the earliest possible stage. All these changes helped improve teaching and are still appreciated and used today by most FL teachers.

One other thing worth mentioning is that the teachers at this stage started paying attention to the functions of the language, perhaps due to the content learning of the vocabulary. One of the most common exercises in China is to ask students to make sentences with the structures recently learned. Because of the influence of the approach, the students were then allowed to justify the sentences they made by describing the circumstances the students thought the sentences could fit in. The teachers, in teaching the structures, also gave as many examples as possible to show the different ways of using the structures and the functions of the language. This is doubtless relevant to the aims and objectives of teaching, even according to the current theory of teaching. This together with the changes mentioned above, indicates fast progress and great improvement in FL teaching in foreign language institutes in China.

In recent years the communicative approach was brought

to China by some TESOL magazines and journals. Some Chinese FL teachers, with the help of foreign teachers, especially those who were second language teachers back in their own countries, tried this approach in their teaching. So far no obvious advantages of the approach have been reported. Because of the limited practical use of the language, some teachers and students using the approach feel uncertain whether the students have really mastered what they are supposed to learn. One point seems to be agreed by most of them, that is, that in a situation where there is only quite limited use of the target language, the likelihood of forgetting what the students have learned increases. Once the systematic teaching of grammar has been abandoned, the chances of recurrence of the words and structures may be random and difficult for students to cope with. The difficulty might be temporary and might disappear when the students get used to the approach. It is also possible that this approach does not work in FL teaching as appropriately as in the SL teaching field, due to the different social and learning environments (see 2.1.2. and 2.1.3.).

The author's experience indicates that in China, FL teaching is not exclusively based on the grammar-translation method, as believed by some people (for example, Cowan et al. (1979)). The language teaching method for students of science may still be influenced by this method, but in foreign languages institutes the method has now changed into a mixture of the direct method + the audio-lingual approach with some remnants of the grammar-translation method. The language teaching

has been improved, but the result of the changes can not be said to be satisfactory. Communicative approach was introduced to the foreign languages institutes but it seems not to be very influential and the results have not been as good as those reported in the SL teaching. It seems to be necessary for FL teachers to find their own way of teaching foreign languages so that they can meet the needs of FL students.

3.2. The Place of Grammar

Apart from the disagreement on general teaching methods among the Chinese FL teachers there are also different views on some specific language items. The place of grammar is one of them. Teachers have mainly argued about two issues, the importance of grammar and the way it should be taught.

3.2.1. The Importance of Grammar in Adult Language Learning

Traditionally, grammar was considered as one of the 'musts' that the students had to learn. It was believed that grammar and vocabulary were all that students have to master in FL learning, for with the help of them students could express themselves freely and correctly. Grammar was also believed to be a short-cut to FL learning so that students did not have to learn the language sentence by sentence. However, when some observations were carried out at the beginning of this century, particularly when the direct method was influential in China, some teachers (not only in China) started arguing that children did not study grammar, yet they learned the language equally well

if not better. They therefore concluded that the adult language learning should also be natural learning where no grammar should be taught. This view has been discussed in Chapter 2 and it was pointed out that adult learning is different from that of children.

The argument arose again recently, together with the international tendency to pay more attention to the communicative ability of students than in the past and to spend less time on grammar. Some teachers pointed out that grammar is not as important as it is believed to be and it does not help students much. Some adult students, particularly in case of SL learning, have mastered the target language without learning much of its grammar. "... the ability to compose sentences is not the only ability we need to communicate. Communication only takes place when we make use of sentences to perform a variety of different acts of an essentially social nature." (Widdowson, 1979, p.118). Yet it is to the learner's advantage to learn grammar so that they can correct mistakes in their comprehension and production of the language. This is especially true if the students are FL students who cannot depend on the environment to practise the language. The goal of communicative ability does not preclude the learning of grammar; in fact, it encompasses the area of grammar, for both the receiving and passing of the information depend much on the explanation, which with incorrect sentences or ambiguity can possibly lead to misunderstanding. Accurate communication, which is no doubt one of the important requirements for FL students in China, depends on mastery of both the forms of the language and its functions. In other words, grammar is still very important. If less time is now spent on grammar, this

occurs because students have other equally important knowledge and skills to learn.

However, the argument in favour of abandoning the grammar remained in theory and influenced very little of practical teaching (except in the very short period of direct method). In China, grammar teaching in general is stressed. The common practice in the foreign languages institutes is that in the first year grammar is taught in the unit of "Intensive Reading", a course involving the training of the four skills and the learning of grammar. Grammar in this unit is at least as important as the four skills and is usually stressed by the teacher as much. Students learn the grammatical phenomena as they appear in the texts, that is, learning the grammatical phenomena one by one. For example, the students usually learn the present tense first as in the sentences "This is a book.", "There is a chair" and so on. In the next lesson, they probably learn the past tense as in the sentences, "I was 17 last year.", "My mother came to see me last Sunday." and so on. By the end of the first year, students have covered almost all of the major grammatical phenomena and much of their usage. In the second year, students have grammar as a separate unit, in which the teacher helps students review and sum up the grammatical phenomena theoretically so that these phenomena are organized as a rule system in students' minds. In the 3rd and 4th years grammar is not taught separately but constantly reviewed when students come in contact with sentences which are difficult to understand as well as in some exercises

practising the use of articles, prepositions and verb forms. According to interviews with the teachers from various institutes, grammar usually forms about 15-30% of the achievement test throughout the four years.

These facts have shown that grammar is fairly strongly emphasised and both the teacher and the students have to depend greatly on grammar in their teaching and learning, despite the existence of the argument against the learning of grammar. This in itself proves the importance of grammar to FL students.

3.2.2. The language Used to Teach Grammar

However, when teachers discuss whether grammar should be taught in the mother tongue or the target language, the disagreement appears to be a much larger scale. Many teachers seem to have believed that since grammar is the grammar of the target language and not that of the mother tongue, it is only natural to teach it in the target language and the use of the mother tongue in teaching grammar may lead to ambiguity on important points, and therefore to the failure of the students to understand these points. On the other hand, just as many teachers maintain that grammar in itself is already difficult enough for students and that the use of the target language in teaching it will not help but confuse the students and may lead to their giving up the learning altogether. These teachers hold that the clear explanation of grammar in the mother tongue is not only possible but also necessary since grammar is only taught formally in the first and second years,

during which period the TL level of students is fairly low.

Apparently both sides have their reasons and the difference in practice is not so great. Nevertheless, it does make a difference and hence it is necessary to analyse the problem to see the advantages and disadvantages of each side.

First of all it is necessary to examine the terms used in the grammatical analysis. Most of these terms are to a certain extent "artificial" to most people including the native speakers. The word "artificial" here means that even the native speakers will never use most of these terms except in their grammar lessons in school. It is, of course, different to a language professional who uses the terms all the time in his/her work and research. To him/her the terms are as real as the word "bread", but to the overwhelming majority of the native speakers these terms are as remote as the jargon of some difficult profession other than their own; with or without this jargon they can live equally well. This is exactly the same for FL students. In China, most of FL students are going to be interpreters, translators, tour-guides and government officials. They have no chance whatsoever to use these terms in their work upon their graduation. They will certainly not "interrogate" where the bus-stop is, nor be referred to as being in the "imperative" mood.

This indicates that students do not have to learn such terms if they can understand the grammar through other means, since these terms will not help them in their real life communication anyway. This leads to the second point, the

question of whether students can acquire TL grammar through mother tongue. As is generally known that grammar is supposed to describe a language. As mentioned above, grammar terms are invented or adapted by the professionals to suit this purpose. More often than not, the terms themselves need to be explained before they can be understood by others. In this sense MT explanation is most probably possible, and will be probably easier for students to understand and master. The terms that exist in the mother tongue can be easily replaced by the equivalents and the terms that do not exist in the mother tongue can be explained with a few words, which has to be done no matter what language the teacher uses. As mentioned above, especially when introducing concepts that do not exist in the mother tongue, the use of MT explanation is far clearer than that of the target language. This is particularly true in the case of learning grammar, because in this way students can learn to use grammatical concepts without spending much time on learning about the terms.

One of the reasons why there is no obvious difference between the students learning the grammar through the means of the mother tongue and those learning through the target language is that students have spent a lot of time after class on familiarizing themselves with the terms and jargon used or to be used in class. This enables the students to understand the instructions but wastes a lot of their time which could have been better spent on learning some communicative skills. There is no doubt that students have learned something during the period, but not what they

need most. It is important to be aware that what students need is communicative skills and in learning these skills the students depend on grammar, not on grammatical terms. Therefore it is unnecessary for students to spend time on these terms if the MT explanation can replace them with equal effect.

Thirdly, the way of teaching is related to the purpose of teaching. As mentioned above, FL students depend greatly on grammar, not so much on the way it expresses the rules but on the rules themselves which can guide the students in their understanding and production of sentences. These rules are meant to be understood fully by students, not 80%, nor 60% and certainly not below 50%. Even if students understand 80% of what their teacher says, they often produce incorrect sentences, or sometimes even worse, change their already-formed, correct habits into incorrect ones. The learning of rules is not like the learning of the language itself in which students are allowed to master the main idea, leaving the remaining 20% or 30% for later study. Rule learning is something that requires students to understand fully and to be able to use the rules in their language practice. It is no good to learn part of a rule; this can only lead to misunderstanding. As mentioned above, in the foreign language institutes, grammar is taught mainly in the first two years during which period the students' FL level is relatively low. Therefore in order to achieve the objective of full understanding by the students, the use of the mother tongue, at least partially, seems to be inevitable. If it is impossible for students

to understand fully at all times the TL explanation of the texts (with visual aids to help), it is even more impossible for the students to understand the TL explanation of grammar which usually can not be helped by the visual aids. This, of course, is the general case and by no means suggests that under certain circumstances, when students can in fact understand the TL explanation of some simple rules, the mother tongue should still be used. In such circumstances there is no objection to a teacher's using the target language so long as the situation as well as the teacher himself, ensures that students can understand fully what they are supposed to understand without spending much time on learning jargon which is not a necessary part of their vocabulary.

Fourthly the students' ability to understand should be taken into consideration. Even within one class the language levels of students are always different. In China, generally the brilliant students, which usually comprise $1/6$ to $1/4$ of the whole class population, can in most cases understand whatever the teacher has to say in class even if he/she chooses to teach in the target language. Half or two-thirds of the class are mediocre students who can understand their teacher only 80% to 60% or even less if the teacher chooses to use the target language as the means of communication. Another $1/6$ to $1/4$ of the poor students just can not understand TL explanation. Yet it is these mediocre and poor students who need the explanation most, not the brilliant students who have either learned the rules or can work by themselves without much help from the teacher.

If the teaching aims to help the mediocre and poor students, as Rivers points out (1968): "...with a homogeneous group of gifted students who already have an understanding of fundamental structural relations, discussion of the structural system in the foreign language is an appropriate technique; for students who are finding the language study difficult, explanations in the native language which are brief, coherent, and to the point, followed by active practice of the features under discussion, are more effective." (p. 86).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the use of the target language alone in class tends to give the opportunity to those teachers who use the target language to cover their own ignorance of certain aspects of grammar or other knowledge. This can happen (and it is observed that this has happened) because when the students have misunderstood or completely failed to understand, the blame will not be laid on the teacher. In other words, the teacher can make the excuse that it is not his/her incompetence that caused the students to fail but the students' lack of comprehension, since it is impossible for the students to understand every word the teacher said in the target language. This does not happen very often but it is extremely discouraging to the students.

3.2.3. Reasons For Using the Target Language

Some FL teachers pay much attention to the input given to FL students. These teachers feel that it is their responsibility to provide as much target language input as possible since the environment outside the class only

discourages the students from practising the target language instead of adding any input. This idea in itself is praiseworthy but this does not mean that providing the TL input should therefore be in full priority, and that everything else can be sacrificed to it. Providing input is one of the teacher's concerns, but it is not his/her sole concern, not even one of his/her main concerns. The main concerns of a FL teacher are to help students understand and produce the target language and to provide the students with an environment in which they can communicate, with others or to each other, as they are going to do in the near future in real life. Compared with these tasks, the FL input is relatively unimportant. When the teacher is helping his/her students, that is, explaining the grammatical rules, or monitoring their speech, he/she needs to let the students understand fully what he/she has to say so that the students will not misunderstand the rules, nor repeat the mistakes they have made before. It is of course ideal if the teacher can achieve this aim through the target language, but in many circumstances the target language is not adequate and that is where the mother tongue can help.

Upon this point, some people may argue that the use of the target language can be effective if the teacher repeats what he has to say until all of the students comprehend it. This involves another important factor---time. In formal learning situations, the time for teacher-student contact (the hours of teaching) is usually set and cannot be changed. The more time the teacher spends on one item or activity, the less time he/she can spend on other items and

activities. Hence, the teacher may achieve the mastery of one item but may have reduced the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching in general. Most experienced teachers nowadays believe that most of the teaching hours should be spent on teaching the target language itself and not on teaching about the target language. Teaching grammar is teaching about the language and therefore should be dealt with in as little time as possible, provided that the students understand the rules and are able to use them. As mentioned above, the terms used in teaching grammar are different from the terms the students need to learn, whether there is TL input or not in this case does not really matter much.

Some FL teachers in China seem to attempt to find other ways to solve the problem. Still believing the FL input is very important even in this case, they hold that one should always try the target language first. Even if the students can not understand it they can at least know what the explanation sounds like. Gradually the students will pick up the terms without being formally taught. To ensure full comprehension, the teacher can use the mother tongue to repeat the same idea afterwards. In this way, these teachers argue, both input and comprehension are taken care of. However, it does not turn out as expected. Most of the students, as many teachers report after trying the idea, find it boring and a waste of time to listen to the same thing twice. Quite a large number of these students simply reject the first explanation without even attempting to understand it since they know that there will be a second

explanation in the mother tongue that is much easier to understand. This practice of the students makes the idea invalid and teaching, a pure waste of time. The failure in this case shows that a FL teacher needs to deal with his work according to the real situation, not the one he imagines but one where the needs of his students lie. As the situation changes, his way of teaching should also change. To ensure effective and efficient teaching, the target language should be used only when the students can really understand it; otherwise it is essential and appropriate for the teacher to consider the use of the mother tongue.

The above discussion of the use of the mother tongue is limited to the aspects of grammar teaching and explanations. It is, however, different from the teaching of the communicative language---that is, everyday spoken and written language. In the case of communicative language teaching the large amount of the FL input may help the learning or make it easier (more familiar) for the students to master. One point worth mentioning here is that the FL input in any circumstance can be provided by tape recordings and other modern equipment nowadays. This by itself is a signal to the teacher to change his attitude accordingly, because the students now do not have to depend on the teacher for the samples of correct pronunciation nor of idiomatic sentences. This is particularly important for the FL teachers of non-native TL speakers. These non-native teachers can usually provide grammatically correct input for the students, but they cannot usually guarantee the idiomatic correctness of their sentences. This move from the dependence on the

teacher for input actually adds one more monitor that makes sure the students get correct and good-quality input. The teacher, on the other hand, can concentrate on explanations to and practice with the students. In China, the overwhelming majority of FL teachers are non-native TL speakers. It is important for them to realize the real position of FL input and to deal with it with more care.

To summarize: up to now grammar has provided FL students with a way of understanding the organization of the language and therefore is essential to the adult FL students. Grammar should not necessarily be taught in the target language for the most important thing is that students understand the rules and be able to use them. If this aim is not achieved the use of the target language in teaching grammar becomes meaningless. Stress on FL input alone cannot justify the use of the target language for the teacher's input can usually be replaced by recordings of native-speakers which the students can listen to at any time. The main concern of the teacher during the class time should be helping the students understand and reproduce the target language and providing realistic situations in which the students can practise their target language.

3.3. The Role of Translation

If there is a great difference between SL learners and FL learners in the importance of learning grammar, the difference in the role of translation in between the two is even greater. To a SL learner, translation is rarely

the aim nor one of the objectives of the course, although it may help the learner understand what he/she is supposed to learn. A SL learner, on the other hand, can either use translation as a means to help him/her understand and produce the target language as well as his/her own, or make it one of the main objectives, or even the aim of his/her study. As mentioned above, the balance of the two languages, that is, the mother tongue and the target language, is usually very important for FL learners. No matter what his/her motive might be, integrative or instrumental, the study usually results in the exchange of some aspects of the two cultures rather than adopting one culture and abandoning the other as sometimes happens in the case of SL learning. Translation therefore plays an important role in this exchange and enrichment of one or both cultures.

In the actual learning procedure, translation, relevant to the aim of FL learners, is also an indispensable means which not only helps students understand and produce the target language but also sets up a system within the learners of equivalents, not word for word, but between ideas and meanings. This system is the base on which the learners do their translation and interpretation in their future work. People usually say there are four skills involved in the language learning, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. To FL learners, there should be five, for translation as a skill is as important as the other four.

In China, translation was very strongly emphasised in the past, perhaps influenced by the traditional method. In recent years the stress is not as strong; instead many teachers

use translation as a means of synthetic drilling, examining students' comprehension, grammar and ability to produce sentences in the target language. Only in the 3rd and 4th years is translation taken as a course of skill training.

Generally speaking, the attention paid to translation in China is relevant to the needs of the students. The learners can, upon their graduation, be competent in translation if their future work demands it. So far no evidence has shown any harm done by this synthetic drilling. There is, however, a danger in using translation for synthetic drilling. In order either to restrict the number of possible versions, or to use certain recently learned phrases some teachers tend to ask students to do literal translation, that is, to translate word for word. This often leads students to looking for the equivalent words rather than appropriate expression of ideas. For example, some students, even some graduates, tend to use the term 'may' to express the idea of the Chinese term '可以' (keyi). Though in many circumstances they have an identical meaning in the sentences there is a subtle distinction between them in some circumstances. The following is one of them:

活干完了 你可以休息一会儿了
HUO GAN-WAN LE, NI KEYI XIUXI YIHUIR LE

work is done, you may rest awhile

This Chinese sentence is quite commonly used and is polite enough to be said to one's friends, superior as well as inferior, with different connotations in the sentence as the situation changes. To the superior, it means 'you have finally got the chance (you longed for) to have a rest'.

By saying this, the speaker shows his concern to the superior. To friends, it means 'I'm very glad that you can now have a rest (so that we can talk, play...or, because you really need a rest). To the inferior, the sentence may be considered as a kind of permit, but more often it is regarded as concern coming from the above. The word 可以 (keyi) here may not mean 'may', but also 'can', or 'to be able to', depending on the situation. Therefore in translation unless the teacher provides the students with information about appropriate situations the students are bound to make mistakes in their future use of the term, for the version 'you may have a rest (now).' is acceptable in itself, in English, but only on certain very limited occasions. It is the teacher's responsibility to tell students the necessity of different ways of translation caused by the different situations and prepare the students with the correct use of the terms in each of the situations.

The use of the mother tongue in translation is appropriate. Guided by their needs, the FL learners depend on the translation, both as practice and as work, for building up the balance of the target language and the mother tongue in their minds. The balance is not necessarily at the word for word level, but must be sufficient for the learners to use in their future work.

3.4. Teaching by Comparing the Languages

Teaching by comparing the languages differs from contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis compares and analyses the two languages to discover their similarities.

and differences, and hence to sum up and categorize these similarities and differences. The theorists then hand over their findings to the language teachers and hopefully these findings will be useful to and in the teaching. Teaching by comparing the languages, on the other hand, compares, analyses and explains parts and pieces of the two languages to the students so that students come to know that in any given circumstances of the two different cultures the difference of the two languages lies not only in forms but also in functions. In other words, the teachers, not the theorists, in this case, try to make students aware of different uses of the language forms and of the different functions these forms represent.

3.4.1. Purpose

In practice, many FL teachers in China use contrast and analysis to some extent in their teaching for the simple reason that it makes learning easier. By comparing and analysing the two languages, the teacher is able to show very clearly the difference between the two languages. The students, on the other hand, are able to associate new knowledge with old and therefore feel the learning is meaningful. By doing this the students do not have to worry about the whole set of the language, but those parts that are different from the language they have already mastered (the mother tongue). Some teachers are concerned about the possibility that this kind of comparison and analysis might result in an increase of the MT interference and the students' dependence on the mother tongue. According to the author's

personal experience and his discussion with many of his colleagues, this is not likely to happen. In any case, the doubts in students' minds, if there are any, should be clarified with the help of the teacher. On many occasions it is not that students do not understand the rules at all; it is that they have understood partly, but not to the extent that they can use the rules freely. These students hence unconsciously mix up the rules of the target language and that of the mother tongue. Or students may not be sure how to apply certain rules to certain situations. Therefore comparison, contrast, and analysis cannot confuse but clarify the students' doubts and help them apply the learned rules to the realistic situation.

As a matter of fact, students, when learning a new language are likely to think, 'why are certain rules so complicated?' or 'why are they not as simple as ours?', which in fact implies that they consciously or unconsciously apply the rules of their own languages to the language they are learning. This shows that with or without the help of the teacher the students will compare the two languages, that is, like it or not, there will be interference. The only thing a teacher can do is to help students make better comparisons and henceforth decrease the possibility of confusion as well as interference. Skillful handling of comparison and contrast often lead students to an awareness of the existence of interference and the students then pay attention to the problems and work hard on them.

3.4.2. Forms

Generally speaking, the sentence structures of Chinese are similar to those of English. However, there are places where Chinese structures are different from those of English. It is important that the students realize the difference. Upon this matter comparison and contrast can help students in two ways---to understand the difference and to know how to apply these rules.

For instance, Chinese students (students from many other countries as well) are likely to make mistakes with principal phrases. Actually this kind of structure is not new to the Chinese students, for in Chinese they can almost find exactly the same kind of structure. For example:

看 见 房 子 失 火 了 他 们 都 上 去 帮 忙
KAN-JIAN FANG-ZI SHI-HUO LE, TA-MAN DOU SHANG-QU BANG-MANG

see house on-fire they all went to help

= Seeing that the house is on fire, they all went to help.

The problem is that in Chinese, the two parts of the sentence have equal weight. Therefore the omission of the subject can occur in either the first half or the second one, or even both, according to the necessity of structure and meaning formation and context. In the example given above either to remove the subject to the first half or to omit it altogether does not make any difference to the sentence. Moreover, in Chinese there is no requirement for the consistency between the subjects of the two parts of the sentence, so long as confusion will not occur.

抬 头 一 看 什 么 也 没 有
TAI TOU YI-KAN, SHEN-ME YEI-MEI-YOU

raise head look, anything not-at-all

= (He) raised his head and looked, but nothing is there (to be seen). Here the context is quite clear. Obviously it is somebody who raised his/her head and looked. Nobody would mistake it as 'nothing' raises its head. Nonetheless, English sentence structure requires that the subject of the participial phrases must be in consistency with that of the main clause, no matter whether the sentence itself is confusing or not. Without the comparison of the structures in two languages many students assume that direct transfer is acceptable in English structure. The students therefore use this kind of structure freely and make such errors as, "Talking about the environment our campus is really beautiful." (= 说起环境来, 我们的校园很美丽 .) The sentence is quite all right in Chinese, but awkward in English. In many cases the Chinese students do not know what is wrong with the sentence and therefore consciously or unconsciously repeat the mistakes. To correct simply the mistakes the students have made is not enough for when they are going to make other sentences of this kind, they are likely to repeat the mistakes. The teacher has to compare the kinds of structures ---Chinese and English---to help students be aware of the difference and keep the awareness in their minds as a kind of weapon against the old habit they formed when they were learning their mother tongue. Only by doing so can the students change from forming wrong sentences like this into arranging the correct ones.

From the above discussion, it is not difficult to see that the interference, when it does appear, is not because the use of comparison and contrast in class. but because the existence of the mother tongue in students' minds. In other words, the interference is there, regardless of the use or the non-use of the mother tongue. The use of the mother tongue does not increase the interference but deals with it efficiently and effectively.

3.4.3. Functions

As mentioned above, comparison, contrast and analysis of the mother tongue and the target language are actually in use in China, though not by all teachers. What Chinese teachers seem not to have been aware of is that comparison, contrast and analysis can also help teach the functions of the language forms. As is now generally known, the functions of the language forms are not necessarily the literal meanings these forms represent. Thus it is necessary for students to learn not only the forms of the language but also the functions. For those forms of the target language that have the same functions as the equivalent forms in the mother tongue do, there will not be serious problems; but those that are not the same will usually become headaches for students.

In the example mentioned in 3.3. (paragraph 4), the function of the word 'may' in many cases is different from the Chinese word '可以' (KEYI), though semantically they carry the same meaning. Only by comparing the different functions of the two words can the students be aware of the difference and consciously practise the use of the target

language.

In many cases the forms exist in both languages, but the functions of these forms are quite different. Therefore the direct transfer is often embarrassing or offensive to the native speakers of the target language. If the students do not understand the difference they are likely to make such mistakes. The only way out seems to be for the teacher to contrast the forms and functions of the two languages and to tell the students if the direct transfer might cause offence. The students can then program these points deep in their minds which can constantly remind them not to make such mistakes. This, of course, should be accompanied by idiomatic examples from the teacher and constant corrections over the students' mistakes.

The main reason that prevents the Chinese FL teachers from using comparison, contrast and analysis of functions lies probably in that the teachers themselves have not fully been aware of the importance of teaching functions to students. Another reason is the teachers' uncertainty about the notional-functional textbook and its teaching system, due to the students' dependence on the systematic organization of language learning, FL learners depend on the recurrence of the structures to review what they have learned, whereas the notional-functional syllabus, though having some overlapping structures, has much less recurrence than other kinds of syllabus. This is also probably one of the reasons why the notional-functional syllabus has not prevailed in FL teaching yet, though many great successes have been reported from the field of

the SL teaching.

However, this by no means suggests that the idea of teaching the functions of the language is no good in the FL teaching. The teacher can either spend a few minutes, whenever the students encounter such a situation, briefly contrasting the two languages to show the functions of the language forms, or spend a period of time, ideally in the later stages of the learning, discussing with the students the functions of the language. In other words, the teacher helps the students go over in a very short period of time the functions of the language, especially those functions of the target language that are different from those of their mother tongue. Since the students by then have already learned the forms, the activity now serves both as a review of knowledge and as a clarification of confusion that might exist in the students' minds, consciously or unconsciously.

In this kind of activity, comparison and contrast are efficient and effective. The functions and forms in the analysis, if clearly presented, are self-explanatory and the students can immediately be aware of what they should do and what they should not.

This kind of activity can not guarantee that the students will not make mistakes in this field, but they certainly decrease the possibility that the students will make any mistakes in the future. The success of the students in avoiding such mistakes depends on their continuous practice after these activities while the success of the teacher in conducting the activities depends on his/

her preparation of good-quality materials (examples) and his/her clear presentation.

To sum up: In China the FL teaching has experienced various changes in methodology and way of thinking. At present the direct method is still partially influential though grammar is emphasised at the same time. Some teachers tend to rule out completely the use of the mother tongue in the classroom teaching, while some others maintain that it is not only possible but also necessary to use some mother tongue to make the teaching more efficient and effective. Because of the importance of grammar to FL students, it is clear that grammar is one of the essentials. However, how the grammar should be taught, that is, in which language it should be taught, is still a matter for debate. With regard to terms used in the description of grammar which most probably will never be used in real life, it is more appropriate to teach grammar in the mother tongue, to save time and at the same time to make the grammar clearer to the students. Translation has been over stressed in the past, but by giving it less attention, Chinese FL teachers are now putting the training of translation skills in their right place. Comparison, contrast and analysis of the mother tongue and the target language in class are in use in China by some teachers and the result is quite fruitful. Nevertheless comparison and contrast can be put to a wider range of uses in FL teaching. It might be one solution to overcoming the disadvantage of previous FL learning which mainly stresses the forms of the language but not its functions. Comparison and contrast can show the

students efficiently and effectively both the forms and the functions of the language.

Chapter 4

STUDY OF MOTHER TONGUE USE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

In the last chapter the general situations of FL teaching and learning in China were described and discussed. This chapter will be devoted to the investigation of problems in practical teaching, especially the MT use. Hopefully the investigation will suggest why there are problems and possible solutions to these problems. Since foreign languages are also taught in Australia where both the problems and the solutions to the problems may exist, it is appropriate to study and analyse the case in Australia in order to compare the classroom teaching in Australia with that in China. In this way, it is easier and also clearer for language teachers to see the problems as well as the solutions to the problems.

4.1. Questionnaires

To achieve the goal stated above, questionnaires were designed, to find out from the language teachers: 1) their general attitude towards methodology; 2) their attitude towards the use of mother tongue; 3) the proportion of various kinds of exercises actually used in their classroom; and 4) their teaching practices.

Owing to the fact that during the period of writing this paper it was impossible for the author to go back to China to conduct any kind of investigation in person, the investigation of classroom teaching in China has had to be carried out in form of questionnaires. The questionnaires were also distributed to the Australian FL teachers to find

out, through analysis and comparison, the differences in their attitudes and practices.

4.1.1. The Design of Questionnaires

Special instructions were given at the beginning of the questionnaires to indicate that the questionnaires should be filled according to the practical teaching situation, rather than theoretical appropriateness or fashion. It was hoped that in this way the questionnaires would reflect the true teaching situation. However, it is not impossible that some of the informants will answer some of the questions under the influence of fashion or theoretic-ally appropriateness, especially those questions related to influential theories and practice within one country or one school.

Items No. 1--4 are general questions concerning learning theories, methods learned in teaching and comments and feedback, if any, about the teaching. Items No. 5--9 are associated with the MT use in teaching. The informants are asked to give reasons for their use or non-use of mother tongue. Items No. 10--13 are designed to let the informants judge, according to their experience, the usefulness of some of the language teaching activities. Items No. 14-19 are devoted to the discovery of proportion of various exercises in order to see partially the informants' teaching practice.

Item No. 20 relates the purpose of teaching, that is, which of the four skills is/are emphasised by the informants.

Item No. 21 is a synthetic rating question. The principles of various teaching methods and approaches are put into separate statements and the informants are asked to rate according to the degree each statement describes them. No attempt has been made to separate the statements of the one method from another for fear that this kind of attempt may influence the informants' decision.

The questionnaires are designed for the FL teachers in China and in Australia (including some EFL teachers from other countries studying methodology in Australia). The informants were selected on the principle that they had at least two years of EFL teaching experience. The informants in China were all EFL teachers at tertiary level while informants in Australia (including FL teachers from other countries) were mainly FL teachers at tertiary level with some experienced FL teachers at secondary level.

With one hundred copies of the questionnaires distributed to the FL teachers in China and Australia (fifty copies each), the return rate was about sixty percent (approximately thirty copies from each country).

4.1.2. The Questionnaire And Its Results

QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a questionnaire for research purposes. There are no correct or incorrect answers for the questions. Please feel free to choose the one you like best. Please make your choice after reading all of them and choose only one answer for each question unless you are instructed otherwise. Thank you!

Table 1. Answers
to the
Questionnaire

	Au.	Ch.
1. I believe that language learning is		
a. knowledge learning	-	6
b. skill training	3	-
c. both	26	24
2. I believe that which method is used		
a. is very important in language teaching	26	20
b. matters but not very much in language teaching	4	10
c. does not matter at all	-	-
3. I think that the methods we now use		
a. are good enough for our students	-	-
b. need to be improved but not much because generally speaking we have met students' needs	14	13
c. need to be improved a lot because we did not achieve what we expect to achieve	8	17
d. need to be improved a lot because we can never be perfect	10	-
4. (Please answer either or both of them)		
A. Students now do not complain because		
a. our method is good enough	2	2
b. they do not know there are other ways to teach/learn	15	15
c. they trust their teacher	12	10
d. they do not rely on the teacher	-	2
B. Students do complain because		
a. they want our methods to be improved	7	10

	Au.	Ch.
b. they have met some incompetent teachers	8	13
c. they feel their teachers are not as good as a native speaker so far as language is concerned	3	7
d. they do not trust their teacher	-	-
e. they do not know what they want	-	-
f. they do not believe in new methods	-	-
g. _____	-	-
5. I think that mother-tongue should be used (You can choose more than one answer)		
a. only at the beginning stage	10	10
b. only in the intermediate stage	2	6
c. only in translation in the advanced stage	6	10
d. throughout the learning period	13	10
e. nowhere at all	2	-
6. I think that the use of mother-tongue in the foreign language classroom		
a. helps students learn the target language	4	5
b. slows down the speed of learning	1	2
c. helps but when students form the habit of relying on it, it is more difficult for them to perfect their target language skills	7	-
d. is all right at certain stages but it should be stopped as soon as possible	8	13
e. could help a great deal if the teacher handles it well	13	10
7. When I teach		
a. I avoid using mother-tongue because I want to 'input' as much amount of the target language as possible into the students	8	10

	Au.	Ch.
b. I avoid using mother-tongue because I do not want students to form the habit of relying on the mother tongue	4	4
c. I avoid using mother tongue because it blocks students' thinking directly in the target language	2	3
d. all of the above	7	5
8. When I teach I use mother tongue		
a. only after I explained the points in the target language and the students still do not understand	8	13
b. only in explaining concepts (like nouns and adjectives and grammar)	7	7
c. only in translation exercises	5	5
d. in all of the above occasions	11	5
e. nowhere	2	-
9. From my observations, students who have a better command of their mother-tongue are		
a. better at understanding the target language, but nothing more	1	10
b. better in organizing (producing) sentences of the target language	1	-
c. better in translation (interpretation) but nothing more	5	7
d. better in most of the skills	20	10
e. not different for the others	2	3
f. worse in some aspects because of more interference	-	-
10. In teaching pronunciation, I find that students are likely to make mistakes in		
a. the sounds that are quite different from any sounds in their mother-tongue	4	13
b. the sounds that are slightly different from that of their mother-tongue	9	7
c. both <u>a</u> and <u>b</u> cases	17	10
b. neither <u>a</u> nor <u>b</u> cases	-	-

	Au.	Ch.
11. I believe that grammar is		
a. one of the essentials that adult students must learn	15	10
b. useful but not essential	3	7
c. useful but the students do not have to spend too much time and energy in it	11	13
d. limited in use and the students can learn it by themselves	-	-
e. not really useful considering that there are so many exceptions	-	-
f. no use at all	-	-
12. I believe that translation (interpretation) exercises		
a. help students a lot to master the target language	18	7
b. help students to master the target language, but not very much	7	10
c. help students to master the target language, but considering the amount of time and energy spent it is not worth it	1	-
d. help but at the same time makes students form bad habits	4	13
e. are only harmful to students	-	-
13. I believe that to contrast the target language and mother tongue in all possible aspects		
a. makes students aware of difficult points and helps them memorize	19	20
b. causes confusion in students' minds	9	3
c. helps but not very much	8	7
d. does more harm than good	1	-

	Ans.	Ch.
14. Of all the class exercises (including class activities), the proportion of grammar exercise in my class is about		
a. 20% or below	12	18
b. 30%	12	5
c. 40%	2	-
d. 50%	4	2
e. above 55%	-	5
15. The proportion of comprehension exercise in my class is		
a. 20% or below	11	10
b. 30%	9	5
c. 40%	1	5
d. 50%	5	10
e. above 55%	-	-
16. The proportion of pattern drill exercise in my class is		
a. 20% or below	19	13
b. 30%	4	10
c. 40%	4	5
d. 50%	3	2
e. above 55%	-	-
17. The proportion of translation exercise in my class is		
a. none	5	2
b. 10%	15	15
c. 20%	4	7
d. 30%	5	6
e. 40%	-	-
f. above 50%	-	-

	Au.	Ch.
18. The proportion of role-play, pair work in my class is about		
a. 10% or below	11	15
b. 20%	6	2
c. 30%	4	10
d. 40%	1	3
e. 50% or more	6	-
19. The proportion of paraphrase exercise in my class is about		
a. 10% or below	17	20
b. 20%	6	5
c. 30%	3	5
d. 40%	1	-
e. 50% or more	-	-
20. When my students have completed their course, I expect that of the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing		
a. listening will be best	5	5
b. speaking will be best	1	-
c. reading will be best	11	5
d. writing will be best	-	-
e. both listening and speaking will be best	7	10
f. all will be equally good	6	10
21. Please rate the following statements from 1 to 6 according to the degree it describes you, as:		
1. I never do anything like that		
2. I seldom do anything like that		
3. I sometimes do that		
4. I often do that		
5. I do it for most of the time		
6. I always do that		

Statements:	Rate: 1		2		3		4		5		6	
	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch
a. In class, I teach rules of the target language in mother-tongue and analyse the text accordingly.	6	4	6	4	3	6	11	15	4	-	-	-
b. Translation is the main exercise (if not the only one) in my class	9	6	5	3	3	3	-	15	10	3	-	2
c. I pay much attention to the input of the target language into students, especially aural-oral input.	3	1	7	3	7	8	-	-	4	13	3	10
d. I never use mother-tongue in class; instead, I use all kinds of visual aids and performance and I repeat what I say until students understand me. In this way students learn the language by feeling it as a child does when he acquires his mother-tongue.	6	7	6	4	4	2	-	6	6	6	6	6
e. I seldom explain things in words.	9	8	2	2	1	4	8	14	8	-	-	-
f. In class my students are required to understand the meanings of sentences and to be able to use them.	-	1	3	2	13	10	-	3	-	3	10	14
g. Grammar is left for students to sum up by themselves. I come in only when they fail to do so.	8	6	4	1	6	3	-	3	16	-	-	11

Statements:	Rate: 1		2		3		4		5		6	
	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch
h. I pay more attention to listening and speaking than to reading and writing.	5	4	6	2	9	2						
	-	4	14	3	-	9						
i. I believe that language learning can best be achieved by mimicry, memorization of set phrases and overlearning.	5	11	4	3	3	2						
	4	5	3	13	-	5						
j. I teach students pattern drills and vocabulary in context and ask them to practise until they have mastered the use of them.	2	2	4	5	10	6						
	-	-	3	10	4	13						
k. Patterns are sequenced according to the degrees of difficulty and to the contrastive analysis of the two languages.	2	3	9	3	6	4						
	-	6	3	7	7	7						
l. No grammar or little grammar is taught in my class until after students have learned the patterns.	9	1	8	4	6	3						
	-	3	7	7	10	3						
m. When I teach I try to teach patterns and vocabulary in realistic situations so that students know immediately how to use them.	1	1	5	1	11	10						
	1	1	7	3	3	17						
n. I pay much more attention to the students' actual communicative ability than to their mastery of grammar.	13	3	4	6	4	9						
	-	3	3	4	10	10						

Statements:	Rates: 1 2 3 4 5 6											
	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch	Au	Ch

o.o. I teach students both the meaning and the function of the sentences.	-	-	7	2	10	10						
		-	3	-	7	4	16					
p. I want students to know what could be said and what should not be said under certain circumstances.	-	1	3	9	7	9						
		-	-	7	7	3	13					
q. In my class grammar is not taught systematically and it is not given unless it is extremely important and can give students immediate help.	7	9	3	1	3	5						
	9	3	10	7	-	10						

Key: Au. = FL teachers in Australia
 Ch: = FL teachers in China

4.1.3. Analysis

The first four questions are concerned with the general attitude towards methodology, the necessity of and the reasons for improvement. In these aspects, there seems not much difference between the Chinese and Australian teachers. They generally agree that language learning involves both knowledge learning and skill training, and what the methods used in language teaching are important and need improvement for various reasons.

Questions No. 5-8 show that a certain number of FL teachers in China (and also in Australia though fewer) believe that the use of mother tongue should be avoided or extremely limited either at certain stages or for certain kinds of skills though the overwhelming majority of the teachers agree that those students who have a better command of their mother tongue are better at one or more skills (question No. 9). Question No. 10 about pronunciation does not prove much since the scores are rather scattered and shows only the existence of the mother tongue interference which is not news to any language teachers. In question No. 11, all of the teachers agree that grammar is useful in FL teaching, but only 40% of them believe that it is one of the essentials that adult students must learn (1/3 of the Chinese teachers and 1/2 of the Australian teachers).

The answers to question No. 12 about translation are very interesting. The teachers from two countries seem to have quite different opinions about this question. While all agree that translation helps, 60% of the Australian

teachers believe that it helps a lot to master the target language (Choice A) and only 13% believe that it makes students form bad habits (Choice D). On the other hand, 43% of the Chinese teachers choose Choice D and only 23% choose Choice A. This perhaps shows that after a fairly long period of using grammar-translation method the Chinese teachers fully realized the negative effect of the method and therefore tend to be against the use of it as a whole while Australian teachers have not suffered as much and simply consider translation as a useful and effective skill which helps them achieve expected result. The answers to this question also indicated that nowadays in China, the method used is no longer grammar-translation, not even based on the grammar-translation method. It should be pointed out, however, that in Australia FL teachers are generally believed to use less modern methods than do Australian ESL teachers. Many ESL teachers believe that some of Australian FL teachers are still using a lot of translation, regardless of whether it actually achieves the results claimed.

In question No. 13, again the overwhelming majority of the teachers from both countries approved the MT use in contrasting the target language and the mother tongue. At its best it makes students aware of difficult points and helps them memorize. It seems that some teachers think that it is a very useful technique in teaching.

Questions No. 14--19 appear to show that teachers prefer to use a wide variety of exercises to hold students' interest.

Question No. 20 indicates the emphasis of the teaching in different classrooms. It seems that a fairly large number of the Australian teachers (37%) pay much attention to reading skills while most of the Chinese teachers stress either both listening and speaking skills or all of the four skills. This is perhaps influenced by the needs of the students, or perhaps by teachers' awareness of their students inadequacies. As mentioned above, the students in the foreign languages institutes in China are to be interpreters, translators, tour guides and government officials. To most of them, either all of the four skills will be involved in their work, or the aural-oral skills will be the most direct, if not the most important, means for them to communicate in their work. The Australian students, on the other hand, have no idea, for the most part, what they will do. The goal now set for these students seems very much like that for the students of science in China, which involves a lot of reading and understanding in the target language. This will, of course, influence the emphasis of teaching as well as teaching method.

Question No. 21 is a rating question and also the hardest one to analyse for it is almost impossible to distinguish the subtle difference between 'I seldom do anything like that' and 'I sometimes do that'. Similarly with the difference between 'sometimes' and 'often'. Different people have different standards. It is only possible to analyse the statements which have fairly concentrated scores. For the sake of discussion, it can be considered that 1 and 2 show a rather negative attitude

to the statement, 3 a neutral attitude, and 4, 5 and 6 a positive attitude.

Statement A and B are descriptions of aspects of the grammar-translation method. The ratings show that the teachers in China are more strongly against the statements than the teachers in Australia. Statements C--H belong to the description of the direct method. There is a fairly neutral attitude towards G (Grammar is left for students to sum up by themselves. I come in only when they failed to do so) and H (I pay more attention to listening and speaking than to reading and writing). However, the teachers, especially the Chinese teachers, are fairly obviously in favour of statements C (I pay much attention to the input of the target language into students, especially aural-oral input) and F (In class my students are required to understand the meanings of sentences and to be able to use them). Strong negative attitudes were shown to statement E (I seldom explain things in words). Upon statement D (I never use mother-tongue in class; instead, I use all kinds of visual aids and performance and I repeat what I say until students understand me. In this way students learn the language by feeling it as a child does when he acquires his mother-tongue), the FL teachers from two countries seem to have just the opposite opinion. The Chinese FL teachers are in general in favour of the statement with three-fifths having a positive attitude, one-fifth a neutral attitude and one-fifth a negative attitude (but all of this is in the category of 'I seldom do anything like that') while Australian teachers have about the same

number of both negative attitude and positive attitude (both two-fifths) with one-fifth of the teachers having a neutral attitude. All this shows that some parts of the direct method are still quite influential in FL teaching in China though some techniques are no longer used.

In statements I--L of the audio-lingual approach, the Chinese teachers tend to favour the approach while the Australian teachers have fairly neutral attitude. Statement M describes the situational approach and the rest of the statements are the descriptions of the communicative approach. Generally speaking the teachers of both countries have a positive attitude towards these statements and, of the two, the Chinese teachers favour these statements more in degree than the Australian teachers.

From the above analysis, it is not difficult to see that some Chinese language teachers (some Australian teachers as well, but smaller in number) do have a kind of prejudice against the use of mother tongue in FL teaching, (questions 5--8 and 21). These teachers seem to believe that mother tongue should be limited to the certain stage or the training of certain kind of skill because: 1) they want to 'input' as much amount of the target language as possible into the students; and 2) they do not want students to form the habit of relying on the mother tongue (question No.7). This confirms the existence of the problems stated in the previous chapters and indicates the necessity of finding solutions to these problems,

As mentioned in 3.2.3., input very often is not the main purpose of teaching. Especially nowadays, input

directly from teachers can readily be replaced by tape-recording, videos and films, both in class and after class. Therefore the goals for teachers to achieve in class are to help students comprehend what otherwise they can not understand and to guide them to practise in an effective and efficient way. However, if the teachers can give input to students as a byproduct, that is, if the students can understand the TL explanations, it is appropriate to do so; otherwise the mother tongue should be used to achieve goals. In any case, input should not be the main reason for non-use of the mother tongue because the main purpose of teaching is not simply to give input.

That students form a habit of relying on the mother tongue, seems to be an assumed rather than proven problem and can hardly be a reason for not using the mother tongue. As discussed in 2.2.2., adult learners always depend, to some extent, on their mother tongue in learning a new language. Mother tongue in this case helps the learners instead of impeding them from TL learning. In other words, it is only natural for the learners to base their learning on their old knowledge. Trying to force students to deviate from this natural way of learning will likely result in slowing down of the learning or handicapping it.

On the other hand, most teachers appreciate, and are in favour of contrasting and comparing the language, (question No.13), and as mentioned in 3.4, ~~it is seen~~ this as a very useful and helpful way of teaching. The fact that most teachers acknowledge and appreciate the approach supplies, at least partially, the solution to the question of whether

the use of mother tongue is appropriate in FL teaching.

4.2. Classroom Observation

While the questionnaires collect the information of FL teachers' attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue and their reported practices, classroom observation attempts to find out the solutions being applied to the problems. In other words the purpose of classroom observation is to see: 1) whether mother tongue is used in FL teaching; 2) why or why not it is used; and 3) how and under what circumstances it is used if it is used.

As mentioned in the last section, it was impossible for the author to go back to China before the completion of the paper to gather information in person. Observations were therefore carried out in the language classrooms in Australia, not necessarily because this is where the solution lies, but at least on the theory that the language classroom is where the problems lie and hence the place for investigation and study. FL teachers in Australia must surely share some of the problems of their Chinese counterparts.

4.2.1. Design of the Observation Chart

Although the observation mainly concerns the amount of time spent on using mother tongue and target language, attention is also paid to the circumstances in which the mother tongue or the target language is used. Class activities are divided into ten categories as in the following sample observation chart:

activity	Teacher's	Teacher's	content	grammar	transla-	Teachers &	Teachers	students	students
Means	explana-	ques-	exercise	exercise	exercise	students'	students'	ques-	answer
Time (min.)	tions	tions				reading & writing	story- telling	tions	
0 - 2		T				T	T		M T
2 - 4	M T		T				T	M	
4 - 6		M T	T					T	M T
6 - 8	M			T					
8 - 10					M T				

Table 2: Sample Observation's Chart (the original).

Key to Table 2: T = target language

M = mother tongue

Since the main concern is the amount of mother tongue used and the way it is used, the chart does not distinguish the persons who carry out the activities in some cases (for example, categories concerning exercises, reading and writing, and story telling) because such a distinction will not contribute to the problems or arguments discussed.

The observation chart was designed to be completed at intervals of 2 minutes. When the chart was put into use, it became obvious that more than one activity was carried out within that time range. In fact most of the time ranges have 3--5 activities being carried on at the same time. This makes the analysis of proportion of time inaccurate and therefore statistically invalid. The observation chart was then changed into the following form:

	M	T	S		M	T	S		M	T	S
1		1		31		4		61			
2		1	-	32	4			62			
3		3		33		1		63			
4		3		34		1		64			
5	8			35		2		65			
6	9			36	9		-	66			
7	1		-	37		5		67			

Table 3: Sample Observations Chart. (the revised)

Key to Table 3: M = mother tongue;

T = target language;

S = silence & and body language;

the time interval = 10 seconds.

1. teacher's explanation
2. teacher's question
3. content exercise
4. grammar exercise
5. translation exercise
6. teacher & students' reading & writing
7. teacher & students' story telling
8. students' questions
9. students' answers
10. others

Silence when marked in the chart means noticeable silence,

that is, silence longer than three seconds; otherwise it is not noted.

With this improvement the result of the observation is much more accurate. Although there are still double-action intervals (in many cases it is one activity accompanied by silence), the difference is too small to influence the total percentage. However, the changes were not made until after the first seven observations with the original chart. For sake of accuracy, another seven observations were made according to the revised chart. Since the results of the latter are similar to that carried out with the original chart, both will be discussed in this chapter though the emphasis will be laid on the second set of observations for the reason of validity.

Before observation, selection was made to avoid one-skill training classes. In other words, the author tried to avoid, for example, listening comprehension class in which most probably the target language alone is used, or translation class where a high proportion of the mother tongue is used. An effort was made to find the kind of classes in which many activities are carried out by both the teacher and the students. Selection was also made to enable observations of both FL teachers who were native speakers of the target language (NS - FL teachers) and those who were non-native speakers of the target language (NNS - FL teachers). All the observations were carried out in language classrooms conducted by experienced language teachers (with about ten years' teaching experience or more).

4.2.2. Observations and Results

Seven class observations were made with the original observation chart and the results are shown in Table 4.

Key to Table 4:

STU = Standard Time Unit. The time of 2 minutes is divided by ten and every one-tenth of 2 minutes forms one standard time unit. Thus the ten STUs of any time range are divided by the number of the activities within that range to achieve the standard time actually spent on that activity. In case of the activities in the time range 8--10 in the sample chart (original) on page 114, there will be 5STUs for each activity while in the time range 4--6, the activities will be 1.67 STUs each.

Ex = Explanation which includes not only the grammatical explanation but also the explanation of vocabulary, different points, cultural background knowledge and so on.

M = the mother tongue

T = the target language

Ex^M = explanation in the mother tongue

Ex^T = explanation in the target language

Total^M = total time in the mother tongue

Total^T = total time in the target language

Total^{Ex} = total time spent on explanation

Nat = native speaker of the target language

Non = non-native speaker of the target language.

Students Grade	Case	Time spent in T/M (STU)	Total Time (STU)	Percen- tage (%)	Time for Ex	Percen- tage of Ex (%)	<u>Exm</u> <u>Total</u> (%)	<u>Ext</u> <u>Total</u> (%)	<u>Exm</u> <u>Total</u> (%)	<u>Ext</u> <u>Total</u> (%)	Teacher
3	A	T214.49 M 35.51	250	86 14	T46.50 M23.17	28	65	22	33	67	Nat
3	B	T213.9 M 46.1	260	82 18	T29.06 M26.02	21	56	14	47	53	Non
3	C	T206.81 M 63.19	270	77 23	T33.81 M28.61	23	45	16	46	54	Non
2	D	T204.20 M 45.80	250	82 18	T40.12 M22.43	25	49	20	36	64	Nat
2	E	T194.82 M 35.18	230	85 15	T30.29 M23.89	24	68	16	44	56	Nat
1	F	T166.95 M 83.05	250	67 33	T12.03 M42.00	22	51	7	78	22	Non
1	G	T188.36 M 71.64	260	72 28	T32.96 M49.22	32	69	18	60	40	Nat

Table 4: Results of Classroom Observation (with the Original Chart)

Seven class observations were made with the revised observation chart and the results are shown in the following table:

Students Grade	Case	Time spent in T/M (sec.)	Total Time (sec.)	Percentage (%)	Time for Ex	Percentage of Ex (%)	$\frac{Ex^m}{Total_m}$ (%)	$\frac{Ex^t}{Total_t}$ (%)	$\frac{Ex^m}{Total_{Ex}}$ (%)	$\frac{Ex^t}{Total_{Ex}}$ (%)	Teacher
3	H	T2345 M 445	2970	79 15	1075	36	39	38	16	84	Nat
3	I	T2015 M 760	3000	67 25	1360	45	57	46	32	68	Non
3	J	T2270 M 500	2980	76 17	770	26	37	26	24	76	Nat
2	K	T2370 M 490	3010	79 16	1215	40	67	37	27	73	Non
2	L	T2375 M 435	3000	79 15	1060	35	55	35	23	77	Nat
1	M	T1915 M 690	3000	64 23	650	22	66	10	70	30	Nat
1	L	T2055 M 765	2980	69 26	730	24	71	9	74	26	Non

Table 5: Results of Classroom Observation (with the Revised Chart)

Key to Table 5 is the same as the key to Table 4 except that there is no STU in Table 5.

4.2.3. Discussion

In most of the 14 cases, the time spent on the teacher's explanation is 1/3 of the total class time or less. This follows the theory that in a modern classroom, namely, the student-centred classroom, the time spent on the teacher's explanation should be as short as possible so that the students can take a more active part in the learning. In 13 of the 14 cases, the students get 60% or more of the class time to practise what the teacher has explained to them and have a very good chance to master it. This, of course, partly depends on the careful preparation of the teacher in deciding how to spend the time, what to explain and what to practise. Only by deliberate planning can the teacher achieve the objectives of the teaching.

Another way to guarantee that the students get enough time to practise in a realistic situation is to use the mother tongue for explanations. It is not difficult to see from both Table 4 and 5 that in most cases about half of the time using the mother tongue is spent on explanation. Explanation of the vocabulary, the grammatical points and the cultural background knowledge in the target language will generally take far longer than in the mother tongue. If all these MT explanations were carried out in the target language probably another 20% of the class time would have to be spent on the explanation. This shows that if the mother tongue is used in a controlled manner it can help the teacher spend more time on the actual practice of the language. When the guarantee of full understanding by the students is taken into account, the efficiency and

effectiveness involved in the MT use is even more obvious.

The efficiency and effectiveness here, of course, should not lead to the overuse of the mother tongue. As can be seen in Table 2, the total use of the mother tongue in second and third years is 15 to 20%, with Case I as an exception (to be discussed later), and in first year about 25% (Table 4 shows the similar results.)

Obviously there is a tendency for students at the beginners' level to make more use of the mother tongue. This is because at the early stages the students depend more on the mother tongue for the understanding of the target language while the teacher can find very few words in the target language that can be used to explain other terms or difficult points of the target language. This is also why at the early stage the percentage of the mother tongue explanation over the total explanation is higher than that of the target language. In Grades 2 and 3, however, the proportion of the mother tongue is about the same for at this stage the teacher can already use some target language to explain certain things. Nevertheless a certain proportion of the mother tongue is kept by the teacher for the sake of effectiveness and efficiency of teaching. The assumption that the higher the students' level, the less the use of the mother tongue seems not to work, not at least in the classes observed.

The point discussed in the previous paragraph is supported by the percentage of the mother tongue used in explanation (the last two columns of the tables). In first year, the number of MT explanations is far greater than the

number of TL explanations, while in second and third years, the MT explanations are fewer than the TL explanations (MT explanations is about 1/3 of total explanation or less) Again there is not much difference between the second and third years. This result may depend on the preferences of individual teachers or the content of the explanation. The mother tongue is useful in explanation and the teacher can not teach a target language without it. On the other hand, as the second and third year students can understand certain amount of the target language explanation, the teacher tends to make use of their knowledge. However, as soon as the teacher is not sure whether the students can understand him/her in the target language, he/she tends to switch back to the mother tongue. This is why a certain amount of the mother tongue is used in all of the cases observed.

Case I is an exception. The use of the mother tongue in this case is 25%. This result arose partly because the exercise in this case happened to take the form of translation, which is unlike exercises that use only (or mainly) the target language. However, another possible explanation might be the fact that the teacher in this case was a non-native speaker of the target language. Non-native speakers of the target language sometimes find it hard to give explanations in the target language, and therefore it is likely that they will switch back to the mother tongue. In other words when the teacher is not sure whether he/she can explain clearly in the target language to the students, (as well as when he/she is not sure whether the students

can understand his/her TL explanation), he/she is likely either to repeat the explanation in the mother tongue or to use the mother tongue in the first place. This can be shown by the higher percentage in column 'Ex^M/Total^{Ex}'. This is a practical teaching strategy and can hardly blame the NNS-FL teachers for using it. On the contrary, it would be strange if a NNS-FL teacher taught the target language without using the mother tongue or using very little mother tongue.

4.3. Summary

From the results and the discussion of the questionnaires it is not difficult to see that the use of the mother tongue in FL teaching and learning is still a problem, especially in China. Consciously or unconsciously some teachers still have a prejudice against the MT use for effective and efficient teaching. As can be seen from the discussion of the MT use in this chapter as well as in previous chapters, the controlled use of the mother tongue can be very helpful rather than harmful to the students. These teachers' worries about the insufficient TL input when the mother tongue is in use are not really necessary. There are other means nowadays to fill the gap; some provide better models than NNS-FL teachers can.

However, classroom observation of Australian teachers' performance revealed a regular use of the mother tongue, although they, as well as their colleges and some of the Chinese teachers who answered the questionnaire, stated that they disapproved the use of the mother tongue.

Most teachers had more or less the same percentage of the time spent in the mother tongue, indicating that consciously or unconsciously they appreciate the importance of the mother tongue use, despite what they said or at least what they thought they should say. It would, of course, be desirable to look at actual practice in Chinese classrooms and make the same comparison. This was, as explained above, impossible in the time available, but is, it is hoped, a feasible project for the future. This again shows how influential and widespread the belief or rather the prejudice against the mother tongue use is. To some experienced Australian language teachers and to some of the experienced Chinese language teachers, what they say is not necessarily what they practise, not at least to the extent of ruling out the MT use totally. Yet it is quite different with the inexperienced, young Chinese language teachers. Because of the lack of teacher training, (in foreign languages institutes in China, students majoring in languages become teachers upon their graduation without going through any pre-service teacher training and the in-service training usually does not start until after a period of teaching), these young teachers have nothing to rely on except what they heard from the experienced teachers. Since the belief in the non-use of the mother tongue is very popular in China, many young teachers not only believe in it but also try their best to put it into practice. Some of them even set a goal for themselves which requires them not to say a single word in the mother tongue in class. This is not only inappropriate for their students but also harmful to these teachers themselves.

It is also important to note that NNS-FL teachers tend to use a little more MT explanation than NS-FL teachers. As indicated in Table 5, for example, by classes I and K, (and some others in Table 4), the NNS-FL teachers have a higher percentage of time spent in MT explanation (in general). This, as mentioned above, is because in this way they can make themselves understood better. In China, the overwhelming majority of FL teachers are non-native speakers of the target languages. Many of them have never lived in an environment where the target language is used for communication. In this sense it is not only inappropriate, but also very strange that some of them should try to disconnect the association of the mother tongue and the target language in teaching and learning. The efforts involved are admirable, but the effect is in serious question and the way of teaching should not be encouraged.

SITUATIONS IN WHICH USE OF MOTHER TONGUE IS APPROPRIATE

The previous chapters dealt the theory and practice of FL teaching and analysis of the possible MT uses. In this chapter the possible MT uses will be considered from the practical point of view. Section 1 of this chapter deals with the MT use in teaching whereas section 2 concerns the MT use in learning.

5.1. Teaching

As mentioned in the previous chapters there are occasions where it is more appropriate to use the mother tongue than to use the target language. These occasions are now listed in the following subsections and discussed separately.

5.1.1. New Concepts

In learning a new language, the students inevitably meet some new concepts. To children, these new concepts can be readily accepted for the whole of their thoughts are still developing and the children are receiving constantly new concepts from their own culture. However, for adult learners the case is different. Adults already have a set of concepts which influence, or even dictate, to a certain extent, their way of thinking. Adults are usually unwilling to change this settled state of mind. When they are learning something new, it must be built on the base of their old knowledge. Anything different from, or contradictory to, the old knowledge in this case can

cause great confusion. Yet in learning a foreign language it is most likely that the students are going to confront some new concepts. It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that the students understand these concepts and are able to accept them. Using the target language to explain these concepts is likely to cause confusion, for the concepts themselves are already difficult enough for the students. If the students fail to understand the TL explanation, even partially, these concepts can become either very vague in the students' minds or totally different from the ideas these concepts represent. For example, 'tense' is a new concept to the Chinese students. Yet this concept of 'tense' is very difficult to explain. If the teacher tries to use the TL dictionary definition as his/her explanation, it is almost certain that all of the students will fail to understand. It will be worse if the teacher tries to use his/her own words to explain the concept in the target language, because the expressions will then be neither easy enough for the students to understand fully, nor exact enough for the students to get the point. The use of the mother tongue is much better in this case. The students do not have any difficulty in understanding, and their ability to digest the MT expressions is far better than that in the target language. The students therefore can soon get the idea even though with some effort.

Another linking factor is time. Many new concepts involve a lot of cultural background knowledge, which without understanding the students can not really get

a true picture of the concepts. Nevertheless it takes much time and energy from both the teacher and the students to give or listen to such long explanations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, such explanations in the mother tongue are much shorter but much more effective. The students can easily understand the concept and then attack the language. This idea that the teacher guides the students to learn things one by one has been tried out by the author and his colleagues back in China and the results have been encouraging. The students used about two-thirds of the time usually spent on the task and mastered what they had to learn to a satisfactory level.

5.1.2. Abstract Ideas

For practically the same reason, the use of the mother tongue is also quite effective in teaching abstract ideas. As most of FL teachers acknowledge, TL explanations of words or phrases for abstract ideas are very complicated, for the teacher has to describe the concept so precisely that the description can remind the students of both the concept in their minds and the label they have learned in the mother tongue. To only remind them of the concept is not enough as the students then still do not know or are not sure what it is, for in this case they are not actually learning a new label for an already-known concept, but also a new concept itself (new in the sense that this is something the students seem to be familiar with, yet not exactly something they know.) What is more, the students, though able to understand the concept, very often have

difficulty in understanding the words and phrases used to explain the concept. Insistence on using the target language for the purpose may lead to distortion of the concept or even a completely different concept.

If the use of the mother tongue is allowed, the same amount of time would suffice to explain the idea clearly (one or two words in the mother tongue) and to provide time to practise the use of the word. However, even if the teacher wants the students to practise explaining the word in the target language, it still seems better in most cases to give the MT equivalent first to the students and then ask the students to explain the concept in the target language in their own words. In other words, the teacher can help the students describe or explain words and concepts in the target language, but should not him/herself give explanations in the target language.

5.1.3. Difficult Points

The term 'difficult points' here means those language/grammar points which are difficult for the students to learn themselves. These language/grammar points require the teacher's explanations in class. To teach these difficult points also requires the use of mother tongue. The most important thing involved here is that the purpose of the teaching is to make the students understand the points. It is not to practise listening comprehension. Therefore the teacher should only use

the means that can be accepted by the students. Of course, this does not suggest that only the mother tongue should be used in this kind of teaching. If the target language to be used can be understood by the students the teacher should use the target language, for in this way he/she can kill two birds with one stone. Nonetheless in some circumstances the students are not able to understand the teacher, that is, the teacher can only fulfil one of the two tasks at a time. On these occasions, it is appropriate to switch to the mother tongue, fulfil the main purpose of teaching and leave the practice of listening comprehension for a later occasion. Some teachers are worried that if a teacher does this too often there might not be enough input of the target language. This kind of feeling is very well justified in the traditional classroom in which the teacher talks for most of the time. In the student-centred classroom in which as mentioned above, the teacher's explanation only takes a small proportion of the class time and the teacher him/herself is no longer the only source of the target language input, there is no need to worry about this. The students can get enough input and practise in and outside the class, and this kind of input is more relevant and more practical to the needs of the students.

This is also true for the complicated instructions at the beginning stage. The purpose of giving the instructions is to have the students follow them. If the students can not understand the instructions there is no way that they can obey them. Classroom target language should be taught in a gradual and casual manner and the

students should not spend too much time and energy on it. Therefore before the students reach the stage at which they can understand all the instructions, it is only natural and appropriate to use the mother tongue now and then.

5.1.4. Grammar

As mentioned above, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to teach all grammar in the target language. Many terms used in grammar teaching are not really used in daily life and are not likely to be useful for most of the language students in foreign languages institutes in China. Since it is commonly agreed that the needs of students are the main, if not the sole, concern of the teachers, the priority for teaching needs to be the everyday foreign language or professional foreign language in case of FLSP (foreign-language for specific purposes). Grammar describes the language ; it is not the language itself. However, as mentioned before, FL students have to depend at least in part on grammar and grammar to them is a useful means of learning the target language. Nevertheless, the time and energy which both teacher and students spend on grammar should be a small proportion of the whole teaching and learning period. To achieve this goal the mother tongue is an efficient and effective means. The teacher can use the mother tongue to present and explain his points clearly, thoroughly and in the shortest time, with some examples in the target language. This way of

grammar teaching may look like the traditional method of presenting the grammar (and in fact is often accused of being such), but the point is that it is pointless to avoid using a method or a part of the method simply because the method itself is no longer fashionable.

In the field of FL teaching to eliminate any one method completely is likely to go to the extreme, and hence will do harm to the teaching. Since presenting the grammar in the mother tongue will benefit the students, it is only appropriate to use it rather than ignore it.

5.1.5. Translation

The same principle applies to the teaching and training of translation skills. There is no doubt that both the teacher and the students will use the mother tongue in the translation exercises and practice. The dispute here is whether the teacher should use the mother tongue to present and explain the translation skills. The terms used in the explanation of the translation skills are not as inappropriate as the terms for grammar teaching, though they are still not directly related to everyday language. The difference is that the terms used in explanations of translation skills are more subtle than those for grammar, as some people believe that it is easy to feel and locate a piece of well-done translation yet it is difficult to talk about it. Personally, the author prefers to present the principles of translation skills which in general are simple, in the target language, but to give the detailed explanation of how to apply these

principles in the mother tongue so that the students can get a clear idea not only of the general principles but of how to put these principles into practice.

5.1.6. Target Language Culture

The previous subsections have discussed the teaching of aspects of the language directly related to everyday language. In this subsection the discussion will focus on different language behaviors. The different language behavior here means the language action or reaction the students might or should take in another culture. As mentioned before, in cultures, the language action and reaction might be different due to different ways of thinking, habits or traditional customs. The teaching of such kinds of language behavior used to be a headache for the teachers before the emergence of the notional-functional approach. The approach here solves some of the problems and tells the students what they should do under certain circumstances. Unfortunately it does not provide the necessary explanation of why such behaviors are required. Thus the learning is not associated with their old knowledge, namely, their original behavior under the same circumstances in their own culture. The students then are often at a loss when they actually encounter the real situation, and consciously or unconsciously they turn to the old habits and react according to their own customs. This can be helped by presenting to the students the contrast of the different actions and reactions and hence making them aware of the difference and of the wrong

behaviors in the circumstances. The students, by discussing the differences, can get a clear and very often deep-rooted idea of the differences, and are able to use the idea to guide their future behaviors in the target language culture. It seems to be certain that this approach of contrast and comparison is in use though no reports appear to have been written describing it. The advantage of the approach is to get the students actively involved in the learning. With the information on TL culture provided by the teacher, the students can make the contrast and the comparison by themselves, which will no doubt leave a deeper impression on them than if the teacher does all the comparison, which, in turn, is far better than if there is no comparison at all.

The use of the mother tongue involved in this approach is not extensive, but it is likely to be very effective. The information concerning the MT culture has to be presented in the mother tongue for a translated version in this case can only confuse students, and cause inaccuracies. The teacher can decide which language to use for the actual comparison and its explanation, depending on the level of the students.

It could be argued that this approach may increase the possibility of MT interference, but such interference has not occurred in the author's experience. Interference is always there whether the teacher uses MT explanation or not. The purpose of using such explanations is to make the students aware of the interference, and hence fight this interference themselves.

5.1.7. Compiling Teaching Materials

There are two ways of obtaining teaching materials for the foreign languages institutes in China; one is importing and the other self-compiling. In the 60's and 70's, especially during the period of the so-called 'Cultural Revolution,' the teachers in China mainly used self-compiled materials because of the "Closed-door" policy. In late 70's when the policy was changed into an open-door one, a very large amount of foreign teaching materials were imported and soon gained popularity in the foreign language institutes in China. The self-compiled materials henceforth disappeared from the classrooms, and among quite a number of the teachers grew the belief that the imported materials are always better than the self-compiled so that whenever they started a unit, they always tried to find an imported textbook even if the textbook was not designed for the purpose and would not help to achieve the objectives of the unit.

It is not the purpose of this paper to judge if this belief is right or wrong, but it is clear that both imported materials and self-compiled materials have advantages as well as disadvantages. The imported materials usually have a very good reputation internationally. Their success has proved them to be good textbooks for FL students. Nevertheless, these materials are not specially designed for Chinese students. Some of the problems the Chinese students have may not be included in the syllabus while those problems and their treatments that are in the syllabus may not be associated with the Chinese students.

To use such textbooks without adaptation will help the students achieve something, but certainly not as much as expected, or far less than expected.

On the other hand, self-compiled materials are specially designed for FL students of a particular nationality, (in this case Chinese), deal with their problems and are based on the knowledge they have. These materials may not (and can never) enjoy an international reputation, but they can certainly help the students achieve what they expect. The weak point of these materials is that the people who compiled the materials are not perhaps not as competent or well known as the compilers of imported materials who have devoted their life to language teaching methodology. This is especially true in China. For various reasons teaching materials have not been much studied in China during the last thirty years and very little research has been done or reported. This perhaps is another reason why some teachers prefer imported materials to self-compiled ones. However, while self-compiled materials badly need to be improved, they should not be abandoned. Another advantage of the self-compiled materials is that the materials not only deal with TL culture but also the culture of the learners; while the imported materials only deal with the TL culture or avoid dealing with the cultural aspect at all. To the Chinese FL learners this is very important since upon their graduation, they need to talk about their own culture in the target language as well as about the TL culture in their mother tongue.

Both in teaching and compiling the materials it is necessary to know what the students' difficulties are. The teachers and the compilers ought beforehand, as well as during the process of teaching and compiling, to know the possible MT interference, the background knowledge the students may need, and the most acceptable way of presentation. All this depends more on the mother tongue rather than on TL knowledge. Apart from understanding what causes mother tongue interference and how it occurs, the teachers and compilers usually sum up the past experience of the Chinese learners and analyse the data to find the effective and efficient ways of teaching or presenting materials. China is a very big country and the students from different areas have different problems which must be dealt with separately. Sometimes different generations of students will have different problems or need different background information. All this requires the MT knowledge, and it can only be done by the people who share the mother tongue with the students.

5.2. Learning

In the above subsections the use of the mother tongue for teaching is discussed, though not exhaustively. However, the use of the mother tongue is not likely to be limited in the aspect of teaching. Students, too, to a certain extent, rely on the mother tongue in helping their learning.

5.2.1. Use of Bilingual Dictionaries

Generally speaking, the use of bilingual

dictionaries is discouraged in the foreign languages institutes in China. The English departments in these institutes, for example, usually encourage students from the second year on to use English-English dictionaries, such as *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, *Longman Dictionary of the English Language*. Bilingual dictionaries, on the other hand, are discouraged, if not forbidden, except in the case of translation. The argument is that the mother tongue equivalents or for the same reason the target language equivalents, in the bilingual dictionaries are very often not precise, or incomplete. This, of course, is a quite valuable point, but not necessarily true in all circumstances. In order to illustrate the point, it is necessary to define in what cases the equivalents are not precise. Actually this is mainly true in two cases, that is, verbs and verb phrases. Again take English and Chinese as an example, in many cases the action represented by a verb or verb phrase in one language is either not exactly equivalent in another language because of the different ways of thinking, or the action covers a range in which several verbs or verb phrases would be appropriate. Under these circumstances it is obviously better to use the TL-TL dictionary to find the original description of the action rather than the equivalents of the action in words. However, verbs and verb phrases are not the only thing the students are going to learn. Many nouns, for example, do not share this feature. In

a bilingual dictionary, a noun may either have an equivalent which suits the noun perfectly, or a description of the noun in another language, which is as appropriate as the one in a monolingual dictionary, if not better. In either case, the students can get a clear idea of the things they are learning.

In fact, it is the monolingual dictionary which can not describe terms clearly, especially the very simple terms. A colleague of the author's once attempted to explain the word 'table' to his students in the target language (English). He gave the 'standard' definition from *The Advanced Teacher's Dictionary of Current English*: "Piece of furniture consisting of a flat top with (usu. four) supports(called legs)." (Hornby, A.S. 1974, p. 878) After his explanation the student pointed at his desk and said: "Oh, I see, this is a table." The teacher then had to explain that that was not a table but a desk. The student finally understood the difference between a table and a desk, but he said: "It (his desk) fits the description, though." And he was right. With a bilingual dictionary there is no such mistake. The word 'ZHUOZI' (table) in Chinese explains all. Even if the student confused the table with a desk, to tell him/her the Chinese words for both terms would enable the student to understand the difference immediately.

Adjectives are like nouns, if not more suitable. Nouns can be described by both nouns and adjectives, but adjectives can only be described by adjectives themselves. This often makes the description imprecise and increases the difficulty of understanding. In order to solve the

problem it is perhaps better to encourage students to use both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, each for certain kinds of words. Overemphasis on either kind of dictionary can impede the learning of the students.

Another point associated with this is the checking up of the students' knowledge about certain things. It often happens that a language teacher uses a word in his/her explanation in the target language and is not sure whether the students know that word or not. The usual practice in this situation is that the teacher checks it in the mother tongue by either giving it himself or letting the students give it to him. It is a lot easier and more practical to do it this way. A long explanation in the target language will not only break the class atmosphere but also confuse the students.

5.2.2. Students Use of Pidgin.

Pidgin here means a special type of language used by the language learners at certain stages of their learning. Developing towards bilingualism, they are not yet bilinguals and can not really express themselves in the target language. These learners therefore develop their own language---a mixture of both the target language and the mother tongue. Almost all of the FL learners use pidgin, which helps them form a small community as is appropriate in the learning situation. The language can not be understood by the peoples of either of the two cultures, yet it works very well among the members of the community. Some teachers consider pidgin as nonsense

language or artificial language and therefore tend to discourage the students from using it, though without success. Many others look at the problem from another angle and decide that this is one of the effective and efficient ways for the students to practise what they have learned.

The ultimate justification of the use of pidgin depends on the users. If they use it to stimulate language practice and deal with problems, then pidgin can be a very effective and efficient means of language learning. To force the students to express themselves totally in the target language when they are not able to do so is to drag them into trouble and make them form bad habits. In other words, when the students do not know how to express certain things in the target language and they are forced to use the target language, they have to use something they are not sure of. This can very easily lead to fossilization (for at the time of practice it is quite likely not to have any authoritative correction), or carelessness in choice of words (because the students feel that there is no way to get it right). In these cases, the learners should be allowed to use some mother tongue in the sentences so long as they have tried their best to express themselves in the target language.

Another reason for using pidgin is that some students find that some sentences or phrases in one language can express their ideas better or more readily, and hence constantly switch codes in their conversation. This is also a kind of practice of the target language, though

the students may not be conscious of it themselves.

5.2.3. History And Cultural Background Knowledge

As discussed in the previous chapters, to learn a language well, the students must at the same time study the target language culture, including history, tradition, habits, customs and manners. This is a task perhaps as great and as hard as the language learning itself for the students, yet the time the students can actually afford to spend on the task is perhaps less than one-tenth of the language learning time, including the teacher's background knowledge explanation and the discussion among the students. The information the students get from their spare time reading can add a little more time. This is obviously not enough to understand the target language culture.

In order to solve the problem, some teachers encourage their students to do more spare time reading in the target language to gain more cultural knowledge. This solution to the problem can be affective if the students are fast readers in the target language. Unfortunately the Chinese FL students have a reputation as slow readers in the target language. The average amount of books (not including the course books) an average Chinese student can read in one semester is about five or fewer. At such a speed to read the students can not gain much, certainly not all they want or need to achieve.

The mother tongue can help students gain the information needed if information alone is what they

need. Generally speaking the Chinese students' reading speed in the mother tongue is much faster than their speed in the target language and the former brings with it a better understanding of what has been read. Actually the students can read these translated versions of information in spare time. They can spend just half an hour on this kind of reading and gain the same amount of information they would gain if they spent the rest of the day on reading for information in the target language. This does not suggest that the students should give up their spare-time reading in the target language and use the mother tongue alone to gain information. They should keep on reading in the target language and build up their speed; but before they have a fast reading speed in the target language the mother tongue is always a very helpful means of getting information. This approach was tried with ESP students in China, and the results were excellent. Given the conditions in China, it is quite possible that it would work equally well with ordinary FL students.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion of the problems and their possible solutions, it seems possible to conclude that the use of the mother tongue need not be limited to the elementary stage, as some foreign language teachers in China have thought. Rather, it can continue throughout the learning period, depending on the circumstance.

From the teacher's point of view, the use of the mother tongue can help him/her teach new concepts, grammar, translation skills, abstract ideas and difficult points, as well as different language behaviors in certain circumstances. The mother tongue also serves as a reference to him/her for the appreciation of the students' difficulties and for the adaptation or compiling of teaching materials.

Students also can use their mother tongue to facilitate their learning by using bilingual dictionaries for vocabulary building, and pidgin for conversation and for practice. Using mother tongue reading materials can assist them to gain more readily the background information they need.

However, it is not suggested that the mother tongue should be used as much as possible. On the contrary even within the circumstances described, the use of the mother tongue should be kept to a minimum, namely, for occasions where the use of target language fails to be effective and efficient. The use of the mother tongue can assist

both learning and teaching, but it should never be a major tool in foreign language learning and teaching. The actual proportion of class time spent using the mother tongue is insignificant in itself. It depends on the individual learning situation; when the factors change, it also varies. What ought to be taken into consideration before a teacher starts using the mother tongue, is the aims and objectives of the teaching, that is, whether the approach will achieve the aims and the objectives of the unit. If the learners need a balance of the mother tongue and the target language and will use them in a two-way communication upon the accomplishment of their study, then the mother tongue can be used or even emphasised if necessary.

Attention must also be paid to the environment and the ways of learning. This paper mainly deals with foreign language learners. Some of the suggestions are based on the likelihood of the students' dependence on grammar and the probable lack of target language resources outside the classroom. However, the solution may be relevant to second language learning and teaching, depending on the situation the teacher has to cope with.

To claim the use of the mother tongue is definitely superior to the use of the target language in certain circumstances is somewhat arbitrary since the comparisons and the examples presented in this paper are too small a sample to prove this conclusively. The effectiveness and efficiency of the use of the mother tongue depends, to a certain extent, on individual teachers' skill, the student's ability to adjust him/herself, and the environment

of the learning. However, in a situation such as that in the foreign language institutes in China, limited use of the mother tongue is both possible and necessary.

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