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What's new in ELT besides technology?

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Introduction

Is language a mental phenomenon or a social one? Is it situated — and thus learned — in the mind, or is it situated — and thus learned — in social interaction? This is a question that has long perplexed scholars. The recent history of research into second language acquisition (SLA) has tended to take a 'cognitivist' view: one in which the focus of attention has been on the mind, and on a mind, moreover, that is largely detached from the person it inhabits, or the social context that the person inhabits. More recently, this view has been challenged by scholars who have adopted what might be called a more sociological, or even 'ecological', perspective, that is one which situates language — and language learning — in its social context.

Evidence of this shift is the appearance of a number of books that document various 'turns' in the field of applied linguistics, notably *The Social Turn in Second Language Acquisition* by David Block (2003) and *The Multilingual Turn* by Stephen May (2014). Both of these titles signal a shift to a more socially grounded study of linguistics, one that is concerned as much with what goes on between people (using language) than what goes on inside their heads (learning language). It is a shift that effectively blurs the distinction between language learning and language use.

This paper reviews four developments that have influenced, or have been influenced by, these major 'turns':

1. Usage-based theories of language learning that view second language learning as 'emerging' from the actual experience of using language, rather than from the formal study of its systems;

2. Language 'socialization', which foregrounds the role played in language learning by social and cultural factors such as group membership, interpersonal and personal identity;

3. The use of the learners' first language and its role not only as a mental phenomenon, but as a social and educational one;

4. Teacher research and the way that classroom-based research not only situates learning in its social context, but invests teachers with a degree of ownership of the research agenda.

All four developments challenge the view that language learning — and learning about language learning — is an individual, intellectual and essentially monolingual activity; one, moreover, that is best mediated or researched by methodologies that ignore local social and contextual factors. Although the seeds of these developments may have been sown some years ago, they have yet to bear fruit in classrooms and materials.

Part 1: Learning through use

Traditionally, language teaching — and the materials that support it — have subscribed to the view that the learners' second language grammar can be 'induced'. That is to say, it can be made to follow a pre-established grammar syllabus, independent of the learners' first language, or their opportunities or willingness to use the language, or any other cognitive or social factors. It is almost as if the learner were a blank slate on to which the target grammar can be inscribed; and that simply by 'learning' the grammar, the learner will be optimally positioned to use it. The experience of many learners and of many of their teachers, however, is that such faith in 'covering the grammar' is misplaced: even several years of grammar-based instruction produce learners whose communicative skills do not stretch beyond A2 on the CEFR scale.[1]

It is true that there was a period, starting in the 1970s, when it was accepted by many researchers that there might be a 'natural order' of acquisition — an 'inner syllabus', as it were — that inhibits or overwrites the effects of grammar instruction. Such a view was partly influenced by the idea — proposed by Chomksy — that humans are 'hard-wired' to acquire language. Certainly, first language acquisition had been shown to follow a predetermined route and there was every reason to suppose that SLA would be similarly pre-programmed. Researchers were able to identify some features of this 'natural order' but, in the end, the 'natural order hypothesis' had little or no impact on either course design or classroom practices — apart, perhaps, from permitting a greater tolerance of error. It was argued that a 'natural order' would require a 'natural method' of language learning, such as total immersion, which was incompatible with most educational contexts.

Attempts were made at the time to substitute the grammar syllabus with a syllabus of communicative functions or of tasks — in other words, to base instruction on 'language in use' (see Figure 1).

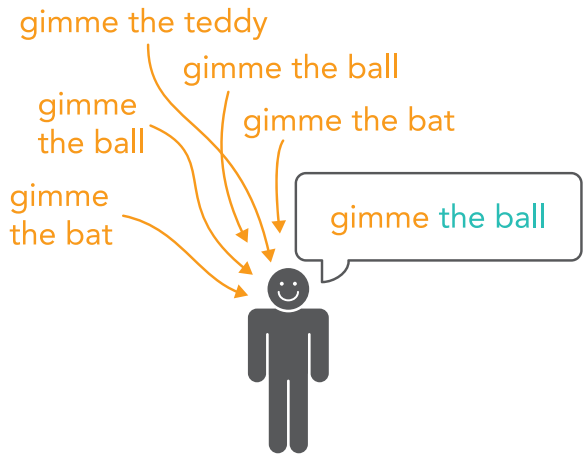
GRAMMAR SYLLABUS	FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUS
verb *to be*	giving personal information
prepositions of place	asking for directions
present progressive	describing activities
present simple	describing routines
countable vs uncountable nouns	obtaining service
past simple	narrating
etc.	etc.

Figure 1: Grammar syllabus with corresponding functional syllabus

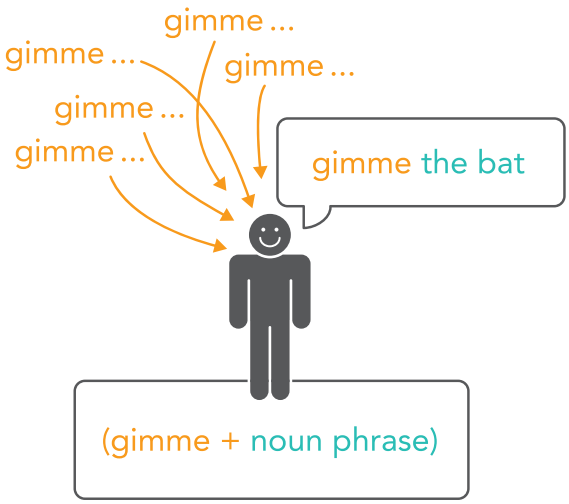
But these initiatives were short-lived or only locally adopted. Allegiance to the grammar syllabus was largely unshaken. Grammar provided an intuitively more systematic way of selecting and grading learning objectives than did either functions or tasks.

1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. See http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

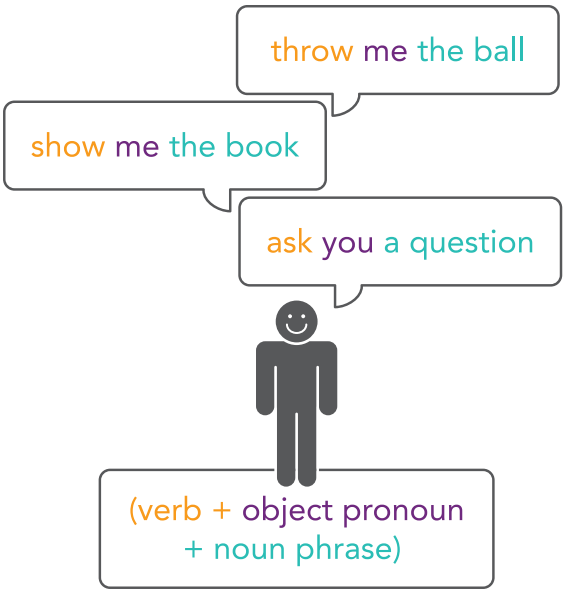
More recently, however, a number of researchers[2] have revived interest in the idea of there being a 'natural order' and the associated view that grammar develops naturally through the experience of actual language use. This so-called 'usage-based' theory challenges both the view that language acquisition is pre-programmed (as Chomsky's supporters argued) and the view that it can be pre-specified in the form of a syllabus of grammar 'points'. Rather (they argue), grammar emerges as a result of the way that the experience of using language serves to trigger mostly unconscious processes. As a child is exposed to instances of particular sound or word sequences, basic cognitive processes that are sensitive to both the frequency and similarity of these sequences operate on this input. In this way, certain frequently encountered sequences and their associated meanings are stored in memory and can be retrieved and recombined for future use.



Over time, using the human capacity to identify patterns, the internal structure of these stored sequences is unpacked, providing a model for the creation of novel utterances. Meanwhile, further exposure and use serves to reorganize the developing grammar into more manageable units, making it easier to access and deploy in real time.



Thus, a child who is exposed to a high frequency of utterances beginning with *give me (or gimme)* and who is able to infer, from context, its meaning, learns to appropriate prototypical utterances, such as *gimme the ball*, and — over time — to internalize the pattern (verb + object pronoun + noun phrase) and adapt it to other verbs and objects, such as *throw me the ball*, *show me the book*, etc. Such constructions are the raw material of language acquisition. Exposure to literally hundreds of thousands of these constructions in their contexts of use is what drives the learning of the first language.



The burning question, of course, is: do these same emergent processes work for the learning of a second language? Some researchers argue that they do, but that the effects are muted. The intricate associative network that has been created for the first language tends to slow down, or even block, the forming of new associations in a second.

Nevertheless, emergentism might help explain why learners 'don't learn what they're taught, but learn what they're not taught', i.e. that they seem resistant to some of the goals of formal instruction, but capable of a good deal of incidental learning. It may also account for the fact that there is considerable variation between learners, even though they are subject to the same instructional processes.

2 For example, Ellis (2015).

The implications of a usage-based theory of language acquisition in terms of course design and classroom practice might include:

- adopting a more 'mixed' syllabus in which the distinction between vocabulary, formulaic language ('expressions') and grammar is merged;
- a teaching approach that does not impose an external syllabus, but one in which the teacher responds to, and shapes, the learners' internal syllabus as it emerges in use, as, for example, in task-based instruction, or in the 'Dogme' approach;[3]
- maximising exposure to authentic text, both spoken and written, so as to provide opportunities for construction learning, for example through out-of-class extensive reading and listening;
- 'noticing' activities, i.e. procedures that draw learners' attention to frequently occurring sequences in the input (the 'constructions') and the meanings that they express; these might involve anything from simply counting the numbers of occurrences of a specific item in a text, to using search engines to retrieve examples of an item in its contexts of use online;
- memorisation of example (or prototypical) constructions, and activities — such as scripting, rehearsing and performing dialogues or role plays — that retrieve and recombine these in meaningful communication.

3 See Meddings and Thornbury (2009).

Part 2: Second language socialization

As was noted earlier, there has been a 'social turn' in SLA research, i.e. a shift away from a purely cognitive to a more social perspective on language learning. In part, this social turn is motivated by the need to restore sociolinguistics (the way that language is used and shaped by its social contexts) to centre stage. Arguably, sociolinguistics has been marginalized due to a prolonged fixation on psycholinguistics (the way that the mind processes and learns language), as well as on linguistics proper (the way that language is described) (see Figure 2). Researchers tend to focus on such 'internal' phenomena as attention, motivation or aptitude. Proficiency is still largely measured in terms of the accurate production of grammatical structures.

An utterance can be explained from at least three different theoretical perspectives.

For example: 'How do you do?'

Linguistic: wh- question; present simple, 2nd person

Sociolinguistic: formal greeting, in response to 'How do you do?'

Psycholinguistic: formulaic utterance remembered, stored and retrieved as a 'whole'.

Figure 2: Three theoretical perspectives

Previously, however, the idea of 'language in use' had had an important impact on the development of communicative language teaching (CLT). It was a sociolinguist, after all, who coined the term 'communicative competence', arguing that there are 'rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless'.[4]

For this reason, the appropriateness of a language item can be judged only by reference to the context in which it is used, including the expectations and relationship of the participants. An expression like *gimme the ball* might be appropriate on the playground but not in a sports shop.

Likewise, the usefulness of a language item can only properly be measured in relation to the learners' needs. A learner with no interest in sport may have little need for an extensive vocabulary of sports equipment. Consequently, CLT promoted the notion of 'needs analysis'.

However, designers of language teaching syllabuses, course materials and testing instruments, needed pre-specified teaching objectives that could be applied to large groups of learners in multiple contexts. So Hymes's 'rules of use' were typically reduced to a checklist of communicative functions, or a 'phrasebook' of some useful expressions. What is more, sociolinguistic competence was described — and assessed — according to (imagined) native speaker standards: what would a native speaker say when, for example, offering or refusing a cup of tea? This somewhat idealized and de-contextualized view of language's social function was a long way from what the original sociolinguists had in mind, best summed up by Dell Hymes again: 'The key to understanding language in context is to start, not with language, but with context' (1972b: xix). And starting with context means adopting an 'ecological' approach to language learning, viewing it as a process of adaptation and integration into a speech community, whether real, virtual or imagined.

4 Hymes (1972a, p. 278).

In a relatively early study of this adaptive process, one researcher[5] observed how immigrant children in school playgrounds used a mix of social and linguistic strategies to 'align' with established groups and to legitimize their membership. Such strategies included: 'Give the impression, with a few well-chosen words, that you speak the language' and 'Work on the big things first; save the details for later'. The important point to make here is that language learning is socially situated, socially motivated and socially constructed.

Language socialization, then, is less about mastering a pre-specified checklist of linguistic items, and more about using language (and language-related behaviours) strategically.

More important than formal accuracy is sensitivity to the needs of the context, including the need to be accepted by the target language group. Because the needs of the context are only partly predictable and will evolve during the actual experience of communicating, the user / learner needs to have the skills to negotiate real-time interaction using all their available resources, even if these are not necessarily extensive or native-like.

Language socialization, then, is less about mastering a pre-specified checklist of linguistic items, and more about using language (and language-related behaviours) strategically.

This is particularly the case in a fast-changing, globalized and multilingual world, where communicative necessity and linguistic diversity override the need to mimic native-speaker-like norms. Moreover, mobility and technological innovations have made language-using contexts fluid and multimodal: the internet being a case in point, where texts, images and languages are freely combined. English both mediates and adapts to these globalising forces, which is why users of English need to be both resourceful and adaptable.

What, then, might the implications of the 'social (or sociolinguistic) turn' be for second language teaching? Here are some suggestions:

- Learning contexts need to be understood as social spaces in which language mediates communal goals, hence the development of a collaborative learning dynamic — whether in the classroom or online — is a priority.
- Lesson content should be oriented to the learners' communicative needs and should facilitate the formation of the learners' L2 identities, thereby easing their transition into real or imagined communities.
- Tasks should require learners to do things using language (such as planning an excursion, or reporting on it), rather than simply display knowledge of language (such as future or past tense forms).
- The focus needs to be less on formal accuracy or native-like competence and more on communicative resourcefulness, even if this means tolerating code-mixing and non-native varieties (see Part 3).
- The development of communicative strategies, e.g. ways of negotiating or repairing communication breakdowns, should take precedence over teaching the linguistic systems (e.g. grammatical structures).
- Both learners and teachers should be sensitized to the situational, social and cultural factors that affect communication, which may involve researching the way that context impacts on language choices, such as when to use 'How do you do?' as opposed to 'Hi'.

5 Wong-Fillmore (1976).

Part 3: The use of the learners' own language in the classroom

Since the Direct Method became popular over a hundred years ago, foreign language teaching and learning has been dominated by the 'monolingual principle', characterized by the exclusion — and in more extreme cases, total banning — of the learners' own language from the foreign language classroom. This practice was informed by two related developments which remained firmly established during most of the twentieth century.

> Recent research studies have shown how the use of the students' own language is not just unavoidable, but beneficial to their learning of foreign languages.

The first of these was a deficit view of the role of the learners' own language — in other words, the students' mother tongue was considered a source of interference and an unhelpful barrier to foreign language learning. An example of this view is how errors were thought to be mainly caused by 'negative transfer' from the students' own language for the first half of the twentieth century. The second factor that contributed to the exclusion of the learners' first language from the foreign language classroom was the rise of native-speakerism, in other words, the belief that the native speaker was the ideal model and the ideal teacher.[6] The task of learning a foreign language, then, was to internalize the target language, approximating to native speaker standards.

In recent years there has been a shift of focus from the 'deficit' or 'native speaker' view to the 'asset' or 'bilingual' view.[7] This new perspective recognizes that in a globalized world multilingualism, rather than monolingualism, is the norm. Consequently, all language competences — no matter how limited — are a fundamental part of a person's language repertoire, and all the languages that an individual knows should be both valued and activated as tools for learning further languages.

This new interest in multilingualism and the role of the learners' own language in the acquisition of other languages has yet to impact on ELT methodology and materials in a significant way. However, an increasing number of linguists and TEFL writers are now acknowledging its importance in their work. This acknowledgement ranges from measured pleas for judicious and principled use of the learners' own language (for instance, Widdowson, 2003) to radical manifestos that argue that 'teachers who are to produce bilinguals should themselves be bilingual, i.e. be reasonably fluent speakers of both the target language and the language of their pupils' (Butzkamm and Caldwell 2009:25). Moreover, recent research studies have shown how the use of the students' own language is not just unavoidable, but beneficial to their learning of foreign languages.

6 Cook, G. (2010:8).
7 Conteh and Meier (2014:3).

Such findings are giving renewed visibility and credibility to the case for the use of the learners' own language in language teaching and learning. The four main arguments put forward for the principled use of the learners' own language to support foreign language learning can be summarized as follows:

The affective argument

For many students, drawing on and using their own language as they learn a new language can be more motivating and less alienating, particularly during the early stages. A study in support of this argument is Levine's (2003), who found that the more the teacher and the students used the learners' own language in the classroom, the less anxious the latter felt about the new language.

The psycholinguistic argument

It is unhelpful to separate the learners' own language and the target language as two separate and independent systems in the students' minds. This is because learners necessarily 'draw on the language they know for learning the language they don't.'[8] Recent evidence from neuroscience confirms this idea: for example, one study has found that in order for a learner to initially acquire new vocabulary in a foreign language, they need to associate new words and phrases with corresponding own-language words and phrases in their memory.[9] Also, cognitive psychologists such as Hummel (1995) and Källkvist (2004) argue that when individuals translate between two languages they engage in complex processing and this effort may help them memorize new target language constructions.

The sociolinguistic argument

Many English speakers use English in plurilingual contexts, i.e. contexts in which English is just one of the languages being used, and the ability to switch and mix languages (known as 'translanguaging') is an important skill that plurilingual individuals use on a daily basis. Therefore, it can be argued that translanguaging is a skill worth focusing on and developing in the classroom. Moreover, when the learners' own language is used in principled ways in language lessons and materials, this practice helps students construct a realistic bilingual or multilingual identity, rather than an unrealistic monolingual one.

The pedagogic argument

In many classrooms own language use occurs frequently as a natural teaching and learning strategy. Consequently, it should be harnessed rather than rejected where that is appropriate. In fact, principled and judicious use of the students' own language, i.e. use of the language that the teacher and the students have in common in order to make the process of learning English easier and more efficient, often enables teachers to form and maintain relationships with their students, manage the class efficiently, check understanding, and give faster explanations. Similarly, comparing and contrasting the learners' own language with the target language can be useful for clarifying certain aspects of grammar, such as word order. For example, learners whose first language is Spanish might benefit from overtly noticing that, while it is possible to drop the subject pronoun before a verb in Spanish, this is not normally the case in English, for example:

	Está	nublado	✓
SUBJECT	VERB	ADJECTIVE	
	Is	cloudy	✗
SUBJECT	VERB	ADJECTIVE	
It	is	cloudy	✓
SUBJECT	VERB	ADJECTIVE	

8 Cook, V. (2001).
9 Sousa (2011).

What might be the implications of the recognition that the learners' own language plays a central role when learning other languages? Here are some suggestions:

1. Both initial teacher education and continuous professional development programmes and materials could include content and teacher learning tasks that:

- present the arguments for the use of the learners' own language in language learning, supported by relevant literature where appropriate;
- promote critical reflection of:
  - » the problems with the deficit view of the role of the learners' own language;
  - » school language policies, such as banning the use of the students' own language, which is still dominant in many parts of the world today;
  - » teachers' own beliefs and attitudes to translanguaging;
  - » teachers' actual classroom practices and how these impact on their learners' construction of a bilingual or monolingual identity;
- provide opportunities for both teachers-in-training and practising teachers to familiarize themselves with a broad range of bilingual techniques, strategies and activities for both monolingual and multilingual teaching contexts that enrich and supplement well-established monolingual methodologies (see examples below);
- encourage sensitivity to linguistic diversity and develop the skills to take account of their learners' own language(s), even if the teachers themselves do not speak it / them.

2. Coursebooks and classroom resources could include tasks that help learners:

- think about the difference between English and their own language and other languages they know;
- actively make cross-language comparisons (for example, asking the students to compare specific aspects of the syntax of English and their own language and to decide whether these are similar or different);
- develop translation skills;
- explore their own views about using their own language to learn English.

3. Accompanying teachers' books could offer a range of ideas[10] to promote use of the students' own language in different classroom contexts (i.e. monolingual and multilingual).

10 See Appendix for examples from Kerr (2014) of activities which are particularly suitable both for monolingual and multilingual classroom contexts.

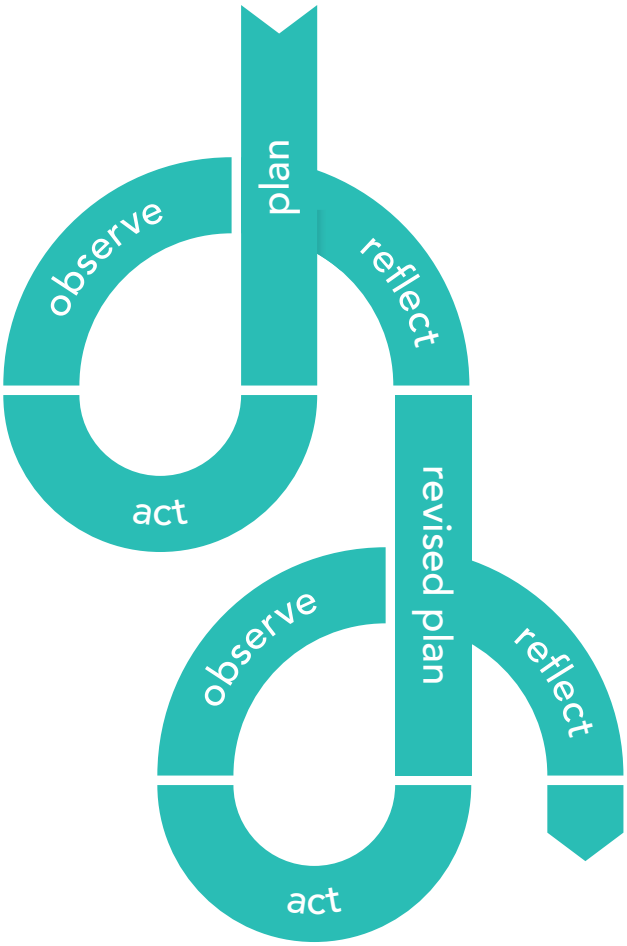
Part 4: Teacher-led research in ELT

Teacher research is defined as systematic enquiry conducted by teachers, individually or collaboratively, in their own professional contexts, which is made public in some way. The purpose of such enquiry is to enhance teachers' understandings of some aspect of their own work.[11]

Interest in educational research by teachers outside the field of ELT can be traced back to the work of John Dewey in the U.S.A. in the late 1920s. Since the 1940s, there has been a tradition of action research — a cyclical approach to research designed to identify problems and develop efficient and practical solutions by introducing and evaluating a change in practice. Teachers' engagement with action research inspired the growth of the teacher research movement in the UK in the 1970s. It was this movement, together with the emergence of reflective practice in the U.S.A. during the 1980s, which promoted the view that teachers have an important role in generating educational knowledge. Therefore, they should not simply be the subjects or consumers of educational research produced by academics, but they should also undertake research into issues that are relevant to them in their own work.

Influenced by these ideas, a teacher research movement emerged in ELT worldwide in the 1990s. Works published during that decade, as well as developments in professional organisations, such as the establishment of the Research Special Interest Group (ReSIG)[12] of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL)[13],reflected teachers' growing interest in and engagement with practitioner research at that time.

However, the growth of action research projects and other forms of teacher enquiry was not without its critics. Some claimed that teacher research (and action research in particular) was fundamentally flawed, as it was more concerned with effecting changes to classroom practices than with robust and rigorous use of research methods.



The Action Research Spiral, after Kemmis & McTaggart (2000)

11 Borg, in Brown and Coombe (2015:105).
12 See http://resig.weebly.com/
13 See http://www.iatefl.org/

Also, the fact that teacher research studied specific issues that took place in classrooms was considered potentially problematic by some, as it was difficult to make valid generalizations about the findings of such small-scale research. Nevertheless, many teacher researchers remained largely undeterred by such criticisms, as in their view teacher research was fundamentally carried out by teachers for teachers.

There is now a substantial body of research evidence on the effectiveness of teacher research as a potentially transformative approach to the professional development of teachers.

Teacher research has enjoyed a surge in popularity and credibility during the last decade, partly as a result of the above-mentioned 'social turn' which has taken place in education, applied linguistics and second language teacher education in recent years. One of the consequences of such a turn has been the recognition that the social contexts in which teachers work deeply influence how teachers teach and behave, as well as the reasons for their choices. This recognition has led to a renewed interest in approaches to teacher development which empower teachers to investigate the teaching and learning processes that occur in their own classroom and school contexts. This is evident in the emergence of a number of schemes in different parts of the world[14] designed to support teachers as they plan, undertake and evaluate action research projects and present the outcomes of their research in various ways.

Another factor that has recently given teacher research new impetus is the fact that there is now a substantial body of research evidence on the effectiveness of teacher research as a potentially transformative approach to the professional development of teachers.

During the last decade, large-scale studies have integrated and synthesized the results of a large number of research reports on different approaches to teachers' continuous professional development (CPD). The aim of such studies was to advance a better understanding of what constitutes impactful teacher learning — that is, deep, transformative learning that teachers transfer to their own practice. These reviews suggest that the most impactful approaches all involve elements of action research and similar forms of teacher enquiry. For example, one review concludes that collaborative, classroom-focused inquiry by teachers has greater power to change classroom practices and learning outcomes for the better than any other factor.[15]

Similarly, a recent report on evidence-based studies[16] found that the teacher development that makes a difference is concrete and classroom-based, enables teachers to work collaboratively with peers who take the role of coaches or mentors, involves teachers in choosing what areas to focus on and which activities to undertake and is sustained over time.

Other related developments have also contributed to the resurgence of teacher research. Over the last few years many teachers, teacher educators and ELT managers have expressed growing discontent with top-down and 'one-size-fits-all' continuous professional development models. Critics of such models argue that CPD initiatives that are imposed on teachers often overlook the many differences that exist in the social and cultural contexts within which teachers work. As a result, they do not always equip or enable teachers to effectively address the specific challenges posed by their teaching contexts. In some educational contexts, such as private English language schools in England[17], frustration with de-contextualized CPD initiatives has resulted in more flexible and differentiated CPD frameworks which promote classroom-based and enquiry-based teacher learning that has immediate relevance to the teacher researchers' contexts.

What future directions might be inspired by this renewed interest in teacher research within the context of a social turn in second language teacher education?

Initial teacher education programmes and materials could provide opportunities for teachers-in-training to:

- become aware of the importance of researching their own practice, both as a means of improving and developing as a teacher and of generating new knowledge and deeper understanding;
- become familiar with the processes and methods needed to conduct teacher research projects appropriate to their developmental stage in their careers;

14 Notable examples include Australia's 'Action Research in ELICOS Program' set up in 2010; the 'Champion Teachers' project, funded by the British Council in Chile and endorsed by the Chilean Ministry of Education in 2013; and the 'Cambridge English Language Assessment/ English UK Action Research Scheme' launched in the UK in 2014.

15 James et al (2007).

16 Walter and Briggs (2012).

17 For example, Bell in Cambridge, UK (where one of the authors works).

- conduct and evaluate manageable and practical teacher research projects; share them with peers and receive feedback which would enable them to take the next steps as teacher-researchers.

Continuous professional development programmes and materials could:

- raise teachers' awareness of teacher research as an approach to CPD that promotes impactful and context-appropriate teacher learning;
- familiarize teachers with different approaches to teacher research[18], their specific orientations, strengths and problems, making sure that information is presented in accessible and unthreatening ways;
- help teachers select those approaches that are better suited to their working context and their learning needs and that are realistic for them to try in the time available to them;
- give experienced teachers opportunities to:
  - » select research topics and develop research questions that are achievable and relevant to them,
  - » engage in supported cycles of collaborative teacher research,
  - » identify what they have learnt by undertaking teacher research projects and how they could continue to develop their expertise by engaging in further research projects,
  - » disseminate their findings amongst colleagues, both within their teaching contexts and in the wider professional field.

18 For ideas, see The Cambridge Guide to Research in Language Teaching & Learning by Brown & Coombe (eds.), 2015

Future directions

Recent decades have seen major shifts in psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and second language teacher education that have redressed the drift towards a 'disembodied', de-contextualized science whose main preoccupation has been with invisible mental processes, detached from the way that language and language teaching are experienced by 'the people in the room'. The long-term effects of this 'turn' remain to be seen, but a few predictions might tentatively be made:

1. The notion of the 'native speaker' as providing the best model for English language use will eventually yield to the view that competent and resourceful users, irrespective of their 'first' language, should set the standards. This will be accompanied by a greater tolerance of code-switching and the 'creative' use of a non-standard and possibly reduced linguistic repertoire.

2. The distinction between 'learning' and 'using' will blur, as technology and mobility further reduce the gap between the classroom and the 'real world,' allowing learners to put their communicative abilities to work relatively quickly.

3. As routine language transactions are increasingly mediated by technological means (e.g. machine translation), there may be less requirement to teach language as a means of conveying information; on the other hand, the importance of interpersonal communication may increase proportionately and, with it, the need to (re-)locate the learning experience in a social context.

4. Increased access and exposure to English (and to different varieties of English) will redistribute the using / learning experience beyond the classroom, reducing the need to pre-package input for learners, but increasing the need to educate learners into how best to choose tools and strategies that enable them to exploit the real-world resources they encounter.

5. Increased recognition of the central role that the learners' own language plays in the acquisition of other languages will result in greater awareness of how to exploit this valuable resource to the learners' advantage among teachers, teacher trainers, curriculum designers and materials writers.

6. As the 'asset view' of the multilingual teacher and learner becomes more firmly established, teacher education programmes and continuous professional development initiatives will become more inclusive and responsive to teacher diversity in content and methodology.

7. The shift in teachers' perception of themselves from knowledge consumers to knowledge creators situated in specific teaching contexts will contribute to the exploration and development of context-appropriate approaches to the teaching of English in different settings.

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Appendix

The following activities, referred to on page 10 of this paper, are taken from Philip Kerr's (2014) book, *Translation and Own-language Activities,* published by Cambridge University Press.

2.3 Own-language moments

Speaking or listening to another language can be very tiring, especially if your level of proficiency is low. There often comes a point when you simply switch off and give up. If, on top of the tiredness, you are not particularly motivated in the first place and your mind is on other things, the switching-off point can come very quickly. All teachers experience moments in their classes when students switch off. But for teachers who are teaching exclusively or predominantly through English, these moments are even more problematic, since the lack of communication between them and their students can become total. The students will not say anything (or only very little) in English, and they will understand little or nothing of what the teacher or other students are saying. Nothing of value can take place. When this happens, there is no point in persevering in English.

There will be times, then, when it will be necessary to switch away from English to another language that the students understand better. This may be the students' own language, but it might also be another shared language (for example, the language of the country in which the students are studying, even though that is not their first language). In some mixed-language classes, it will be necessary to divide students into groups with a shared language where the collective proficiency level is higher than it is in English.

Apart from moments such as these when the teaching breaks down, there will be other moments when it may be useful to use the students' own language. These will be discussed below, but the basic approach is the same.

Announce to the class that the normal English-only rule is suspended. Tell them approximately how long this will last. In most cases, this is likely to be for only a few minutes. In some classes, you may simply want to give the students a break and allow them to chat about anything they like. In other classes, you may want to set them a task which they can do in their own language. Of course, if some students prefer to continue in English, so much the better!

You might also encourage your students to move into code-switching mode (where they mix up English and their own language), rather than switching entirely into their own language. While some students will not take up this option, others will. For those that do, there is an added opportunity to experiment and explore in English without the pressure of having to use English only. For more on code-switching, see Technique 2.5: *Recasting*.

When and why own-language moments may be appropriate

The examples below are intended to be illustrative. They should be taken as moments when a teacher might *consider* an own-language moment, not as instances of moments when the students' own language is absolutely necessary.

Before speaking activities

It can be hard enough trying to speak another language without having to think about what you want to say at the same time. It is common practice for many teachers to give their students some preparation time before speaking tasks, usually in pairs or small groups (although it can also be done silently and individually), so they have time to plan or brainstorm the content of what they will say. Sometimes, this planning and brainstorming will work better if students can use their own language. It is certainly worth experimenting with the technique. A minute or two of stress-free own-language discussion may result in substantially extended English speaking. If you cannot see a payoff when the students are involved in the speaking task itself, it has cost very little to carry out the experiment.

During speaking activities

On occasion, students simply get tired when they are speaking English. Concentrating hard on trying to express themselves in the foreign language, they may be unable to concentrate on the ideas they wish to express, or they forget what they had planned to say. In order to get the activity working again, it may be enough to give the students a minute or two to take a breath and take stock in their own language, before returning to English.

After speaking activities

After a speaking activity, you may want to conduct feedback with the class about how the activity went. This may be done with the whole class or in pairs / small groups. It is an opportunity to discuss what they found easy or difficult, how successfully they completed the task, or whether they found it interesting or useful. Discussions such as these can be extremely valuable for both teacher and students, and, with lower levels, will probably need to be carried out in the students' own language. One way of focusing this kind of discussion is to ask the students to compare the way that the activity actually went with how they anticipated the activity would go while they were involved in the brainstorming stage.

Before or after language focus activities

Before an activity where students will focus on a set of vocabulary, it is often a good idea to find out what they know first. Some teachers will put their students into pairs or small groups, and ask them to go through the list to identify the words they know. In a monolingual group, we should not be too surprised if students do this by sharing translations of the items. That is, after all, how most people measure their knowledge of words in other languages, even though this measure may be less than adequate. In the interests of economy, clarity and, possibly, inevitability, there will be times when it makes sense for teachers to give the green light to quick translations of this kind. If the students' work is closely monitored, the teacher will be able to identify any false friends or other confusions.

In a similar way, at the end of a vocabulary focus activity, it may be useful to give the class a few minutes, working in pairs or groups, to check they have understood and can remember the words they have just encountered. Again, this could be done very quickly with lower levels with reference to the students' own language.

In lessons with a grammar focus, a teacher may also want to find out about what their students already know. This is probably best done with a task which will require them to use the target language, but there is a place, too, for investigating students' declarative knowledge of grammatical rules. With lower-level classes who do not know grammatical terminology in English, this will have to be done in their own language. If the lesson does contain a focus on declarative knowledge of grammar rules (and especially if the teacher has explained the grammar in the students' own language), a useful follow-up task is for the students, in pairs, to explain these rules as if they were explaining to a student from another class who has not yet studied this grammar point.

Before or after work with texts (reading and listening)

Suggestions for own-language moments for these stages of a lesson can be found in Chapter 6.

Talking about learning

Educational authorities (such as ministries), as well as individual institutions and teachers, often prioritise other curricular objectives in addition to English language learning. These may relate

to notions of lifelong learning and learner autonomy (as outlined, for example, in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Classroom activities which foreground these objectives include discussions of learning styles and strategies, self-evaluation, learner training and feedback on the course. Some examples of activities which encourage learners to reflect on the language of instruction can be in Chapter 3. With lower-level learners, curricular objectives of this kind may be better achieved if activities are conducted in their own language.

Developing intercultural awareness

Intercultural awareness (like learner autonomy) is a curricular objective in many teaching contexts. Sometimes, it is separate from language classes, as in some high schools in Brussels, for example, where students may spend an entire school year studying the culture of their third foreign language before they actually study the language at all. More frequently, intercultural awareness is taught alongside a language. In order for the development of intercultural awareness not to be constrained by language limitations, own-language moments will be necessary, especially with lower-level learners.

Disciplining and delicate moments

There will be moments in all classes when administrative details need to be discussed. If these are at all important, they will need to be discussed in the students' own language if the students' level is low. The same holds true for any moments when a teacher needs to align herself with the class. Examples of this kind include the imparting of sad news or the sharing of extra-curricular problems. Disciplinary talk, too, is often better done in the students' language, not only for reasons of clarity, but also for emphasis.

Practicalities

However much we might like to plan the details of our teaching, much of what we do will come in response to unplanned things that happen in the classroom. Some own-language moments (such as brainstorming and content-planning before a speaking activity) can be anticipated; others will seem like a good idea at the time. Whether these moments are planned or not, it is important that students are aware of their purpose. This will often be self-evident, but on occasion it may be helpful to explain why you want them to do something in a particular way.

It is important, too, that students are aware of the 'rules': how long the moment will last and what they will be expected to do afterwards.

The beginning and duration of an own-language moment can be clearly signalled by the teacher in a number of ways. Some teachers use a symbol (such as a flag) which is displayed for the duration of the moment. Teachers of younger learners sometimes use a pair of dolls or figurines: when one is visible, only English can be spoken; with the other, students can speak their own language. Scrivener (2012, p. 216) suggests using red and green traffic light symbols. An amber light could indicate the intermediary situation of code-switching allowed.

If, as will often be the case, these moments involve pair or group work, the teacher will probably want to move away from the front of the classroom so that they can better monitor what the students are saying. Even if it is not possible, because of the size of the room, for the teacher to move around the class, it may be a good idea to stand or sit in a different place. When you then move back to the place where you habitually sit or stand, this will signal to the class that the own-language moment is over.

An indication of the length of the own-language moment will also be useful. The length will depend on a number of factors. In some lower-level classes, you are perhaps more likely to indicate English-only moments than own-language moments. Giving time limits can help to focus the students' attention on the task at hand. It is inevitable that the teacher will not always stick rigidly to the time limit.

Finally, you might like to experiment with allowing the class more of a say in what language is allowed. Ideally, our learners would be sufficiently self-aware, responsible and sophisticated as learners to know when they would benefit more from speaking one language or the other. As a step in this direction, some teachers operate a system like a basketball game where students themselves can call a certain number of own-language timeouts (five or six, for example, in a forty-five minute period) in the course of a lesson.

Reference

Scrivener, J. (2012) *Classroom Management Techniques*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4.7 Dictionary cross-checking

Outline	Students practise dictionary cross-checking to improve their skills with bilingual (pocket) dictionaries.
Level	All levels
Time	10–15 minutes
Preparation	This activity should be used as part of the preparation for speaking or writing activities. Students will need access to bilingual pocket dictionaries or online dictionaries (e.g. of the kind that can be used with smartphones). You will need to remind students in a previous lesson to bring these into class.

Procedure

1 Before a speaking activity, give students time to brainstorm ideas for what they wish to say individually. The length of time needed for this will depend on the activity and on the level, but five minutes is usually enough. In order to generate more ideas, tell them that they can do this in their own language or a mixture of English and their own language (see Activity 2.3: *Own-language moments*). Tell them to take notes to help them to remember what they want to say.

2 Tell the students to get out their dictionaries and check how to say in English what they want to say. Explain that it is often a good idea to cross-check items that they look up in small dictionaries (i.e. look up the English translation of a word in their own language, and then check the translations into their own language of the English words they have found).

Give an example such as the following. A student checks the French word *carnaval* and the dictionary offers the English *carnival*. However, when you look up the English word *carnival*, you find two entries: *carnaval* and *fête foraine* (corresponding to the American use of *carnival* (and the British *funfair*).

Tell the students to do the same with any words in their own language that they have noted down and which they are not sure about. It is usually best to set a time limit of a few minutes in order to encourage students to prioritise their work (and not to look up every word).

In the example on page 63 (Figure 4.3), students have brainstormed and cross-checked ideas to talk about a festival they have been to.

Variations

This technique can be used equally effectively when students are (1) brainstorming ideas for writing, and (2) editing their writing.

Students can also be encouraged to check first in a bilingual dictionary and do the cross-checking in a monolingual learner's dictionary.

Note

The limitations of small bilingual dictionaries are obvious to language teachers, but less so to our students. Ideally, they would use larger dictionaries (i.e. Learner's dictionaries), but bilingual versions of these exist for only a small number of languages, and many students are reluctant to carry around heavier books of this kind. Bowing to 'force majeure', we can, at least, help our students use pocket dictionaries more critically.

French–English search results

costume	suit, costume
coupe	cut, haircut, cup, goblet, glass
fanfare	brass band, fanfare
cire	wax, polish
déambuler	meander, walk around
feu d'artifice	firework, firework display, fireworks

Selected English–French search results (and notes)

suit	costume, tailleur
costume	costume

Knowing that the French word *costume* has two different meanings, the student should be able to work out that the English word *costume* (and not *suit*) is the word needed here.

cup	tasse, coupe
goblet	gobelet
glass	verre

It should be possible to eliminate immediately *cut* and *haircut*. Cross-checking should lead the student towards selecting *glass*, rather than *cup* or *goblet* (although both are possible).

brass band	fanfare
fanfare	fanfare

Cross-checking is more circular and less immediately helpful here, but a cross-check with the word *brass* (= *cuivre jaune*) will make things clear.

Figure 4.3: Student's brainstormed notes and translations

5.3 Delayed reverse translations

Outline	Learners translate an English text into their own language. They translate it back into English in a subsequent lesson, and then compare their version with the original.
Level	All levels
Time	Variable, depending on length of text and level
Preparation	This activity is intended to be used in the latter part of a lesson where students have earlier read a text (e.g. for reading practice or because it contextualised a particular language item). This text might be from their coursebook, but it could also be something more authentic. Decide how much of the text you will ask the students to translate. For lower-level (A1 and A2) students, 40–80 words will be enough. For B1 and B2 students, 90–120 words will be enough.

Procedure

1 Towards the end of a lesson, organise the class into pairs or small groups. Ask them to look at the text or part of a text, and write a translation of it in their own language on a sheet of paper. This is collaborative work and you will need to decide if you wish to allow students to use dictionaries or other tools. Thank the students and collect their work when they have finished. If necessary, this work could be finished for homework and collected later.

2 In a subsequent lesson, ensure that the students cannot see the text which they translated in a previous lesson. Distribute the translated texts to the students who wrote them, and ask them to translate these back into English. Students will probably have queries and some will be very tempted to look at the original text. Don't answer the queries at this stage, but encourage the students to put a question mark in their translations (into English) for anything they are not sure about. Again, this is collaborative work.

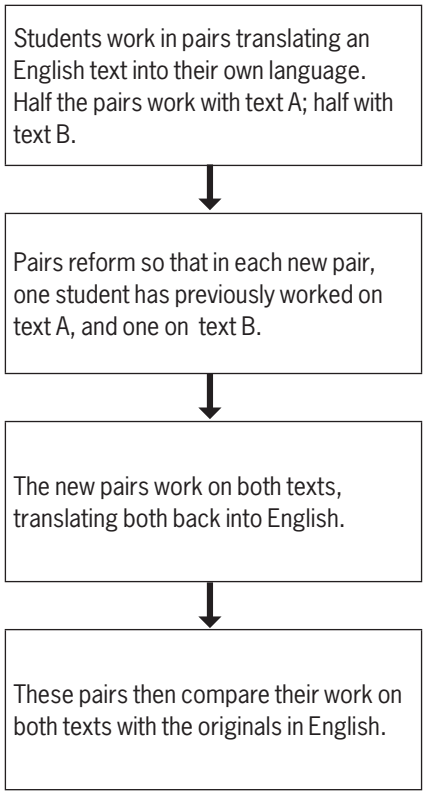
3 When the students have gone as far as they can with their translations, tell them to look at the original text and to compare their version with it. Deal with any queries that arise.

Variations

1 Instead of using a paragraph for translation, you could also select extracts from a longer text: these might be key sentences, useful phrases or chunks of language which contain elements of grammar that you want to highlight. Remember to keep the task manageable: too much text to translate may be demotivating.

2 In the subsequent lesson, organise the class into groups of four. Instead of distributing the translated texts to the students who wrote them, distribute any two translations to each group. Using both of these texts, the group's task is to translate back into English. When they have completed this, they can compare their work with the original. They can also evaluate the two translations they worked from.

3 Instead of all the students working on the same text, select two different texts. These might be parts of a longer text which the students have read. Organise the class into pairs, and give each pair one of the texts to translate. When they have done this, reorganise the class into new pairs, where each member of the pair has translated a different text. The students work together on both translations to translate back, orally, into English, without consulting the original. Finally, they compare their work with the originals, noting any difficulties they had.



Students in classes where no two students share a language will have to work individually when translating the text into their own language.

7.3 False friends

Outline	Students identify and research a set of false friends.
Level	A1–B2
Time	Approximately 20 minutes
Preparation	Prepare a list of false friends between English and the students' own language. Good bilingual dictionaries often provide lists of false friends, but they are usually easy to find by typing "false friends English + *(students' own language)*" into a search engine. Choose a group of about seven words each time that you want to use this activity. Prepare a list of English sentences, each of which contains one of the false friends. Again, good monolingual or bilingualised dictionaries will provide appropriate sample sentences. See the example on page 128 (Figure 7.2) for speakers of Spanish. You will need to project these sentences onto the board or distribute photocopies. As with Activity 7.1: *Words for free (true friends)*, this activity can be done with the class on a regular basis (with different sets of words).

Procedure

1 Distribute or project the sentences and ask the students to find one word in each sentence that looks like a word in their language, but has a very different meaning in English.
2 Ask students to compare their ideas with a partner and to guess (if they do not know) the own-language translations of the words they have identified. After giving them a few minutes to do this, ask them to check their answers in a dictionary.
3 Ask the pairs of students to produce two more sentences which include the target words. Then, elicit a few suggestions from the class and write these on the board.
4 Now ask the students to use their dictionaries to find the English equivalents for the false friends in their own language. In the example on page 128, these are *soportar*, *realizar*, *embarazada*, etc. Ask the pairs of students to produce two more sentences for each of these English equivalents. Then, elicit a few suggestions from the class and write these on the board.

Look at the sentences below. In each sentence, one word looks like a Spanish word, but its meaning in English is very different. Find the words.

1 He has to support six children.

2 I didn't realise that it was important.

3 She was very embarrassed when she made a mistake.

4 That centre assists the poor.

5 The doctor wanted to know if she was constipated.

6 The student went to a lecture about linguistics.

7 You can get that book out of a good library.

Key

support ≠ *soportar*; realise (*realize*) ≠ *realizar*; embarrassed ≠ *embarazada*; assist ≠*asistir*; constipated ≠ *constipado*; lecture ≠ *lectura*; library ≠ *librería*

Figure 7.2: False friends in English and Spanish