

# 教室における言語選択：教師の声

## Language Choice in the Classroom: The Instructor's Voice

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### ABSTRACT

本稿では、国際基督教大学の英語教育プログラムにおける英語と日本語の使用について検証した。インタビューによって教師の認知を調べ、その結果と授業観察とを比較した。方針、訓練、学生の好み、個人的信念が教室における言語選択に影響することが分かった。さらに、教育実践の検証の重要性が示され、資源としての第一言語（L1）という考えが支持された。また、L1とL2のバランスを見つける必要性が示唆された。

This paper examines the use of English and Japanese in the English Language Program at International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan. It explores instructor perceptions through interviews, and compares these perceptions to classroom observations. Policy, training, student preference, and personal beliefs were found to influence language choice in the classroom. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of examining teaching practices, and supports the idea of the first language (L1) as a resource, suggesting that a balance should be found between the L1 and the L2.

## INTRODUCTION

Should teachers use the first language (L1) in the language classroom? This has been a major issue in second language acquisition (SLA) literature. Code switching (CS) or L1 use is generally not promoted in language programs.

In order to investigate the issue of language use in the classroom, I examined previous studies concerning language choice (Brownlie & Rolin-Ianziti, 2002; Crawford, 2004; Duff & Polio, 1990; Polio & Duff, 1994; Macaro, 2001). While some scholars (Cook, 2001; Cook, 2005; Duff & Polio, 1990; Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001) support target language (TL) maximization in the classroom, Macaro (2005: 63) questions whether or not codeswitching (CS) is more appropriate, as in bilingual communities throughout the world CS is an “asset”. However, in the EFL classroom, CS is generally perceived negatively, resulting in less or no L1 use in the classroom (Cook, 2001; Cook, 2005; Macaro, 2001; Macaro, 2005; Turnbull, 2001). Turnbull (2001) and Macaro (2005) suggest the idea of a proper balance between the L1 and L2: a balance in which the L1 is neither overly used, nor explicitly ignored.

### Purpose of my study

With such varying perspectives, my study aims to shed light on a situation that has not been examined in great depth: the instructors’ language usage and perspectives. Through classroom observations and teacher interviews, my study looks at the use of the L1, Japanese, and the L2, English, in the English Language Program (ELP) at International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan. What are the reasons for the use or the avoidance of the L1 in the ELP? What factors influence the instructor’s use of the L1 and the L2 in the classroom?

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

First-year students in the ELP are placed into Program A, B, or C (with C being the most advanced) based on a variety of proficiency tests, and take classes such as Academic Reading and Writing, Reading and Content Analysis and Communicative Strategies (CST). All classes prepare students for courses not only in the ELP, but also in regular English-taught academic courses. The CST classes available to Program A and B students are the main focus of this study.

The nine instructors (seven females and two males) interviewed in these courses range in age from 37 to 66. Only two instructors were native speakers (NS) of English. The other seven instructors were NS of Japanese and non-native speakers (NNS) of English. Eight instructors had received at least an M.A in English teaching-related degrees, and one had both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Linguistics. All had six or more years of teaching experience.

### Data Collection

CST classes were video-recorded to investigate any instances of the L1 or CS. These instances were transcribed and codified to determine their purpose in the classroom. Short interviews with the instructors were audio-recorded using a Sony Cassette-Corder TCM-400 after the classroom observations to elicit reasons for instructors’ language use, taking into account ELP policy, personal beliefs, training, and experience.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Language Proficiency

Table 1 summarizes the responses from the nine instructors. Three out of seven NNS English Instructors said that they felt that they were not even near-native speakers of English. For example,

Instructor F said, “I don’t really feel near-native, uhm, below that,” but then defined her English proficiency as being at least higher than that of her students. Instructor H also responded that she did not feel near-native, and claimed not to be native-like from an English NS’s perspective. Instructors A and E were uncertain of their proficiencies. Instructor G said that while she felt comfortable with her English in the ELP environment, if she began working in a different environment she would not be able to “survive in English.” Unlike the other instructors, Instructor C felt sufficiently proficient to do things outside of daily conversation. Instructor B seemed to feel the most confident in her English proficiency, as she said, “I think I can pretty much do whatever I want to do using English.”

The two NS English Instructors, D and I, were asked about their Japanese language proficiency. As shown in the third column of Table 1, Instructor D felt fairly confident that his Japanese was at a conversational level, while Instructor I said that he felt below conversational level. Both instructors admitted to having low proficiency in reading and writing Japanese.

The variety of answers from both NNS and NS instructors shows the difficulty in describing language proficiency within a single category, e.g. near-native, conversational.

### Teacher Training

As shown in Table 1, Instructors B, G, and H were trained in eclectic methods. Instructor G said, “you need to pick and choose whatever you think might fit a particular group of students, on a particular day, on a particular topic or whatever.” However, Instructors D, E, and I were trained in particular methods, such as functional based training, the direct method, and the communicative method. Instructors A, C, and F were uncertain of what methods they had been trained in.

With regard to the methods they now use,

Instructors B and G still use the eclectic method they were trained in. Instructor E has now switched to an eclectic method, implementing different techniques depending on her students’ needs. Instructor H was unsure how to answer the question as she felt she taught following the structure of the ELP, though she did not feel that it was “purely communicative either”; therefore, her response is categorized as ‘uncertain’ in Table 1 as are the responses from Instructors A, C and F. While Instructor A recognized that her method was more communicative, she found it difficult to make *Listening Skills and Strategies* classes too communicative due to the passive nature of the class. Interestingly, before teaching in the ELP, Instructor A had tried using the communicative approach in junior and senior high schools, but because of expectations to prepare for university entrance examinations, she felt that she “shifted toward grammar translation.” This could call into question how appropriate the communicative method of teaching is for the Japanese context. Instructor I mentioned using neuro-linguistic programming techniques along with the communicative method in his classrooms. Instructor D, however, found the question difficult to answer as he mentioned that the ELP is a program in itself, so that “the individual does not have ... much choice” but to follow the content-based approach written in the ELP handbook.

### Perceptions of the ELP Policy

The ELP handbook has no specific written policy stating just how much English should be used in the classroom. That is, there is no explicitly written English-only regulation. The handbook mentions a maximization policy, where instructors should strive to use as much English as possible in the EFL situation. When comparing the handbook’s guidelines to instructors’ perceptions of the ELP policy, it was evident that there was no agreed-upon perception of the policy. While some instructors

table 1

Instructor	Self-perceived English Level	Self-perceived Japanese Level	Method Trained In	Method Used	Perception of ELP Policy	Perceived Use in class		Actual Use in class		L1/L2 Use Outside of Class	L1 Benefits	L2 Benefits
						L1	L2	L1	L2			
A	Less than near-native	Native	Uncertain	Unsure	Maximize TL	Depends on program level	English only	1% or less	99% or more	Tries to maintain the L2	Comprehension	Maximize TL
B	Confident in her level	Native	Eclectic	Eclectic	English is the main medium; students are not allowed to use Japanese (L1) at all	At times	Main medium of instruction	1% or less	99% or more	Student's decision	Vocabulary, getting help, comprehension, smoother, reduce cognitive load	N/A
C	More than conversational level	Native	Uncertain	Unsure	English only	Specialized vocabulary	English only	1% or less	99% or more	Student's decision	Specialized vocabulary	Maximize TL
D	Native	Conversational	Functional based	Content-based approach	Mainly English only	.5% or less	99.5% or more	None	100%	English only	Short-term benefits, grammatical points, pronunciation points	Long-term benefits, should establish an environment for thinking in English
E	Unsure	Native	Direct method	Eclectic	English only	None	English only	None	100%	Student's decision	Clarification purposes, comprehension	
F	Less than near-native	Native	No certain method	N/A	English only	Specialized vocabulary	As much as possible	1% or less	99% or more	Student's decision	Anxiety/frustration, comprehension, medical terms, quicker	Maximize TL
G	Limited by different social situations	Native	Eclectic	Eclectic	Maximize TL; students expected to use English, but are sometimes permitted to use Japanese	Vocabulary words	Main medium of instruction	1% or less	99% or more	Student's decision	Grammar explanation, vocabulary, comprehension	Maximize TL
H	Less than near-native	Native	Eclectic	Unsure	English only; students are not allowed to speak Japanese	Specialized vocabulary; uses kanji at times on the board	Main medium of instruction	1% or less	99% or more	English only	None	Maximize TL
I	Native	Less than conversational	Communicative	Communicative and NLP techniques	English only	None	English only	None	100%	English only	None	Maximize TL

believed that the policy was strictly English only, some felt that the L1, Japanese, could and should be used to some extent (see seventh column of Table 1). Macaro (2005) has pointed out that policy can strongly affect what language is used in the classroom and can and does influence instructors. Similar to findings in Crawford (2004), the instructors in my study had different ideas on what exactly the policy was. While many instructors expressed their uncertainty with the ELP policy, such as Instructor A (“I don’t know how much I should use Japanese in classes”), five of them (C, E, F, H, and I) felt the policy was English only. Instructors C, F and H thought English could be used all the time during class because students were at a high enough level to “handle it”, a reason also given by the instructors in Macaro’s (2005) study. While Instructors A and E felt L1 use was dependent on student proficiency levels, Instructor I felt English should be used all the time because of his training, and Instructor H said that though it was not a regulation, “the principle is not to use Japanese.” Instructors B and H explicitly stated that students were not allowed to use Japanese. But Instructors B and D felt that while English should be the main medium of instruction, the class did not need to be English only. Instructor G explained the ELP policy thus: “it’s unwritten, but there’s a sort of understanding and consensus among the teachers that because this is an EFL situation, one of the jobs that teachers need to do is just provide a lot of input, and ... create sort of an immersion type of environment.” The next two sections will compare instructors’ perceptions to actual language use inside and outside the classroom.

### L1 and L2 Use Inside the Classroom

When asked if they used Japanese in their classrooms, and what purposes they felt they used it for, Instructors C, F, and H responded that they might use Japanese for specialized vocabulary,

such as medical terms (see seventh column of Table 1). Instructor H, however, would write a kanji translation on the chalkboard as a type of visual aid, rather than speak the technical term’s Japanese equivalent aloud.

As discussed by Macaro (2005), completely denying the L1 from the classroom can lead to heightened student anxiety, and taken to extremes, ‘punishing’ students for any ‘slip’ of the L1. This idea of punishment has no doubt developed through the belief that L1 use in a language class is not only undesirable, but also possibly detrimental to SLA. Instructor D, at one point, devised an in-class system to deter students from using the L1. If a student was heard using the L1, Instructor D would make a note and lower the student’s grade. He added, however, that “usually I didn’t really make a note of it because it never became that much of an issue.”

Instructor G who allowed her students to use Japanese in class at certain times would use Japanese for vocabulary purposes, “just to make the contrast clear, maybe between two words in English, or between English and Japanese.” Instructor B also used Japanese at times for vocabulary and comprehension purposes, and added that given the choice, she would use much more Japanese but that it would depend on the level of her students whether or not she, or they, would be able to use Japanese in the classroom. This supports Cole’s (1998) statement that the L1 can be helpful for those students who are at a lower level. Instructors E and F agreed with this because they taught English at other schools where Japanese usage was required to compensate for students’ low English proficiency, as also reported by Hosoda (2000).

Instructor D felt he used Japanese 0.5% or less of the time, and that he might, at times, use Japanese for joking purposes, similar to Polio and Duff’s (1994) empathy/solidarity category. When asked how much English they felt they used in their classes, and for what purposes, Instructors E

and I, who had said they used no Japanese in their classes, answered that they used only English. Six instructors (A, B, C, F, G and H) used English as their main medium of instruction with Japanese usage for comprehension purposes, vocabulary and specialized words, efficiency purposes, and to lower anxiety. This correlates with the actual use of both languages inside the classroom, as all instructors used mainly English, though some used a small amount of Japanese. Instructors, A, B, C, F, G and H used Japanese 1% or less of the time and English 99% or more of the time. Instructors D, E and I did not produce any Japanese in the classes observed. Notably, each instructor had spent some time living in English-speaking countries. According to Crawford (2004), experience abroad is an important factor for determining how much L2 an instructor would be willing to use. Although many of the instructors were English NNS, their exposure to the TL and culture has not been limited. Hosoda (2000) has suggested that a NNS instructor with limited exposure to the TL and culture would be more likely to use the L1 in the classroom.

Most of the instructors in the ELP could be considered to have a virtual position according to Macaro (2001). The instructors strongly believed in TL maximization, and as such, used their classroom as a substitute for the TL country, using mainly the L2. However, when the instructors who taught outside of the university were in other schools, many adopted what Macaro (2001) calls the maximal position. While the instructors still felt little use for the L1, it had to be used at times as “perfect conditions do not exist [in which to conduct class solely in the L2]” (Macaro, 2001: 535). Perhaps Instructors B and G could be termed as having Macaro’s (2001) optimal position. These instructors could see some obvious value to using the L1 in the classroom. Overall, the instructors varied in their views of how appropriate the use of the L1 is in their classroom.

## L1 and L2 Use Outside the Classroom

As shown in Table 1 (ninth column), Instructors B, C, E, F and G said that students initiated the language to be used outside the classroom. If a student chose to speak in Japanese, the instructor would respond in Japanese. As these interactions always took place outside of class in a more informal situation, did this turn Japanese into the ‘we’ code as mentioned by Hosoda (2000)? Does English then become the classroom language, leaving Japanese as the ‘real’ language to be used elsewhere? Instructor E said that she would speak to her students in Japanese outside the classroom if they wished, though she maintained an English-only policy within the class. Instructors D and I maintained an English-only policy outside of the class presumably because of their limited Japanese proficiency. Instructors A and H tried to maintain the L2 with their students, even outside of the classroom, but Instructor H added that she would switch to Japanese with ex-students she had not seen for a few years. Instructor A would use English outside of class during the term even when she saw students at the bus stop. However, she explained “it’s hard, if it’s a bus ride together and we’re sitting together and all the other people are Japanese, and, sometimes I switch back to Japanese.” This brings into question the idea of authenticity. In other words, why should Instructor A be speaking English to a student on a bus in the middle of Tokyo, Japan, when everyone around them is speaking Japanese? Because it is an EFL situation, when the students go home for the day, they will probably not be using English. Therefore, this context cannot be compared to an immersion environment. As Cook (2005) argued, if the instructor and student share the same two languages, why should their L1 be banned from the classroom, especially in an EFL situation? It could be argued that such a policy further reinforces the belief that the two languages a bilingual has are separate, and should be kept as separate entities.

Should students in an EFL situation be practicing instead CS as a natural response in such a situation?

### L1 and L2 Benefits

When asked if they felt that there were any benefits to using the L1 in the classroom, only instructors H and I said specifically that there were no benefits, even though Instructor H said she might use kanji for vocabulary purposes (see tenth column of Table 1). Instructor H would do this only when explaining a concept in English would be too time consuming. In other words, as mentioned by Cook (2001), if the cost of the L2 is too great, Instructor H might use kanji as a short cut for a vocabulary word. Instructor I, trained in communicative language teaching, was taught to teach English using only English, and so felt there were no benefits from using Japanese in the classroom. Cole (1998) discusses how communicative language teaching has been ambivalent towards the L1 with no mention of benefits from using the L1 in the classroom. This training could be a very real and influencing factor in how instructors who have been thus trained feel towards using the L1. Furthermore, when asked the question that Macaro (2005) poses, ‘do you wish that you were able to make use of the learners’ L1?’ Instructor I perceived benefits only in a translation class, but not in the language classroom. Again, this is not a rare view, as Cook (2001: 405) cites a study of nineteen education advisors in the UK who, each and all, saw no pedagogical value in a teacher referring to the learner’s own language. It should be noted that some positions in the ELP require native Japanese language skills.

Several instructors provided different benefits. Instructor C felt that the only benefit for using Japanese in the class might be for a quick translation of specialized vocabulary. Instructor A answered that she does not “totally deny using Japanese in the classroom,” and that sometimes when she explains things in class, only one or two students might get

it and might explain it to the other students using Japanese so that other students understand what is going on (labeled in Table 1 as ‘comprehension’). Anton and Dicamilla (1999: 233) viewed such scaffolding help between students as “indispensable.” Similarly, Instructor B thought it beneficial that students could use their L1 as a means of getting help and as a way of making the class run more smoothly. This illustrates Cook’s (2005) suggestion that if an instructor and student share the same two languages, the L1 could be a resource. In addition, Instructor B said that Japanese can be beneficial when explaining vocabulary, aiding with comprehension, as well as reducing the cognitive load of the students. This is a benefit discussed by Macaro (2005), as cognitive load can add to the stress a student is already experiencing. Lightening the load can help alleviate such stress and switching to the L1 at times is one way in which Instructor B chooses to do so.

Instructor D found using Japanese to explain grammar or pronunciation points to have mainly short-term benefits, while Instructor E thought that it could be useful for clarification purposes and to move the class along. In addition to the last point, Instructor F added that using Japanese can help with specialized terms. Instructor F described students in her class who were anxious and frustrated “because they couldn’t really follow what [was] happening” but these students “were so glad” when she explained the situation to them in Japanese. Instructor F thus used Japanese to alleviate anxiety in her class. The type of anxiety Instructor F mentions could be best termed as competency-based anxiety as described by Stroud and Wee (2006). Unsure of their ability in the L2, these students are overly anxious but are relieved when they hear explanations in their L1.

Instructor G stated that some L1 benefits include grammar and vocabulary explanations. However, in moments when she knows that her students are having trouble comprehending something in English,



she would switch to Japanese or give them a few minutes to sort it out in Japanese before returning to the task. This practice of providing a separate speaking time for the students to use the L1 is exactly what Burden (2000) suggested instructors could do. Burden (2000) mentioned that doing so would open up the option of using the L1 as a resource in the classroom, while making sure that it is not overly used. None of the NNS instructors said they would use the L1 to relate to their students as second language learners, a suggestion made by Macaro (2005), and one that Benke and Medgyes (2005) also found to benefit students' positive perceptions of NNS versus NS instructors. The instructors did not mention the possibility of offering more accurate translations either, another benefit discussed by Benke and Medgyes (2005).

With regard to L2 benefits in the classroom, Instructors A, C, F, G, H and I explained that the TL should be maximized at all times in an EFL environment to ensure that the students get a chance to hear as well as to speak the language (see the final column of Table 1). Crawford (2004) and Macaro (2005) both claim that TL maximization is the main reason why CS in the classroom is largely avoided by instructors and students, because it is felt that more time in the TL is better. While it is true that as much of the TL should be absorbed as possible, many instructors take this to the extreme, banning the L1 completely from the class. As Turnbull (2001) argues, the instructor is often the sole model of the L2 in FL situations, and as such, the TL should be used as much as possible. Instructor D stated that using English in the classroom has long-term benefits, rather than the short-term benefits of using Japanese. However, both Instructor D and H, while still agreeing on the idea of TL maximization, discussed concepts relating to the co-ordinate bilingual model. Instructor D brought up the idea twice of “chang[ing] the language the students are thinking in,” and as Instructor H put it, “but I don’t

really want them to get back to Japanese thinking or [...] their [...] Japanese circuit, I don’t want them to go back.” It can be argued that these statements are reminiscent of the co-ordinate bilingual model, as Macaro (2005: 67) mentioned, instructors who think along this vein often see CS as evidence that their students “are not thinking as much as possible in the L2.” Instructors B and E were ambiguous in their answers and are labeled as ‘N/A’ in Table 1.

## CONCLUSION

Observations and introspections highlight the importance of examining teaching practices. As discussed by Edstrom (2006), examining teaching practices can reveal specific influences and goals that instructors feel are appropriate for each class they teach. Perhaps, from such examination, instructors can focus on where to go from there. Do changes need to be made, and if so, how should they be made?

In this study, each instructor had a different perspective – according to their training, personal beliefs and understanding of ELP policy and student preferences – on how much L1 should or should not be used. A clear tendency to create an English-only environment could be seen in the classroom observations and interviews with instructors. Many of these instructors are NNS of English who share the same culture and language as their students. Why then is “the measurement of success to what extent the bilingual teacher [can] deny and overcome his/her bilingualism” (Macaro, 2005: 67)? What should the instructors and students be striving for in an EFL situation? They cannot expect to walk outside of the classroom and immediately begin speaking English with anyone they meet. Therefore, how appropriate or how authentic is it to pose a restriction of English only? This study has raised more questions than it has answered. Countless scholars have argued for the idea of TL



maximization in an EFL situation, ensuring that the L1 should not become the main language medium in the FL classroom. While we know that the L1 should not be exclusively used, and are leaning towards the notion that the L2 should also not be exclusively used, that leaves the idea that different situations call for different amounts of the L1 and the L2. Future research needs to address how we can achieve a satisfactory balance between the L1 and L2 in the EFL environment.

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