

## Overcoming resistance to 90% target language use: Rationale, challenges, and suggestions

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### Abstract

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has prioritized maximal classroom use of the target language (TL) for foreign language (FL) instruction. In spite of its edification in the research and standards that inform language pedagogy, extensive teacher use of the TL eludes most Western PreK–12 and postsecondary classrooms. This article offers several perspectives on the topic of promoting teacher use of the TL in FL classrooms, starting with the research and standards literature as a base for informing directions in pre-service as well as in-service professional development, continuing to address challenges faced by FL departments, faculty, pre-service and in-service teachers, and students, and concluding with practical suggestions for effecting maximal TL use in the FL classroom.

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The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) recently published a position statement advocating 90% minimum teacher use of the target language (TL) in the classroom (ACTFL, 2010). While this stance would seem to be a widely accepted principle in the field of language teaching, the step from adoption to implementation appears to be much more difficult than one would expect. Language teachers across the spectrum of instructional levels (from beginning to advanced classes) struggle to comply with the recommendation advocated by their national organization, though it is based on what is generally known and accepted as good language instruction practice. One need only examine the listings of foreign language (FL) conference sessions at the state, regional, and national levels to realize that this is a topic of great concern to teachers at all levels of instruction, PreK–16.

Given that the research on FL teacher discourse points to a number of contradictions to this position such as exaggerated perception of TL use (Edstrom, 2006; Levine, 2003; Polio & Duff, 1994), haphazard employment of the TL (Duff & Polio, 1990), and meager integration of the TL into classroom discourse (Rhodes & Branaman, 1999), it makes sense to revisit and briefly summarize the theoretical and methodological foundations of language instruction in order to articulate a principled position on classroom code-switching—alternating use of two or more languages within a single conversational unit—from first language (L1) to second language (L2).<sup>1</sup> That framework established, the authors of this article will use this base to explore current and possible future directions in pre-service as well as in-service professional development that focus on increased use of the TL by instructors and learners in language classrooms. Consequently, the discussion is divided into three themes: (1) the latest research and standards, and how they synthesize into a principled approach to TL integration into classroom discourse; (2) the current picture with regard to approaches to L1/L2 code-switching in FL teaching and teacher education; and (3) recommendations for pre-service and in-service professional development, and encouragement of departmental conversations related to the promotion of more teacher use of the TL.

### **Toward a principled approach to L1 vs. L2: What the research and standards tell us**

While a full account of the modern approaches to language pedagogy is beyond the scope of this article, a focused historical narrative that centers on the theme of L1 vs. L2 use in the FL classroom suggests a diversity of schools of thought when it comes to language code preferences. Many of us are familiar with the story of how language pedagogy and research has evolved over the last six or so decades, but retelling that story from the perspective of use of L1 vs. L2 in the classroom sheds some light on just how much the conventional wisdom has shifted over the years. As the reader will note, this evolution has been anything but a linear process.

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Prior to the rise of Behaviorism in the 1950s, Grammar-Translation focused on the use of L1 as the medium for written translation of L2 passages. The subsequent rise of Behaviorism under the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) shifted Grammar-Translation's emphasis on reading and writing to experiments in coercing speaking and listening 'habits' from L1 to L2. Behaviorist approaches like Audiolingual Methodology (ALM) indicated preference for the removal of L1, with L2 use centered on canned dialogue memorization and mechanical transformation drills

The displacement of behaviorist approaches with more cognitive varieties in the 1960s ushered in Cognitive Code methodology. Cognitive Code retained many of the controlled, mechanical qualities of ALM, adding a grammar-based syllabus and an emphasis on explaining L2 rules in the L1, followed by carefully controlled language practice drills. Though Krashen and Terrell (1983) derided this approach as ALM in reverse, the input-based approaches associated with Krashen's Monitor Model have done little to promote a more emancipatory view of the learner, failing to allow the latter more free communication in the L2.

In the last couple of decades, the rise of interactionist theories and methodologies has created space for a more socially situated view of language development, emphasizing that language should be seen as a mode of social interaction rather than simply a structured linguistic system. Lantolf, working within the framework of sociocultural theory (SCT), advanced the empowering image of learner-as-participant (Lantolf & Appel, 1994). The core point of access to L2 development for teachers and learners, within an SCT perspective, has centered on exploration and co-construction of L2 rules through leading questions (e.g. "what do these endings have in common?").

The current debate within SCT centers on the language medium for teaching and learning (L1 vs. L2). While it is generally accepted that the L1 represents an essential tool students use to manage language learning tasks (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Anton, 1999), the question of the extent to which the teacher should use L1 vs. L2 is not universally agreed on in the literature. Wells (1999) expressed concerns about the consequences of giving teachers and learners unqualified latitude to use the L1, and Adair-Hauck and Donato's (2002) elucidation of the PACE (Presentation, Attention-to-form, Co-construction, Extension) Lesson Plan suggests a brief transition period to accustom students to full teacher use of the L2. In contrast, Anton (1999) and Lantolf and Poehner (2007) argue that students and teachers should be given free license to use the L1. Warford (2009a), invoking the Vygotskian notion of teaching as centered on 'just enough' assistance within the learner's emergent zone of proximal development (ZPD), proposed an arrangement in which students would be free to use the L1 but the teacher would maintain the L2. The success of this approach depends on a shared commitment to locating and addressing breakdowns in communication.

While we have not reached 100% consensus with regard to articulating a principled position on classroom code-switching (Macaro, 2001), two points are well established in second language acquisition (SLA). First, L2 input and interaction are essential to acquisition and the development of communicative competence, respectively. Second, there is some utility to explicit grammar

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instruction, though this does not necessarily warrant liberal teacher use of the L1. We can teach effectively through the L2 in ways that promote active participation and exploration of L2 concepts. ACTFL's target of 90% is a realistic and worthy aim, so long as classroom discourse, as underscored in the position statement, targets engaging and authentic usage at an appropriate proficiency level. The space for 10% L1 use, given the variety of positions on L1 vs. L2 in recent language research and pedagogy, also makes sense.

### **Professional standards and teaching in the target language**

In 2002, professional standards for US foreign language teachers were published. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) and the National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) both worked with ACTFL in the design of guidelines for FL teacher preparation. Both, as in the case of proficiency-oriented instruction, emphasize using the L2 to the maximum extent. While ACTFL-NCATE (2002) Standard 3.a (Understanding Language Acquisition and Creating a Supportive Classroom) states: "They (the candidates) use the target language to the maximum extent possible" (p. 42), the InTASC (2002) standards are more explicit in their attempt to promote extensive teacher use of the L2. Principle 1 (Content Knowledge), for example, asserts that "They [the candidates] can effectively conduct classes in the target language at all levels of instruction" (p. 13). Principle 4 (Instructional Strategies) openly presents the ability to effectively maximize messages in the L2. These standards also address the need to establish positive learning environments through the L2. InTASC Principle 5 stresses "Language teachers understand that an environment in which communicative interactions occur in the target language is essential for effective language learning" (p. 25). Principle 6 (Communication) asserts that this commitment to use the L2 extends well beyond the immediate classroom environment.

Finally, InTASC Principle 9 (Reflective Practice) underscores research on teacher discourse as a vital tool for professional development: "They reflect on various aspects of their teaching, such as target language use during instruction" (p. 43). It is noteworthy that the ACTFL Position Statement (ACTFL, 2010) on teaching in the L2 appears to have embraced the maximal language used in the InTASC (2002) and ACTFL/NCATE (2002) Standards (90% minimum).

### **Changing professional cultures: Promoting more L2 use at the department level**

The ACTFL Position Statement can be a tool for change among in-service teachers who are not currently using the TL 90% or more in the classroom. There are many reasons why a particular teacher might not be using the TL sufficiently.

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Some of these could be based on conscious decisions and beliefs whereas others stem from unconscious practices and habits that have developed over years in the classroom in a variety of socio-educational contexts (Warford, 2005). Therefore, we prefer an approach to change based on modifying the professional culture. There are many paths to making improvements in our TL classroom use, both as individuals and as members of a department. In order to have an impact on a culture, we need to start from an understanding of where we are and a recognition of the realities that teachers face in their specific classroom with their own students.

What are some of the reasons why teachers do not use the TL as much as they might? One of the most powerful forces pushing teachers to use L1 is the need to be sure that students understand points of grammar and cultural knowledge as we work to raise their proficiency (Warford,

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2007). As teachers, we have to be communicating with students to manage the classroom, provide content-based instruction, engage students in activities, assign work, answer questions, give feedback, encourage motivation to succeed, and interact with students on a personal level. Trying to do all these things in the TL can be especially difficult for a teacher who is not used to doing so, for teachers who may not have received adequate training, for those whose own TL skills are weaker than one would hope, or for those who find it difficult to communicate about more complex topics near enough to the students' own level. All of these forces make it easier to fall back into teaching how one was taught or unconsciously allowing L1 to play an ever increasing role in the language teachers' interactions with students, whether such L1 use is in accord with the teacher's personal beliefs about effective teaching or not. Neuroscience today tells us that much of our behavior is not directly governed consciously (Ramachandran, 2011). Driving while talking to a passenger is an oft cited example of this aspect of conscious focus vs. unconscious behavior. If the focus of our attention is limited yet we are engaged in the highly complex behavior that is language teaching while actively using all of the subskills just mentioned, some of these classroom behaviors such as L2 use must necessarily lose focus. How can we make it more likely that the teacher will fall back to L2 rather than L1 when attention is focused on other pedagogical issues? Teachers need to develop good habits and a classroom culture that makes L2 the natural fall back. In this way, changing the classroom culture and specific daily practices can help us avoid using more L1 than we intend.

We know that the error of the teacher constantly translating TL utterances to ensure comprehension leads to students not paying attention to the TL but waiting for the translation (Wong-Fillmore, 1985). The teacher can avoid this trap by staying in the TL or carefully and systematically selecting what can and should be said only in the L2 and what needs to be said in L1. Limited translation to support comprehension of new vocabulary or structures can have a place; it just cannot be the routine. If we expect students to understand what we say in the TL, we have to use language they can comprehend. The teacher needs to have a plan for how to handle vocabulary support when reading or listening to new material or when presenting new vocabulary. Getting at the meaning through context, paraphrasing

in the TL, using audiovisual support, asking for student comprehension checks, can all be tried before resorting to translation, even in a classroom that does not have a systematic L2 focus. Having a specific plan and standard practice can help avoid relying on the last resort of falling back into L1 when another approach could be more effective.

Many teachers feel the need to explain grammar in L1. Grammar explanation is certainly above the language level of students in lower- or intermediate-level classes. Explanations in L2 that the students do not comprehend are not productive. Excessive and repeated grammar explanations can crowd out communication in the TL. How many teachers have thought, “If I explain the agreement of the *passé*

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*composé* just one more time, maybe they will get it”? We can keep the explanation to a minimum and spend more time practicing and interacting in the TL by focusing more on modeling correct usage and limiting explanation to brief comments in answer to questions or essential statements that we know through experience will be sticking points. Grammar points in written form, whether in textbooks or handouts, can help get the explanation out of the way and out of the teacher’s mouth, at least to a greater degree. Adopting a classroom culture that says we are more concerned with communication and accuracy than with prescriptive rules does not mean abandonment of those rules. Both teacher and students should know that the rules are just a stepping stone or crutch; competent speakers are not thinking about rules when doing real language. One place for L1 in the classroom might be in

helping students become aware of why we learn things in a particular way, why we are building a particular classroom culture. If students buy into the usefulness of classroom practices in facilitating their success, it can allow them to more readily accept the classroom culture we are putting in place even if communicating in the TL forces them out of their comfort zone.

Getting students to begin an activity can be problematic. They must understand what it is that they are supposed to do, and they may resist beginning an activity if they are unsure. Providing instructions in L1 can become a pattern that takes up class time. The problem is often compounded by students who do not pay attention to instructions, whether in L1 or L2. The more complicated the activity, the more difficult it will be for students to follow directions in the TL. It behooves us to keep activities simple so students can focus more on communication and less on the procedural questions. Providing a model by having the teacher engage in the activity with a student in front of the class rather than explaining what we want students to do is frequently a better approach. Using a smaller number of activity types that students will come to recognize and know how to perform will save time compared to using many new kinds of activities that students do not recognize and hence will not know how to complete without more procedural input from the teacher.



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We need to address the culture standard by integrating cultural information and behavior in the language classroom. Many teachers think of culture as separate from language and as too complex for beginning students to grasp in the TL. It is certainly the case that if we try to use the L2 to explain complex cultural content, especially perspectives, that requires too much language above the students' ability to understand, we will not be successful. What we can do is to limit the culture topics and the complexity of concepts to those that can be addressed mostly in the TL through examples, engaging in the cultural practices as part of communication (e.g., shaking hands when saying hello), using video to illustrate cultural products and practices or listening to native speakers comment on aspects of their culture. If necessary, such activities may be followed up with short comments in the L1 to address points that lie beyond the students' ability to grasp in the TL if that is acceptable in the classroom culture. If a topic simply cannot be addressed in the TL in a level 1 class, then perhaps it is a topic better left for level 2 or beyond. Certainly enough cultural content is available to choose from that we can incorporate something different that will work better at the students' level. However, it might be that limited information about the topic can be presented in the TL in level 1, and more complex aspects of the topic left for a later date. Such decisions should be motivated by the needs of the particular classroom environment we are implementing, by the teacher's interests and level of comfort, and not simply by what is in the book, by what materials happen to be available, or what is in the news at the moment.

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Managing the classroom, assigning work, and keeping students on track are all areas where very clear student comprehension is essential. Naturally, we have to be sure that students understand what is being assigned or they will simply not do the task because they do not know what to do. One way around this is to give homework assignments in written form rather than spend class time explaining what to do. Teacher personality and student expectations, problems with individual students, and differences among student groups can all lead to incredibly diverse environments that require adaptation to find solutions. Classroom management issues can also crowd out time in the TL. However, keeping students actively engaged in communication in the TL can also help keep management issues under control, simply by keeping students occupied. Individual teachers need to discover what works best for them. Addressing problems outside of class time can be a useful strategy for reducing L1 in a language class. Having clearly established routines and a coherent and consistent plan in advance for implementing classroom management reduces the need for intervention and makes it easier to decide ahead of time rather than on a moment to moment basis how to handle as much classroom management in the TL as possible. Of course, having a clear plan established from the outset is good practice in any classroom.

An important aspect of early language acquisition is getting into the habit of using learned expressions in the right contexts. The more that teachers and

students interact and use the TL with each other in the classroom, the easier and more automatic it becomes and the more natural it feels. Expectations that go too far beyond the students' abilities are unrealistic, can lead to failure in spite of good intentions, and can generate frustration and a breakdown in the TL environment. The teacher must make sure that those expectations are appropriate and that students are not asked to perform too far beyond their ability. Students who know what to expect because language use has been part of the classroom culture will be able to better deal with the inevitable frustrations of communicating in a new language.

In language departments in the real world, we find a mix of teachers who use the TL extensively and those who resist such use for a variety of reasons.

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Ninety percent is not a magic number, but it does help give faculty a clearer idea of what we mean by "extensively." ACTFL's authoritative statement can support the teacher who is meeting resistance from the students, parents, administration, or even other instructors. This goal also helps underline the importance of developing oral proficiency at all levels, especially for pre-service FL

teachers who need to meet proficiency objectives in order to be successful in credentialing programs. These new teachers need more oral practice in their upper-level courses, a need university faculty should better address by requiring more spontaneous student participation and contribution in those upper-level classes, perhaps also reducing the too often teacher-centered nature of the advanced literature course.

### **Teaching in the target language: Challenges for pre-service and in-service teachers**

An important goal of any FL methods course should be to prepare pre-service teachers to be knowledgeable, capable, and committed with regard to teaching in the TL (both in their practicum work as well as their eventual FL classrooms). The idea of teaching in the TL would seem to be a given, considering the subject matter and purpose of the FL classroom. In FL teaching, the medium often *is* the message (McLuhan, 1964; Bernhardt & Hammadou, 1987), other venues of FL learning such as content-based instruction and immersion education notwithstanding. However, many FL teachers appear to be perpetuating a system wherein much instruction takes place in the L1 and, indeed, the TL at times takes on a secondary role. A large body of research asserts that teachers teach *how* they were taught, and *not* necessarily how they are taught to teach (Britzman, 1991; Lortie, 1975). Why does this happen? First, it is easy, familiar, and in many instances, it is the path of least resistance. The sense is "I don't have to think about this; I'll just do what I have seen for years." All pre-service FL teachers have sat in classrooms and observed how their instructors have (or have not) communicated in the TL. It is a scenario they recognize, they know, and thus can follow without a great deal of effort. For a beginning FL teacher trying to juggle all the daily demands of the classroom, the additional requirement of teaching largely or completely in the



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TL, particularly for non-native speakers (NNSs), compounds the pressure and can even be overwhelming (Bateman, 2008). If the role models these teachers have had throughout their educational formation have not used the TL much, they then will not necessarily be predisposed to do so either, despite repeated exhortations by their FL methods instructor.

Nevertheless, we need to fight against this inertia vis-à-vis TL use in the classroom and place it front and center in the FL methods class. One review of FL methods course syllabi indicated very little, if any, attention paid to successful TL teaching; in other words, TL use was *not* listed as a topic for concentration in the course (Warford, 2009b). This could mean that (a) it was simply ignored, (b) it was touched on but not deemed “worthy” of an entire topics heading, or (c) the very idea permeated the entire course. We have no way of knowing, other than identifying what we ourselves experienced in these courses, what we as FL methodologists do, and/or what our colleagues tell us they do. The stark reality here is that we are *not* preaching to the choir. We need to convince pre-service teachers of the necessity of TL use in the classroom, and this goes right to the heart of their language learning beliefs. Pre-service FL teachers must examine the extant database of research on TL use and with guidance develop their own position on this very important issue. Then we need to give them the tools to be able to execute (Gwyn-Paquette & Tochon, 2002; Levine, 2003; Pearson, Fonseca-Greber & Foell, 2006). Beginning in the FL methods class, pre-service teachers can be equipped with a TL ‘advocacy kit,’ containing a bibliography of the research base addressing teaching in the L2, the ACTFL Position Statement, additional statements and articles by noted FL practitioners, and input from FL colleagues (So you say, 2009).

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FL teachers need good role models of TL use in the classroom. They must see their university professors, university practicum supervisors (PSs), and their public and private school cooperating teachers (CTs) demonstrating good TL practice regularly. Ideal practicum placements are those in which the transition from theory stressed and learned in the FL methods class to practical application in the classroom is seamless. While many excellent and dedicated CTs do accept the role of mentor along with the concomitant increased workload, at times events seem to conspire against this ideal situation. It can sometimes be difficult to find CTs who engage in extensive TL use in their classrooms. Enter the student teacher (ST) who wishes to implement a 90%+ policy of TL use, informed and motivated by a previous FL methods course. Resistance is encountered on at least two fronts. First, the students are unaccustomed to the increase in TL use and rebel accordingly. Second, some CTs do not want the ST implementing a change in TL use policy that they themselves cannot or will not continue, for a variety of reasons, once the ST has departed. The ST is then in a very difficult situation: the PS advocates more TL use and the CT argues against it (e.g., the students just will not understand or they find it too difficult to “do” some classroom actions in the TL). Nevertheless, STs need to be encouraged to persevere and encourage their students to plunge

into the TL world. They can even anticipate and actively combat resistance to TL use on the part of their students by discussing the rationale for and importance of using the TL in the classroom (Bateman, 2008). It is imperative that STs be placed with those CTs in the field who are in agreement with ACTFL's stance on TL use and employ the TL optimally in the classroom, thus providing the aforementioned good role models. Unfortunately, sometimes geographical and other constraints work against this goal.

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One potential impediment to optimal TL use by practitioners is that of confidence in the use of the TL. Thus, an important area to be addressed is that of TL competence on the part of pre-service and even in-service teachers (Bateman, 2008; Pearson et al., 2006). FL teacher candidates must achieve a certain level of TL proficiency that will enable them to teach in the language, including management of the class and additional pedagogical tasks such as giving instructions and explanations, employing comprehension checks, and carrying on the continual conversational “patter” that goes with an interactive class (Pearson et al., 2006). Upper-level language, culture, and literature courses must be conducted in the TL, and ample opportunities for continued development of oral and written L2 proficiency should be provided in these classes. Pre-service teachers would also be well-served by explicit instruction in how to integrate their language skills with “teacher talk” that will enable them to run their classroom. They also need to be taught the speech patterns used by natives for circumlocution that will help them continue conversations with students when their own strategic competence fails (Canale & Swain, 1980; Jourdain & Scullen, 2002; Pearson et al., 2006). Micro-teaching—giving short lessons targeting specific grammar or cultural points to peers—should be included in all FL methods courses, with each lesson video-taped. Extensive analysis and feedback by both students and instructor should follow to reap the full benefit of the activity. At the very least micro-teaching provides a taste of how one might conduct a class in the TL and whether or not “students” have understood.

Instruction in how to *stay* in the TL needs to be incorporated in the training of language teachers. Such techniques include how to teach daily routines and conduct warm-up activities, use of common classroom expressions and grammatical structures, and how to convey meaning without resorting to use of the L1 (e.g., use of gestures, concrete objects, and examples). This type of scaffolding will increase pre-service teachers' confidence and skill in using the TL as much as possible (Henry, 2007; Bateman, 2008). In addition, programs that prepare pre-service FL teachers should have in place a structured system to evaluate the TL competence of their students such as one involving the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or a series of Simulated Oral Proficiency Interviews (SOPIs). These evaluations should begin early in the students' program, be consistent, periodic, formative, and directly relate to programmatic goals and objectives. Students not showing satisfactory progress and improvement in TL competence in the requisite skill areas must be advised to make a concerted effort

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to increase their language proficiency, to consider study abroad, and be directed toward any and all opportunities to engage in TL use on a regular basis. Even with these measures, students must be made aware that these are minimum standards in a life-long learning scenario.

In-service teachers are not immune to the confidence issue. In fact, both native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) can exhibit reticence to use the TL due to two different sides of the confidence conundrum. While NNSs may struggle with TL competence and merely producing the desired TL input that is comprehensible to their students, NSs clearly are not encumbered by language ability. On the other hand, many NSs suffer from the “fear factor” of not being understood; they use the TL and are greeted with blank stares from students who appear to be terrified by the torrent of TL unleashed by their teacher. Seemingly unable to modify their TL input to assist comprehension, the NSs’ reaction is often to revert to the students’ L1 to quell their apprehension and frustration, and the proverbial vicious cycle ensues. It becomes simpler and “safer” just to run the class in the L1 for much of the time, even extending to regular classroom routines that could easily be conducted in the L2 and perhaps once were (Duff & Polio, 1990; Levine, 2003). Once this pattern is established, it is difficult even for experienced teachers to change. As negotiating meaning is thorny, not necessarily quick, and sometimes exhausting, it is all too tempting to “save time” by using the L1. Thus, NSs could also benefit from training in making their TL usage “comprehensible” to their students.

In essence, we need to win our colleagues (pre-service and in-service alike) over to the ACTFL position of 90% TL use in the classroom. Many FL instructors believe they spend considerable time already in the TL, but research has shown that teachers are frequently quite unaware of the L1 that pervades their own instruction and often make an inaccurate assessment of the amount of TL in use in their classrooms (Duff & Polio, 1990). One way to verify the amount of TL input happening in the classroom is to record one’s lessons. This can be an eye-opening experience for many FL teachers who felt heretofore that the TL predominated in their classes.

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Among the arguments in favor of increased TL usage are those promoting TL input as a means to L2 acquisition. Clearly, students must be exposed to TL input in order to acquire the language eventually, and L2 researchers claim that meaningful interaction is an essential ingredient for L2 development, particularly where comprehensible input, focused output, and accuracy cues are involved (Ellis, 1997; Gass, 2003, Toth, 2011). In addition, hearing the TL and trying to figure it out is part of language learning processes and thus promotes movement along one’s interlanguage (IL) continuum. Hence, it seems to follow that the more exposure to the TL, the more learning takes place (Turnbull, 2001). Though input does not

necessarily equal intake and subsequently output (Ellis, 1994), a paucity or even an absence of TL usage will lead to interlanguage stagnation.

Pre-service and in-service beliefs can also figure largely in the discussion of TL use. As Levine (2003) states, nearly all FL instructors have developed their own approach to L2 use versus L1 use in the classroom, said approach being influenced to one degree or another by a variety of components such as knowledge of research base, pedagogical training, departmental policy, and personal experience. If teachers believe certain aspects of the FL class simply cannot be conducted in the TL, their practice will follow suit. These aspects often include managing the classroom, giving instructions for a range of tasks, teaching grammar, covering cultural information, and even establishing personal relationships with students (Polio & Duff, 1994; Macaro, 2001). Nevertheless, some FL teachers have met with great success in all of these areas using the TL. In one study, those who used more TL appeared to be more organized, more focused, had higher expectations for their students, and in general were more successful than their counterparts who used much less TL. Their students also had better listening comprehension (Bateman, 2008). Other studies support the use of the TL for teaching higher-order thinking skills and providing more opportunities for L2 interaction between teacher and students and among students, leading to increased TL proficiency (Gwyn-Paquette & Tochon, 2002; Henry, 2007). Student perceptions of TL use can also vary, differ from the classroom reality, and influence their own language behavior. Thompson (2009) found that the more students perceived TL use by the instructor, the less likely they were to use their L1 in class interactions.

The debate over just how much TL use is optimal in the FL classroom is extensive and will likely continue to engender much discussion in the future. Macaro (2001) provides a succinct summary of the whole range of L1 versus L2 use in the FL classroom, delineating three theoretical positions: The virtual position, which treats the FL classroom as a TL country and permits no L1 at all; the maximal position, which credits no pedagogical value to L1 use but acknowledges that nothing is perfect and thus the teacher may resort to the L1 from time to time; and the optimal position, admitting some pedagogical value in L1 use and allowing that some aspects of learning may even be enhanced by L1 use. FL practitioners need to decide where they stand on this very important issue but, at the very least, they should reflect on their own practice and make the effort to increase their TL use in order to address ACTFL's recommendation in a way that makes sense to them in their own classroom. Given the difficulty we know we all have in adopting behavioral practices that follow such conscious decisions but differ from past models, a combination of cultural change and specific practical activities can help us successfully implement this recommendation. Following are some concrete suggestions on how teachers might go about doing just that.

### **Staying in the TL: Confronting areas of classroom discourse that gravitate toward the L1**

We have seen how FL teachers can easily slip into L1 use for a variety of reasons in the classroom. Here we offer several practical ideas for staying in the

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TL as much as possible and covering an assortment of tasks and actions common to the FL classroom.

1. Set the stage from day one. Regardless of language level and/or age of the students, the FL instructor can begin class in the TL and thus start students on their path to much language exposure and input. Use of body language, modeling, props, cognates (where possible), and a great deal of enthusiasm all aid in communicating introductory information at the beginning of a course. Students realize from the outset that the TL *is and will be* the mode of communication in the class. The teacher creates a language community and invites the students to join, facilitating them in their first steps (or continued progress) into the TL.
2. Establish classroom routines in the TL and provide students with scaffolding to enable them to be successful performing these routines from the beginning. If certain procedures need to be followed, delineate these in the TL with gestures, vocabulary, props, and then practice these with the students often. Routines are just that: actions that are repeated over and over. The more they are done, the easier they become. Give students the language to use—in written or oral form—and then expect them to use it. Something as simple as requesting permission can be executed in the TL. If the student reverts to the L1 for this, feign incomprehension.
3. Do “classroom management” in the TL with tone of voice, a look, physical presence near the students, and of course appropriate TL words.
4. Teach a particular grammar point using the PACE Model (Adair- Hauck & Donato, 2002) or a modified version thereof, as an example. In the PACE Model, students are presented with many exemplars of a grammar point in the TL and are then asked to ferret out the rule or rationale for a specific use. By carefully choosing the grammar point, the examples, and the TL used to ask probing questions of students, this task can be completed by all parties in the TL.
5. Introduce effectively many new grammar structures or expressions through just the imitation of models following up with use in groups. Explicitly explaining or even developing rules interactively might not be necessary in some cases where patterns are not complex.
6. Demonstrate completely interactive activities involving students asking each other for preferences, missing information (also known as information gap activities), and any tasks wherein students must negotiate meaning prior to setting students to work. Pick a student as a partner and walk everyone through the activity in detail, using gestures, examples, or visuals if necessary and appropriate. Literally *show* the students how the activity works and what they are to do; avoid giving any verbal instructions if possible. Once the activity is underway, the teacher should also actively participate, circulating among groups, repeating what was demonstrated initially as a reminder to students.

7. Show short video segments, stopping frequently to interact with students about meaning through circumlocution. Add personal comments to bring in the teacher's own experience in the culture and show where specific cultural content can be generalized or where it might represent an exception. Follow up with short small group discussion in the TL.
8. Read to students or tell them stories to provide TL input. Use techniques such as circumlocution, images, gestures to provide vocabulary support.

## Conclusion

The push for reaching a level of 90% plus TL use in the FL classroom is a laudable and admirable objective; even more so, it is a necessary goal if FL learners are to move along their interlanguage continuum toward maximum TL proficiency. It is underpinned by SLA research, has consensus by stakeholders at all levels of FL education, and is “field-tested” extensively by practitioners in the profession who have realized the need and accepted the obligation to provide as close to an immersion setting in their classrooms as possible. Indeed, implementing 90% plus TL use in the classroom is no small challenge to be met. Using the TL extensively in the classroom is clearly not a revolutionary idea. Nevertheless, judging from the large attendance at conference sessions discussing this topic and also the considerable amount of discussion generated in online FL forums (e.g., FLTEACH) by teachers searching for advice and suggestions on how to do so, staying in the TL obviously continues to be an elusive goal for many FL educators. The rationale for implementing 90% TL use in the classroom and the suggestions for taking beginning steps in the direction discussed above hopefully have provided the impetus for our FL colleagues to take on this challenge, to view it as a worthy undertaking, and to meet with success.

## Note

1. The ACTFL Position Statement consistently refers to the use of the “target language” and does not reference “second language” use per se. For the purposes of this article, we use target language (TL) and second language (L2) interchangeably, due to the prevalent use of L2 in the literature.

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