

Teaching in English only...begging to differ:

in search of cultural & communicative competence development

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*...Not 'learning to use' English
but 'using English to learn it'.
—Howatt (1984: 278)*

Abstract

In the present paper, two points are discussed. One is to see what grounds the use of the first language (L1), not of the target language in the class room (L2) is on, i.e. how can the L1 use be justified? Because it is all based upon Krashen's hypothesis of 'acquisition vs. learning,' could the L1 use be better advised to use for the learners of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to comprehend easier and more at home? The other point is the use of 'translation' closely related to L1 use. The more use of L1, the better 'comprehensible input.' The 'translation,' however, need not be always an L1 rendering from L2. For a sign of comprehension, paraphrasing or interpretation in L2, not in L1, would do well enough. Ultimately, it should be reminded what matters the most to improve the learners' proficiency in English.

1. Introduction

In his provocative article on the use of the mother tongue in foreign language teaching, Gabrielatos (2001) pointed out that "the mother tongue (L1) use in the classroom is not 'a skeleton in the cupboard' but 'a bone of contention,' agreeing that "teachers should not treat the L1 use by themselves or learners as a sin." Granting it really is, however, I wonder what on earth is meant by it. Besides, any argument raised for and against L1 use does not seem as convincing as it should be meant, since it does not reflect the ultimate aim of language teaching/learning, nor does it clarify the validity of L1 use in the proper, pedagogical framework/environment of (applied) linguistics.

In fact, up to this very moment, for ages ever after the failure of Palmer's Oral Method/The Direct Method in Japan in the 1920s, it is widely known that not as many Japanese teachers of English have had much confidence in their spoken fluency. Particularly these days, they have been incessantly confronted with such a great pressing demand that a language should be learned or taught as a practically useful skill in order for both teachers and students to socially survive or live ambitiously through the competitive age amidst the growingly globalizing world. Hence, what matters the most in this language environment is to be aware of, or be alerted to the fact that more people than ever have got a feeling of a dire need of such a skill. True, all learners cannot be required to reach an absolute level of proficiency in the target language (L2) and, no wonder as well,

their motivations can be easily guessed to be multifarious. Empirically speaking, however, the quintessence recognized in common is to acquire some communicative competence, in speech or writing. However poor they may be at L2, learners say they don't care. But whatever they may say against the acquisition, evidently it is not what they mean. All too often, many can be heard to say, "I'd desperately desire the competence myself, were it not for *tears of effort* to acquire". If that really is the case, who on earth can ever believe that the L1 use in the classroom will be able to contribute to any improvement of L2 competence? Needless to propose a caveat that 'learners and teachers alike be made aware of the limitations and pitfalls of L1 use in the classroom, even as they are all aware an unprincipled use of L1 can have long-lasting negative effects on the learners' awareness and production of the target language' (Gabelatos 2001; Atkinson 1987; Harbord 1992; Prodromou 2001; Schweers 1999; Clanfield & Foord 2003; Barnard 2000; Nation 2003; Gill 2000).

On the other hand, by his metaphor of a '*skeleton in the cupboard*', Prodromou (2001) contends that "it is apt in so far as we have for a long time treated the mother tongue as a 'taboo' subject, a source of embarrassment and on the part of teachers, a recognition of their failure to teach properly, i.e. using 'only English'." Further, he goes on to say that it is an irony in ELT that "most non-native-speaker teachers have been considered to use the L1, to a lesser or greater extent, since 'direct methods' became the official orthodoxy." After his survey to identify how students feel towards the mother tongue used in the EFL class, from the procedural and methodological viewpoint, he suggests that learners and teachers alike "go beyond the conventional use of L1 to include uses of the mother-tongue which is seen as a resource on which we [sic] can draw to bring in the student's cultural background into the learning process ..." My concern is, however, how and how long their disciplined use of L1 could be maintained, without their primary focus kept on the use of L2.

Currently, my students at university are mostly freshmen and sophomores who are required to study English. So far I have been involved in the educational environment of teaching English as a Foreign Language for over a quarter of a century. A great diversity of changes has been seen in the methodological approaches to the language acquisition. With all the changes over the time, I think I can believe that the ultimate and unchanging goal for the ever increasing majority of the Japanese learners of English is to acquire a good and pragmatic command of the target language (L2), above all, in order that they can communicate in L2 naturally accompanied by sound listening comprehension competence. Should this very goal be made light of, how can the corresponding end of L2 learning/teaching ever be justified? Not remembering any more what state of mind we were in at the start of learning English as a new foreign language especially as its learners, some non-native-speaker teachers (NNSTs) may claim that there is no evidence that the L1 use in the classroom, all or part of the time, surely interferes with or somehow retards the development or progress of L2 learning. However, others do not suspect in the light of their own learning experience that 'it is widely understood by TESOL professionals around the world, and usually does not need any further authority resorted to, just except for the benefit of new teachers (posted Nov. 23/05 at TESL-L@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU).' Granted,

with the goal in mind, its fulfillment cannot be overemphasized.

Therefore, on the-more-the-better basis, the learners' exposure to the target language is not only fundamental, but also inevitable. Axiomatically, the L2 can only be learned by speaking as well as listening, i.e. by using the language for meaningful communication. There should be no buts; logically it follows that the L2 should be one and only language used as much as possible in the classroom. In connection with this, another point should be made to clarify the difference between in the language taught by the non-native-speaker teacher (NNST) and by the native-speaker (NST). Because the learner's exposure to the language should be stressed does not mean that NST must be esteemed one-sidedly. The language can be taught by NNST no less well and effectively. The way Widdowson (1992: 338) put it with good reason, "The native speaker may have the edge as informant. But the instructor's role is a different matter. ... Although native speakers obviously have the more extensive experience as English language *users*, the non-native speakers have had experience as English language *learners*." Hence, the difference does not matter much, as long as EFL learners are exposed to the target language most of the time in the monolingual classroom of L2, since they are actually to become at once learners and users.

Anecdotally, very few of my non-native colleagues will think of believing the claim that the language class can be carried out in L2 properly, not to say 'successfully'. Preconceived, they are against it for no definite reason, just opposed to any class taught by NNT and what is more, in L2 without giving any adequately albeit not-slum-dunking convincing justification. Not voicing their opinion intelligibly enough, many don't seem to believe that there are no other approaches than the so-called 'grammar-translation method (GTM).' Instead, as non-native teachers, they know well enough that GTM is the best approach they have been adept at, considering the fact that their students should be being taught most efficiently, with more comprehension or retainment of what they have been taught through GTM in class than otherwise. On top of that, it is usually measured in terms of knowledge about the language whether and how much they have comprehended or retained. Consequently, there can be no room for L2 use in class, GTM being conducted mostly in the mother tongue.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the issue of L1 use in the classroom, naturally entailing the use of translation as a means of better understanding for learners. In addition, the unfashionable yet covertly still-in-use GTM is examined as to what it has to do with L1 use. We can see whether and how the L1 use is conflicting against that of L2 only. What does 'understanding or comprehension in general' mean in the language-learning environment?

In fact, when Krashen (1982: 64) claims "comprehensibility is a crucial requirement for optimal input for acquisition of the target language", where can it be more effectively attained in L1 use or L2? What if it can in L1 in a true sense of the meaning, as may be much anticipated? If that is the case, what can be actually the *raison d'être* for *comprehension in L2*?

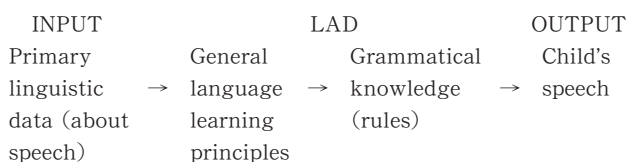
On top of that, the question remains whether the comprehension in the mother tongue can be considered as the same that is comprehended in the target language. As is the case

with an equivalent in another language, particularly in terms of its conception, there does not seem to be a complete equivalent, sounding self-contradicting per se. This is why ‘the first language can be necessarily used in ways that accelerate second language acquisition, as a means of making second-language input more comprehensible, and further, ways of using the first language in EFL situation (cf. Krashen, 1996; 1999; 2004, posted Nov. 29/05 at TESL-L@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU). This also leads to the use of translation in the classroom.

2. Review

As has been known by the name of H. E. Palmer in Japan ever since 50 or more years ago, in the first half of the twentieth century, the direct method associated with the oral method has hardly seen any place in our monolingual classroom. Instead, with a top priority on translation techniques, the grammar-translation method was established and has been still in use, without much room to use the target language (L2) as extensively and thoroughly as the mother tongue (L1). Even today, at the expense of L2 practice, translation along with interpretation in L1 is still in usual and familiar use as a means of understanding the structures of the language, i.e. grammar. Recently, however, grammar and its related technical items have been considered to be a bit too hard, or sometimes, next to impossible to teach and to learn even in L1, much more in L2.

On one hand, as is often “treated either as a joke (Remember ‘how we learned languages at school?’), or as the whipping boy of EFL” (Atkinson, 1987: 242), the grammar-translation, i.e. L1 use, seems to have gone no longer valid in any sense and has become increasingly obsolete, though actually not. In the sixties, in fact, the behaviorists’ view of learning a language simply on the response-stimulus basis was replaced by the notion of a ‘meaning-seeking mind’; the human brain with its innate capacity for language development (See below ‘Language Acquisition Device (LAD)’ in the cognitive process). “Given motivation/the will, it is inevitable that human being will learn a second language if he is



LAD (from Crystal, 1987: 234)

exposed to the data” (Corder, 1967, cited by Howatt, 1984). By the end of the sixties, the second language was recognized as a vehicle for the comprehension and expression of meanings, or ‘notions’, since utterances carry meaning in themselves and express the intentions of the speakers and writers.

In the sixties, Behaviorists and Contrastive Analysis proponents saw L1 as a core in language learning, but as a source of errors in L2. Then, the core role of L1 was downplayed by universal properties of language given in Chomsky’s *innateness* views. In the

seventies, Interlanguage Theory (Selinker, 1972) also saw a negative effect in L1 in that it may disrupt a naturally predetermined acquisition process. Krashen's Monitor Model (1982) saw no place for L1 use in the classroom but asserted that L1 subject-matter instruction can facilitate L2 acquisition by making L2 input more comprehensible. In the early eighties, Interactionalists, with their emphasis on language use rather than form, primarily concerned with negotiation of meaning. No apparent role was assigned to the use of L1, and early communicative language teaching in the mid eighties tended to adopt an English-only approach to language teaching. In the nineties, an emerging interest on 'focus on form' has surfaced, with the potential of promoting accuracy. Research showed that "a focus on form within communicative settings can significantly enhance performance, providing important evidence that leads learners to reflect on their own language production as they attempt to create meaning" (Donato 1994; LaPierre 1994, cited by Swain 1995: 140). Above is the general transition of language acquisition in terms of L1 vs. L2.

2.1 L1 vs. L2 in the monolingual language classroom

Whether or not to use the students' first language (L1) in foreign language (L2) classroom or learning environments has been a critical matter of debate. It has not been discussed overtly until it was pointed out earlier in the present paper by using the metaphor of 'a *skeleton in the cupboard*' (Prodromou). Or, in teacher training, 'the topic of the methodological role of L1 was often ignored' (Atkinson, 1987). L1 use in the classroom was never talked about without being connected with the grammar/translation method. Over the years, the effect of the method has made non-native-speaking English teachers (NNSETs) feel "either defensive or guilty at their inability to match themselves up to native-speaking English teachers (NSETs) in terms of conducting a class entirely in English" (Harbord, 1992). No wonder, therefore, their incessant sense of a deficient command of the target language makes NNSETs resort to the translation accompanied by too much fine-tuned grammar. Conventionally it is a usual scene of the classroom, still being used without much change as a typical means or pretense to check and see if the learners can comprehend correctly in a reading text. Actually, in the classroom, it is not until their correct (or sufficiently intelligible) translations or words in their L1 equivalents are given that the students can be judged to have understood clearly each sentence structure used in the text, while the whole class is mostly conducted in the mother tongue. This is a "learner-preferred strategy" (Atkinson, 1987) non-native English teachers can feel at ease with. Only too often with the teachers, finding it too complicated to explain in L2, they would not feel as confident. Neither could they be as capable of giving a clear, unambiguous explanation, especially about sentence structures, should they be demanded to explain only in English. On the contrary, the L1 use in the classroom would be considered to make it possible to facilitate the teacher-student communication, which will lead to enhance much closer teacher-student rapport between.

By so doing, many teachers at the chalk can get their message across more easily, so they think they can save time as well, instead of spending explaining lengthily in L2. In addition, they may say to themselves, 'are we, in reality, acting upon our sense of good

teaching practice (whatever it might be) when we choose to make use of our students' L1 in the L2 classroom (Owen, 2003)?' But in fact, their strategies of easier 'message-getting-across' as well as effective 'time-saving' do not sound as convincing, rightly without any evidence. Whatever it is, every language teaching strategy should come to converge upon how it can contribute to the better understanding of the students' problems and their learning process. Obviously enough, once given in L1, students "begin to feel that they have not really understood any item of language until it has been translated (Atkinson, 1987)" usually in a complete L1 sentence like in writing. I cannot agree more here in this point. To speak empirically, L1 in this case has become addictive believing that every word in L1 has got its own exactly corresponding equivalent in L2. As a result, there's a danger that "students fail to realize that...it is crucial that they use only English" (op. cit.: 246).

On the one hand, with respect to the time spent on rather lengthy explanation, one of the common justifications given by the NNETs who favor the L1 use is just to spend time economically or efficiently, but is this really the case? In the course of language learning/teaching, on the face of it, "it is commonplace to say that little is known about what constitutes effective language learning, yet it is not unusual to discover among teachers the assumption that students are not in a position to judge what is best for them; this is the teacher's job" (Atkinson, 1987). As a teacher, I'd say to myself, 'Take your time to explain yourself, and in turn, get the students to spend their time reflecting upon, puzzling out and guessing what they're driving at all through L2,' however tottering their English is. I would not believe that the L1 use can be justified only because of time-saving strategy or anything of that sort. "Quick reaction precludes reflection. But the process of reflection, the wrestling with words and meaning, may be crucial for learning, may be more conducive to conscious awareness, or unconscious assimilation, than rapidly provided feedback. Solutions are often less important than the process of solving" (Widdowson, 1992). Indeed, it is the process that makes a difference in making progress, no development of behaviorists' conditioned reflex being needed.

Further, it was only a ratio of about 5 percent native language employed at the early levels in the L2 classroom that Atkinson as "an early voice in the wilderness" (Gill, 2000) intended to argue, and the rest of about 95 percent target language would be more profitable. In my opinion, the estimated ratio is dubious whether it is 5% or 10% (Krashen, 2005). Whatever the judicious or disciplined use may be, the overuse seems all too easy for all the caution. Despite of his remark that the mother tongue is not a suitable basis for a methodology, Atkinson claims the roles it plays are "consistently undervalued for reasons which are for the most part suspect" (Atkinson, 1987: 247). For the very same reasons, I would not think I can agree.

Specifically, in Japanese context, where the target language is mostly learned for pedagogical, occupational, and/or cultural purposes, the danger of losing one's language and culture to the L2 cannot have to be thought of. If it can, it must be politically motivated. Instead, the arguments raised for and against the use of L1 should be discussed in the relevant framework of linguistic learning contexts. As Widdowson (1992: 338) makes

“a distinction between the role of native speakers obviously with the more extensive experience as English language *users* and that of non-native speakers with experience as English language *learners*,” it is extremely important to appreciate the distinction right now. Especially with those non-native teachers of English, if they stand firm as professional learners, i.e. not politically motivated but just linguistically devoted, they can make better use of their own status as non-native ELT professionals, offsetting the advantage of the native-speaker teachers as *users* of English. Likewise, Medgyes (1992:346) views from his experience that “natives and non-natives stand an equal chance of achieving professional success.” Further, he contends that the deficiency in *NNETs*’ command of English may be made up for by such hidden advantages as can be seen in their “serving as imitable models of the successful learners of English, providing more information about the English language, anticipating language difficulties and pitfalls, and benefiting from sharing the learners’ mother tongue” (op. cit.: 347), though I wonder if sharing the L1 in common can be really counted among the strong points of the *NNETs*. To facilitate the teaching/learning in the classroom setting can be double-edged, spoiling the authentic efforts of communication in the target language. The learners are apt to rely upon the L1 part of their instructor. Particularly in the EFL environment like in Japan, the students often have no exposure to real-life English outside the classroom. Hence, with good reason, we would be better advised not to think of wasting this very invaluable teaching/learning time using L1.

Meanwhile, in the edited debates which appeared on TESL-L email (2000–2001) for ESL/EFL classroom pedagogy on whether or not to use the students’ L1 in the L2 classroom environments, Stanley (2002) reports, “Generally, however, few instructors feel that the primary language of instruction should be the L1,” and analyzes the various factors seen in the wide spectrum of opinions which affects each decision on the degree of L1 use: 1) social and cultural norms, 2) student motivation and goals, 3) whether English is a primary means of communication in the environment external to the classroom (ESL) or not (EFL), age and proficiency of the students, and the linguistic makeup of the class (monolingual or multilingual as relates to L1). On one end of the spectrum, feeling guilty or not, some teachers may see that “too often students hold on to the security blanket of their first language FAR too long” (*ibid*: 2), but still claim that we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater. On the other, most believe “a little of the L1” is good for students because it makes them feel “comfortable” but it should become a case of “comfort now, pay later” (*ibid*: 3).

In actual fact, however, allowing the L1 use, limited or not, in the classroom is not merely a ‘learner-preferred strategy’ (Atkinson), or a pleasing or understandable input, in a sense. But that is also a tempting strategy for teachers to use, though making them feel “betraying their sense of good teaching practice (whatever it might be)” (Owen, 2003). Then, they believe or must have seen somewhere that “a well-trained and resourceful L2 instructors can act out, demonstrate, illustrate or coach new learners to do what is required in class without ever using L1” (Stanley (ed.), 2002: 8). They know as well: “No language is a direct translation of any other, and if you really want to get the feel of the target

language you have to learn the target language in the target language. It is possible to use the target language as a vehicle of communication, with all its frustration. And if grammar is taught inductively, there is also no need for ‘explanations’ in L1” (*ibid.*: 12). Needless to say, in order to be taught inductively, individual grammar points must be met beforehand.

2.2 What is the use of translation in the monolingual classroom?

Generally, translation in language teaching is assumed to render the target language (L2) into the mother tongue (L1) in such a way the surface, not as the precise, meaning of the two languages will be approximately the same, pedagogically with sufficient understanding of the structures of the source language. As EFL teachers, we have known clearly that the use of translation is a long-established practice (Howatt, 1984; Richards & Rogers, 1986) as a means of facilitating the learners with understanding the foreign language. Hence, it follows that the translation in the classroom is naturally carried out in L1, employed as a convenient shortcut to facilitate their learning. I suspect, however, there can be some room for L2 to be exclusively used instead of L1, so that the students may improve their proficiency more effectively as well as substantially, though admittedly awkward at first, particularly at their beginner’s level. It is much more important for them to be able to comprehend rather than to make an L1 rendering of L2. Further, it should be reminded, this rendering is not a goal in itself, but just a means used to check if and how much they can understand what they work over in L2. If there is another approach to comprehension e.g. acting out their understanding in other ways than in L1, it would do as well, or the better because it can do without any Japanese rendering. In this respect, in fact, their understanding can also be performed through their own paraphrasing or some questions put by their teachers in L2.

Considering the nature of translation, whether in or out of the classroom, why should it be prescriptively rendered into one and only translation in the mother language? Never can it be, as long as the meaning grasped on the basis of proper understanding goes appropriate. Hence, suffice it to say that “there are no criteria for specifying a single outcome in translation or interpretation relative to a given text” (Ross, 1981 : 11). As a result, no wonder, as are so many persons, so are many translations as well as many interpretations.

As a matter of fact, Wallerstein (1981 : 89) addresses herself, “Search for the standard translation, if one exists. By standard translation, I mean the accepted equivalent in the two languages.” At the very beginning, the learners should be advised well not to regard equivalent as sameness. In addition, the expression and style in translation will make matters more complicated. “Not only do lexical and syntactical aspects of language ensure that sameness is impossible, but it is also the case that different cultures interpret meaning in different ways” (Byram, 2004 : 639). As is put paradoxically in *Translation Impossibilities*, Gabrielatos (1998 : 1) alerts his readers to the fact that “Uncritical use of translation, which does not take account of language idiosyncrasies resulting from cultural factors, will invariably lead learners to formulate in their minds a non-existent relation between English and their mother tongue.” Should it be the case, in other words, and if we have to accept the inevitability of *linguistic and cultural untranslatability*, what is the use

of translation, particularly when it comes to checking the learners' comprehension/understanding in L1? Instead, why should we not recommend the use of something else other than the translation into, I should say, other communicative strategies in L2 such as an interpretation or explanation in L2, using paralinguistics, circumlocution or simplification, in addition to a couple of other ways mentioned earlier (Cf. Atkins, 1987 : 245). As a matter of fact, there is not much need use of rendering L2 into L1, in terms of true comprehension.

Alternatively, I wonder as well if non-native EFL teachers really need to translate themselves, rendering into L1 from L2, when they read or hear to understand the L2. Whether in a 'mental translation' (Atkinson, 1987 : 244) or in any other way, empirically, I'd say definitely there is not any form of translation happening while engrossed in understanding/comprehension, there is nothing but an appreciation of a content interesting us. Early on in the paper, as is seen in the learner's inner LAD (See Figure 1, p. 4), there does not seem to be any tangible evidence that has been put forward in the history of comprehension analysis so far. But in fact, Luria (1982 : 169) observes that "analysis of speech comprehension is one of the most difficult and, strange as it may seem, one of the least discussed problems in psychology." But before he says so, he explores the cognitive process of comprehension:

Psychologically analyzed, it is decoding. It begins with external speech, moves to an understanding of the meaning of the utterance, and then moves to the subtext or sense...the problem of speech decoding or comprehension...in order to understand the sense of an utterance it is enough to understand the meaning of each word and to understand the precise grammatical rules governing word combinations. In that view, comprehension of a message is determined by the presence of concepts on the one hand and understanding of the grammatical rules of the language on the other (*op. cit.*)

Also, in connection with the process of comprehension, we can know how it is analyzed linguistically:

"According to Widdowson (1990a : 102), there are two kinds of comprehension: understanding sentences and understanding language in use. The first is a semantic matter of deciphering 'symbolic' meanings, i.e. the senses of linguistic signs. However, this knowledge alone will not enable us to understand language in use, for this is always a matter of realizing particular meanings of signs in association with the context. These particular meanings are 'indexical', in that the sign which is used will indicate 'where we must look in the world we know or can perceive in order to discover meaning' (Widdowson 1990a : 102, cited by Nyysönen 1995 : 163).

Since the days as old as more than half a century ago, in a sense, not much seems to have changed in the process of understanding:

Much of the professional concern of those interested in the improvement of “understanding” in communication centers around the means whereby a speaker or writer can “say it clearly” or “put it into plain words” so that the process occurring in understanding can be facilitated. The effort is to reduce the verbal specialization, complexity, incoherence, compression, diffuseness, vagueness, generality, and impersonality by any or the known devices of reduction, amplification, concretion, iteration, variation, dramatization, and visualization (Hayakawa, 1954: 41-42).

As a matter of fact, not a few teachers must be sorry to have heard their students say ‘they can not really or very well understand any item of language until it has been translated’ (Atkinson 1987; Harbord 1992; Prodromou 2001). I would often wonder what they actually mean when they say they do not understand or comprehend what they have heard or read, unless it is rendered into the mother tongue. Similarly, I also wonder how successfully it can be justified to use translation as a means of comprehension, so that they may comprehend/understand the target language, and with ease and comfort at that, while their teachers are well aware of their ultimate goal in their learning. Really cannot any good understanding/comprehension be achieved without translation in L2 which is not an end per se? As was already referred to, can there be any other means provided for the comprehension check instead of the conventional translation?

Meanwhile, most of the incomprehensibilities the students feel faced with in the L2 class conducted in L2 must be attributed to their lack of experience in the target language. Anecdotally speaking, many of my students at university always find their L2 class much too difficult and not as comfortable as they expect. More often than not, they complain about the use of L2 most of the time. As one of their EFL teachers, I listen to them attentively, anticipating their worries and complaints in advance, and feeling great empathy with their needs and problems. I hope, however, that their encountering all the difficulties and problems by trial and error will never fail to facilitate their learning in as many ways as possible, though too hard at first. With all these in mind, I believe I can say all the rest is *caveat emptor*, as is in a real-life situation of L2. I’ll take every opportunity to make students aware of the dangers of translation and teach them to exercise a conscious check on the validity of translation they accept and content themselves with all too soon.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

Apparently, many of the Japanese university freshmen can be called general-purpose learners who simply ‘want to learn English’, contenting themselves with what had been taught at school so far, while wishing they were practically good speakers of English. Taking into account the rapidly changing linguistic background of the globalized age, the basic “competence level or common core” (Van Ek & Wilkins, 1980) of proficiency in English would be definitely required of these general students before moving on to their professionally or non-professionally specialized interests in the not-distant future. Accordingly for them to meet their linguistic needs amidst such an age as mentioned

before, no room can be provided for translation, certainly entailed by the use of the mother tongue (L1). As has been already discussed, translation can not be good enough for comprehension check. As such, can it ever be justified as an effective, reliable or time-saving means resorted to in the pedagogic classroom activities? On the contrary, by any chance, what if inundated with L1 most of the time? Can it be over emphasizing to say that students are suffering a so-called *language deficit*? The deficit could be “compensated for only by a *richer* linguistic environment...it was not the children’s knowledge of English that was *restricted* but rather their experience of using it to explore the abstract concepts and relationships required in school learning?” (Howatt, 1984 : 279–280).

Although sounding like a self-contradictory term, *translation in the target language* (L2), as it were, could be made good use of to cover the preceding *language deficit*. By L2 translation, I mean all in L2: interpretation, explanation, paraphrasing, paralinguistic acting-out, QA clarification, possible use of ‘*interlanguage*’ (Selinker, 1972), or whatever can replace L1 translation. All in L2 should also serve as a means of comprehension/understanding check, as long as it is in its context. In fact, as can be seen in Leech’s claim (1983: 3) that “interpretation can be recognized to work as always ultimately a matter of guesswork, an informal problem-solving strategy” (cited by Nyssonen 1995 : 164), I do feel as an EFL teacher that the use of ‘*translation in L2*’ is certain to teach how to cope with real-life English, not less efficiently than otherwise. It should be reminded again that there is no complete L1 equivalence possible in any sense, always with a problem of loss or gain, i.e. more or less dissimilarity in translation itself. Indeed, any rendering into another language, viewed linguistically as well as culturally, can be hardly defined as the same. Hence, the result of a ‘*using- to-learn, not learning-to-use*’ (Howatt, 1984) strategy mostly in the *language-deficit* environment of the classroom would be sure to outweigh some disadvantages of seemingly unapproachable difficulty or uneasiness felt at the start. In fact, many students in dire need of exposure to L2 all around in the current environment are ready to await their instructors who could spur them on to improve their communicative competence.

Therefore, what matters the most at the moment is to focus on facilitating their seemingly too hard learning at first and then to enhance their proficiency in English, that is to say, to help them attain their original goal, which should be the EFL professional’s job, not just to negotiate with them in order to balance language choice through a favorable mix or collaboration in the classroom.

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