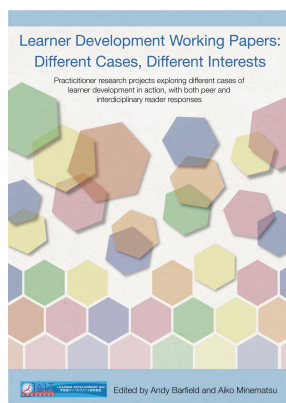


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Inclusive learning environments and code-switching

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Chapter Three

Inclusive Learning Environments and Code-Switching

Peter Cassidy, Canadian International School, Tokyo, with Mike Nix, Chuo University, and Mike Mahon, Canadian International School, Tokyo

Abstract

Code-switching, the switch between two or more languages during a speech event, has led to considerable debate about its place in the language-learning classroom. English-only language policies in English Language Learning (ELL) classrooms still exist in many parts of the world today, and these policies may deny learners the opportunity to code-switch or use their mother tongue (L1) while learning English. Such subtractive language practices do not take into consideration the linguistic and sociolinguistic benefits for both teachers and learners with regard to clarification of meaning as well as classroom solidarity. This paper reports on the benefits of code-switching for two very different language-learning contexts, and highlights creativity, skill development and inclusion. In particular, from a Writers' Workshop perspective in which learners were given the opportunity to plan writing with a same-language partner, the opportunity to code-switch between the L1 and the target language of English seemed to be a motivator to start more quickly and allowed for prolonged interest in the difficult task that writing is. A year-end survey and its analysis also points towards the L1 as a tool that can be useful in the productive stage of the writing process, as one of the key components in the process of learning a new language.

要旨

言語学習の教室におけるコードスイッチング（2つ以上の言語を混ぜて話すこと）の善し悪しは議論の的となってきた。世界中の英語学習の教室において、未だに英語の単一使用を促す言語政策が採用されており、これらの政策は学習者が英語学習中に自分の第一言語の使用やコードスイッチをする機会を制限している。このような単一言語政策は、複言語使用が教師及び学習者にもたらす言語的・社会言語的な有用性を考慮していないと言える。というのも、複言語使用は意味の明確化とクラスの連帯強化を促すからである。本論文は二つの異なる言語学習環境におけるコードスイッチングについてまとめ、主に創造性・技能発展・インクルージョンという効果について論じる。特に、作文ワークショップにおいて同じ第一言語の学習者同士が文章の計画をする際、第一言語と英語のコードスイッチをすることで課題により早く取り組み、作文をする課程でも興味を維持していた。年度末のアンケートとその分析により、第一言語の使用は新たな言語を学ぶ上で鍵となる要素であり、作文を書く段階においても役立つという点が示唆された。

Key words

code-switching, second language acquisition, language and inclusion in the mainstream classroom, L1 (mother tongue) planning before target language production, writers' workshop
コードスイッチング、第二言語習得、通常学級における言語とインクルージョン、目標言語での言語産出における第一言語でのプランニング、作文ワークショップ

Chapter Three

Inclusive Learning Environments and Code-Switching

Peter Cassidy, Canadian International School, Tokyo, with Mike Nix, Chuo University, and Mike Mahon, Canadian International School, Tokyo

Part One

Introduction

I have known for years that it is a questionable practice to disallow a learner the opportunity to sometimes use his / her mother tongue (L1) when learning a second or other language (L2). Language policies in many schools, however, often ban the use of any language other than that of the target language. This occurs despite Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research pointing towards the relevance of a person's L1 in his / her L2 learning for noticing similarities and differences between the two languages. In order to explore how subtractive language policies may affect social development as well as motivation to learn another language, I conducted a small-scale action research project with a group of pre-kindergarten children. During the first videorecorded choice center activity where there was no re-direction away from the use of the L1, all five learners used some English (target language) and communicated meaning. In the second session I enforced an English-only policy, and this resulted in my being able to assess only two of the five participants based on their English production. While I report in this chapter on insights from that small-scale action research project, I will also focus on other, more revealing, issues around creativity and language production assessment that grew out of that research. In exploring parallels between what occurred with my young learners and more advanced classroom contexts, I have found that the benefits of code-switching in English Language Learning (ELL) group work far outweigh the shortcomings. Doing such classroom research has proved to be a valuable opportunity for me to understand critically the need to respect use of the L1. It has also allowed me to better communicate with parents, colleagues and school administrators the reasoning behind my decisions in the classroom about L1 use for promoting learner development.

Before taking up my current position at the Canadian International School (CIS) in Tokyo, I worked at several international preschools with four- and five-year olds where my learners benefitted from a curriculum of choice centers and autonomous learning. 'Choice Center' activity refers here to a part of a young learner's daily schedule where the learners have the opportunity to explore anywhere in the classroom in order to learn through play. The learner controls what activities they decide to attempt, from manipulative toy areas, sensory centers to writing and art centers. My young learners enjoy solitary play, parallel play as well as cooperative play, and, at the age of four or five, they are at a stage of

development where they can play cooperatively should they so choose. From a pedagogic perspective, it is ideal for young learners to be allowed the choice of where, how, and with whom they interact within the learning environment.

Just as Jean Piaget believed that human beings' knowledge of the world is connected to actions in the world, the use of choice centers in my classrooms allowed for learners to explore and learn through hands-on activities. If a child wanted to choose the sand table on a daily basis, it remained a choice that was never revoked, even if choosing the writing center would have pleased mom and dad more. Of course, there were circle times with the whole group for more focused exploration of central ideas surrounding monthly themes such as seasons, weather, wildlife or cultural similarities and differences. These circle times tended to be learner-centered with a teacher-set framework within which the learners could explore and create their own lines of inquiry. In many cases, parents were quite verbal about wanting their children not to speak Japanese even during playtime or lunch. This was in juxtaposition to the spirit of the learner-centered and autonomous choice center classroom that I was committed to, and a number of issues started to emerge for me around the conflicting demand for English-only policies and practices.

An English-only line is taken in many language programs and by many teachers, too. One reason for the promotion of such policies is that English users are believed to have greater power than non-English users and this motivates governments, institutions, and parents to make decisions surrounding language policies (Chen, 2006). For me, the idea of a language having a lower status than another language, in and of itself, is philosophically questionable since language is a tool that people use in their own unique ways and is a part of their identity as human beings. In my teaching experiences in Japan, language policies often require that teachers maintain the use of English even when the children are playing or eating a meal. I have often tried to clarify for myself how this practice may, or may not, be conducive to the development of social skills. In a learner-centered environment, children need many opportunities during the school day to speak freely with their peers while they negotiate meaning within the parameters of the central ideas and lines of inquiry. This is also true for creating social bonds with peers during periods outside of instructional time. If use of the L1 is banned, opportunities to speak for the purpose of learning and socializing may be diminished. Yet, the fact remains that parents and educators alike may believe that eliminating the L1 in the L2 classroom means creating more opportunities to produce English.

The value and purpose of code-switching

Taking a different view, I wanted to find concrete evidence supporting the relevance of the L1 in the L2 classroom, especially during socialization activities. I did a small-scale classroom research project with my young learners who ranged in age from their late fours to early fives. My goal was to explore how different teaching practices might affect the amount of speaking in the L2 that the children did. I looked at the language use of three different groups. The main study group consisted of five Japanese nationals, one of whom was a bilingual with an American parent, and I videorecorded the children on two separate occasions. The first day of videotaping saw the group of children participating in a greeting circle before being told that they would be working with wooden blocks in the 'block center'. I didn't set any restrictions during this first session and, after 20 minutes of building structures, they were asked to return to the whole-class circle for discussions about their structures. This was the space for learners to describe their structures and mention any

details that they felt were relevant to the activity. It was also the opportunity for me to observe what language(s) the children used. Most spoke in Japanese, as I had observed during the playtime activity itself, but eventually every child was able to at least name, in English, what they had built. This was made possible by the bilingual learner who decided to help her friends communicate in English based on my inability to understand the Japanese being spoken. These interactions in both Japanese and English pointed to certain benefits in allowing both the L1 and the L2 (or code-switching) during group work.

Three days later, the same group of children were involved in the same activity with the exception that they were directed not to speak any Japanese and to use English only. The children behaved in noticeably different ways: they would inform me when someone was speaking Japanese, they would whisper in Japanese, they would remain quiet or they would use hand gestures. The assessment opportunity in the post-play circle saw only the bilingual child and one other being able to, at the very least, name in English the block structure that they had built. Three out of the five were unable to say anything about their structures, and the opportunity for me as an observer to assess language based on the activity was severely limited. In addition, two-thirds fewer blocks were used during the second session.

Why did the re-direction away from using the L1 component of the second session result in significantly fewer blocks being used? Still wondering about this question, I soon afterwards attended an EARCOS (The East Asia Regional Council of Schools) conference in Tokyo led by a Language Education Consultant named Dr. Virginia Rojas. This conference had as its focus differentiated learning strategies for English Language Learning (ELL) students in mainstream classrooms. Early in the first day, Dr Rojas asked the participants to compile a list of the benefits of code-switching. I was familiar with the terminology, but many others were new to the terms associated with 'code-switching', which is essentially a switch between one language and another during a speech event. Although we did not refer to any specific research, the final list saw 'classroom solidarity' as one of the main benefits of code-switching, which is very much in line with the findings of Eldridge (1996), Cole (1998), and Mattsson and Burenhult-Mattsson (1999) on the use of L1 for L2 learning. 'Clarification of meaning' was also an important item in the list, suggesting possibilities for both teacher and student code-switching. 'Holding the floor' was proposed as a further benefit, and was defined as 'substituting the target language with the L1 when there is a stopgap in fluency, thus allowing speakers to hold the floor until another participant speaks'.

For me, the new concept that Dr. Rojas brought to the discussion surrounding code-switching was the issue of 'inclusion'. By inclusion she meant that code-switching enables participants in a multilingual speech event to shift between languages in order to ensure that everyone is involved in pre-production planning as well as in the production of the target language. She revealed a timing strategy for ensuring that inclusion is realized during group work. It involves an agreement between class and teacher that there will be opportunities for L1 during group work, but when the teacher approaches a group involved in code-switching, they must switch to the lingua franca of English to make sure that everyone is included in the group conversation. Looking back at the videorecorded sessions with my young learners, I realized that 'inclusiveness' was what I had witnessed when the bilingual learner had code-switched in order to ensure that everyone was able to express basic meanings about their building structures in the target language. Everyone, including myself as the English-speaking teacher, was included in the activity, and this would not have been possible without the code-switching that took place. More target language was

used when the L1 was a part of the overall process than when the children were asked to speak only English during the second session.

Switching now to my current work and research, I am presently working as the English Language Coordinator at the Canadian International School (CIS) in Tokyo. My work involves close collaboration with homeroom teachers of the elementary school (Grades 1-6) and the provision of language support through a 'Writing Conference' format. Everything is directed to the learners' developing skills in a system that promotes ownership of written work throughout the process leading up to publishing of the final product. Part of this process relies on planning before drafting and allowing for writers to collaborate in the planning stage by using their L1 through 'turn and talk'. This seems to produce richer ideas before the writing begins. I have been fortunate in that my Primary Years Programme (PYP) Coordinator at the school has been very receptive to my position regarding the use of L1 in L2 learning environments. In fact we have collaborated and re-written the school's language policy to be more in line with International Baccalaureate (I.B) language policy standards. The International Baccalaureate organization stresses the importance of the L1 and how students need to be afforded some opportunities to learn and present using their mother tongue. Allowing learners to use the L1 during 'turn and talk' or brainstorming before drafting or editing potentially allows for higher-order thinking skills to be realized in the planning and review stages of the writing process. That said, at the Canadian International School, there is also the expectation that planning in the L1 will lead to the production of English, and the writing portfolios produced are a testament to the effectiveness of that process. Summative assessments rely on the production of the target language of English, as well as published writing samples from the beginning of the year in comparison to the end of the year. In the overall writing process, the ability to create ideas and expand on them is where I see the L1 being most beneficial to the 'writing conference' process.

So, in exploring the issue of code-switching, I regularly see in my work how learners benefit from being able to negotiate the process of writing in the L1 as well as in the L2. The questions that I am now concerned with revolve around the creation of a more natural self-directed monitoring process leading to the analysis of language use. Ideally, I would like to eliminate the need for potentially intrusive videorecorded sessions that may negatively affect those involved in the data collection for the classroom research that I want to do. I would like to find a happy medium between teacher-transcribed data and looser transcription that could be recorded and reported by the learners themselves. Surveys may be a solution, but I have yet to explore the accuracy issues that could arise, especially with really young learners. These are some of the further issues that I will explore in Part Three of this chapter.

Peer reader response from Mike Nix, Chuo University

Although your teaching context is very different from mine, Peter, the issues you raise about your young English learners' use of their Japanese L1 are familiar. Recently, I have been shifting, uncertainly, in my own university teaching from a basic policy of 'English only' to encouraging my students to use Japanese 'when necessary or useful' in their work in English on academic issues. Looking at your work from a second language education perspective, your main insight is that use of the L1 can play a positive role in the development of the L2, particularly through code-switching by learners. Although there has recently been a re-assertion by scholars (see, for example, Hall & Cook, 2012) of the benefits of L1 use, there is

still a powerful commonsense belief, and one I find difficult to shake off myself, that language learning is a zero sum game: more use of Japanese means less use of English. So your observation that your learners actually produced more English in the review of the block activity when they were allowed to use Japanese is reassuring. However, I wanted to know how much the students had also used English in the block play activity itself and how the code-switching in the review activity had happened. A follow-up investigation with Canadian International School students that produced a more concrete picture of the students' actual bilingual discourse, whether through teacher observation or 'self-directed monitoring' would give us a much richer and more complex sense of the way that they combine Japanese and English.

In opposing subtractive language policies that see the L1 as preventing L2 use and advocating an additive approach instead, you draw on perspectives in the field of bilingualism. For me, it's interesting that both these positions derive from a monoglossic or fixed bilingualism (Garcia, 2009; Weber & Horner, 2012) in which languages are understood as bounded, countable (L1, L2, and so on) systems that (should) exist separately in both society and their speakers' heads. Within this view of bilingualism as compartmentalized, monolingual competencies, a view which underpins mainstream second language education, use of the L1 may be valued in so far as it supports learning of the L2. But because the goal of language development in this approach is the creation of separate systems of linguistic competence, and it is assumed that societies are basically monolingual, the mixing of languages is not valued in itself and code-switching is expected to decline as L2 proficiency increases.

However, your account also points, I think, to a model of bilingualism as heteroglossic (Garcia, 2009) and flexible (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Weber & Horner, 2012). This sees contexts of language use as typically multilingual and the ability to mix and move between languages, or translanguage, as an integral aspect of linguistic proficiency. In this view of language as local practice (Pennycook, 2010), people make pragmatic use of all their linguistic resources to get things done with words in specific social circumstances. And it is the importance for your young learners of being able to make use of their full linguistic repertoires for real purposes like socializing at meal times, negotiating meaning, and mediating their play with blocks, that you emphasize, I think, over a narrow focus on specific language learning activities. The idea that learners' autonomy should extend to choice of which language they use in the classroom raises intriguing questions for autonomy-based approaches to second language education. Indeed, I felt your account suggests that maybe children should have the right to choose which language they use in the here and now of their play and socializing as protection against their parents' attempts to project imagined ideal linguistic ideal selves onto them!

For me, this brings into focus two intriguing questions that Ofelia Garcia has posed quite recently: "What would language education look like if we no longer posited the existence of separate languages? How would we teach bilingually in ways that reflect people's use of language and not simply people as language users?" (Garcia, 2007, p. xiii). Partly in response to these questions, I have been trying to imagine how learning English at a Japanese university might be rethought as a process of students becoming better at using both English and Japanese translingually to co-construct knowledge of the world. I wonder if these questions might also be useful for you, Peter, in thinking about new possibilities for supporting your young learners in developing their writing at the Canadian International School and for doing more action research with them? Perhaps this is fanciful and the development of linguistic resources by our learners requires a separation of languages and a focus on target language production, especially when they grow up in a largely monolingual environment, as Japan is

usually thought to be. But perhaps we also have the opportunity and responsibility as teachers to create inclusive, multilingual spaces in which our learners can develop as much as possible their translingual potential.

Part Two

Continuing the exploration

Thank you, Mike, for responding to my discussions surrounding vernacular (L1) language-use in classrooms with English as the medium of instruction. Like you, I believe that teachers have the responsibility to support learners to the best of their ability, but that not all classrooms present the same opportunities. Our contexts are indeed very different, and it is understandable that you are a little uncertain regarding the potential outcomes of ceding more language-choice control to your students who may themselves demand that no Japanese be allowed in their English classes. You may even encounter difficulty convincing some of your students that your proposed multilingual opportunities within the class are meaningful, or useful, in their acquisition of English. My young learners rarely, if ever, object to the opportunity for communication in their L1 and have accepted it as a part of the process during our writing conferences. Perhaps this is the case because it is viewed as the norm for my class after the establishment of certain essential language-use agreements on the first day of school, where we have seen that code-switching has proved to be a useful tool for empowering the children in the cognitively challenging activity of writing.

The belief that subtractive language policies are sometimes needed or that they may be the best solution for optimum SLA is, as you point out, one perspective that has its roots in the belief that different languages are, for the most part, separate of each other. I consider language learning as a spectrum between the L1 and the L2 and that different language bases are interdependent of each other in the language-learning process. The 'Common Underlying Proficiency Theory' (Cummins, 1979) suggests that, in terms of academic language proficiency that requires abstract thinking or problem-solving skills, the L1 is a key component to the process of learning other languages. This is in juxtaposition to the belief that language learning is a zero sum experience, as you point out. The theory also suggests/encourages us to understand that there will be either similarities or differences between the languages that can be highlighted by a language teacher, which can be a starting point in the process of supporting learner development. My research revolving around language use during the pre-kindergarten block-play activity was motivated by the existence of just such restrictive language policies, and the results of the post-play discussions led to my current interests in fostering learner development in a writing community that allows for use of the L1.

Writing and playing with blocks may seem to be two quite disparate activities that would not support correlations in terms of the benefits of code-switching. However, just as with the block-play activity format that consisted of a pre-play activity, the activity itself and then the post-play discussions, supporting learners during the many stages of writing lets this more cognitively challenging activity become as manageable as possible for them. Ensuring that there is support leading to a certain level of success may potentially help

them grow their interest in taking risks and, of course may maintain prolonged interest in language tasks. That said, there are important differences between learning language in context-rich social settings and the language learning that takes place in traditional classrooms. I will touch on some of these differences in discussing how the L1 has been a tool for learner development in my writing classes.

It has been claimed that Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), such as language used in a playground or a block-play area, develop separately in the L1 and L2, whereas Communicative Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), or more cognitively demanding skills like writing, have commonalities across the languages and there is more of an interdependence between the L1 and target language (Cummins, 1991). Here, Cummins' 'Interdependence Hypothesis Model' (Cummins, 1979) has informed my decision to allow for learners to develop their writing skills with their L1 as a key piece of the process, especially in the planning stages of an activity. It has become very clear for me how allowing learners the opportunities to conduct themselves in their L1, either independently or in group work, promotes success in getting started more quickly, as well as allows for prolonged interest in writing activities. A brief description of the principles and the genres of study for my classroom writing conference and the results seen this year will hopefully shed some light on how allowing for the vernacular in a language-learning classroom can be meaningful in learners' writing development.

Planning in the L1 before production

In 2011, I attended some summer workshops led by Lucy Calkins at Columbia University on helping teachers to develop their reading and writing classroom approaches. Calkins's central principle is that writing programs should involve writing every day, together with explicit teaching and learning opportunities as well as a very specific pre-writing protocol. These writing and pre-writing activities, along with revision and editing strategies that lead to publishing and presentation, are all interconnected. As mentioned earlier in this chapter in relation to the code-switching group-work strategy, I allow my writers the opportunity to use their L1 throughout the process, with the essential agreement that planning and practice in the L1 will lead to the production of the target language, English. In my classes at the Canadian International School this year, I have used a specific routine in daily Writing Conferences with my learners. This routine supports group work in the form of turn-and-talks, and promotes the relevance of every stage of the writing cycle (think / plan / write / re-read / add-on / make another piece / further revision / edit / publish / present).

We started the school year with the genre of autobiographies. The 'Small-Moment Narrative' is usually the first unit of study under Lucy Calkins' 'Writing Project' system, but I feel that this is a difficult genre for language learners. I decided to adjust to my audience and we started with autobiographies. We used the mentor text entitled 'The Road Ahead' written by Bill Gates and focused on the subject pronoun 'I', the object pronoun 'me' and the reflexive pronoun 'myself' in his story. I also created a mentor text about myself with the focus on personal information. We started out with some language that focused on physical description, family dynamics and also descriptions of places where people may live. This laid the groundwork for their autobiographical introductions.

Of course, as I have described above, my learners / writers needed to be supported in their acquisition of the language associated with personal lives and an autobiographical account of themselves. I allowed for them to write in their L1 and the languages represented were

Swedish, Turkish, Arabic, Korean and Japanese. Before writing, they could talk with a same-language partner, but of course I could not be included in these turn-and-talks. Therefore, in conjunction with our essential agreement that everything will eventually lead to the use of English so that there is inclusion, the next opportunity to explore the language associated with this writing activity was allowing for each partner to describe what his/her partner had discussed and written. They could code-switch during this time and come back to English after clarifying with their partners. As further support, we also discussed and compared their ideas and writing to what I had written about myself. The other components of this writing experience eventually lead to their writing about school, a particular friend or group of friends, and their future goals in the body of the paper. Every step of the process allowed for planning and discussions in the L1 leading to the production of English.

I thought that this first unit was successful because everyone started writing immediately. The same was noted in the next genre of biographies and interest seemed to remain high, based on how quickly people started to highlight personal pronouns so that they could convert the autobiography into a biography. I continued supporting learners with mentor texts and they sustained productive group work. The summative assessment entailed taking the final copy of a partner's autobiography and re-writing it as a biography. It was also apparent that the stipulation to ask questions of their partners in the L1 allowed for the process to evolve and not come to a standstill. Using the L1 during turn-and-talks allowed for learners to work better with peer-assessment and self-assessment rubrics written in English as well.

Successful starts and the maintenance of interest in writing have been similarly noted during the units All-About Books, How-To Books and Small-Moment Narratives, and I anticipate the same for the next unit of poetry. Thinking and planning in the L1 happens naturally, but, with a common L1 partner and the option to plan and write in the L1, I saw quick starts to the process of writing. Admittedly, this writing was often in the L1 and needed to be later shaped into English text, but it was helpful for learner development within the process of writing; this also supports the Writing Conference criteria adopted by the school regarding the importance of writing every day. It also supports a writing process strategy where a writer needs to take risks and get ideas down on paper in order to eventually shape it. Writers who constantly stop writing in order to ask how a word is spelled, or whether a sentence is correct or not, really constrict the flow of ideas and hinder the writing process for themselves and others. Revisions and editing can come after ideas are nailed down, and the L1 has been instrumental in this occurrence. From my perspective as the teacher, the flow is much better when the L1 is a part of the drafting ideas component. However, I am planning to create a survey before the school year is done to find out how participants of the Writers' Workshop see their writing experiences, as well as the purpose and value of code-switching. The central questions of this future survey will hopefully yield richer insights about the use of L1 in learners' development as writers in English.

Interdisciplinary reader response from Mike Mahon, Canadian International School, Tokyo

As an educator working in an international school with a diverse learner population, I find the best language policy is one that offers inclusivity and encourages a respect for the L1, being the

students' first language. This may also lead to more authentic exemplars of communication among diverse learners in the common target language.

At the Canadian International School Tokyo we have a very diverse community of learners in that many of our parents have different goals for their children. Some want their children to achieve proficiencies in so far as they can gain a working knowledge of English and then go on to excel in Japanese programs culminating in a degree from a Japanese post-secondary institution. Other Japanese parents desire full academic proficiencies in English and plan for their children to attend universities abroad. Other parents are expats, who seek an international education for their child. These parents, whether they are native English speakers or not, desire their children to be educated in an international context where English is perceived to be the lingua franca in a global context. Though our school community is diverse, our greatest asset is in giving students an experience that may offer autonomy and consistency in their classroom academic and social experiences. It is through this that our school gains its effective, if not unique, identity as a community of learners.

*The International Baccalaureate Organization, through which our school is accredited, gives guidance through publications to all IB world schools, including those who participate in the Primary Years Program (PYP), on matters related to programming, for example, *Developing a School Language Policy* (2009) and *Language and Learning in IB Programmes* (2011). Both of these documents have much relevance in regard to the discussion around Peter's observations and experiences as they often refer to learner-centered methods. To accommodate these methods, we must first assess what students already know. We extend learning by appreciating the relationship between the prior knowledge of the student and their Zone of Proximal Development. This reinforces for the teacher that the learner is at the center of instruction; thus, without the recognition of the student's prior knowledge, teaching approaches cannot be well informed. This is a simple truism of elementary education, and one that could be extended, especially in the area of second language acquisition, into more advanced levels of taught curricula. Again, the importance of the domain of language and language learning is supported.*

While trying to assist students in acquiring language proficiencies, we need a core understanding of how best to approach learners by validating what they already know. The IBO refers to this as "activating prior understanding and building background knowledge" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2011). In regard to second language acquisition, the big question is: Where do we start when we determine that their prior knowledge may not initially include any context that they can draw on from the target language? I propose that we must then draw from commonalities which exist in all languages. This is most apparent when we are dealing with very young learners. This is usually effective because very young learners are more accepting of basic approaches. They are more engaged since their identities as language learners share more in common with their prior knowledge of what language learning may require of them at this time. For older students, they may not be able to come to terms with the lack of overlap between their prior knowledge and the expectations of a second language program. To teach a kindergarten student that "apples are red" fits with their identities, domains, and prior knowledge as learners to a far greater degree than would be the case in a more advanced academic setting. In such a setting the content knowledge is out of step with the student's identity and their domain of learning.

The IB defines the process of accommodating students' language development in terms of a continuum. It is defined by three strands: learning language, learning through language &

learning about language. These strands interact and support each other. All of these contribute to the learner's development of a relationship with language in general, including, but not limited to the target language. As these strands are supported through the program, some areas may be identified where remediation is required. The area where language support or remediation is given most readily is in the strand for 'learning language'. This strand encompasses questions like 'What is a noun?', 'What is a verb?', and areas like vocabulary, usage, or spelling. It has been put forward that students who require assistance in these areas of the target language also require assistance in similar areas of the L2. Most interestingly, it is through 'learning about language' that the benefit of experience with an L1 or L2, which is not the target language of instruction, is seen as most beneficial. This is the strand that will also encompass literary or critical theory through the continuum as the student progresses through their journey toward higher order thinking skills while making connections with meaning and significance in language. So why isolate it from the learning experience in the elementary classroom where it can do the most good, even with very young learners?

It is perhaps the strand of 'learning through language' that is most in contention. For some stakeholders this points to the need for a program that may support the idea of increased exposure to a target language equaling increased language proficiency. Through my experiences in an elementary international school setting I have had many discussions with parents who insist that the classroom needs to adhere to a more rigorous policy of 'learning through language', and that this must be unquestionably learning through English. This is troubling since, depending on the goal of the parent or their experiences with bilingualism, the results can be unexpected. As Peter mentions regarding his motivation for doing the study, it is important to inform parents about the implications of policies that they may insist upon.

I do find Peter's retelling of his students' experiences with blocks to be quite revealing. This leads me to a consideration as defined through the IB program: that of 'affirming identity'. This is perhaps the most significant issue when approaching the question of inclusive vs. exclusionary language policies for the immersion classroom. How do learners view themselves in terms of their experiences in an academic setting when they are not at home in their mother tongue? Is it possible that they may see cognition through their L1 as being less significant than cognition in the target language? Compounding the prohibitive scenario over a number of learning experiences, over a significant period of time, could compromise a student's learner identity in any number of ways. On the other hand, if students can validate their ideas and achieve better results overall by using 'code-switching' then there is no question that this outcome is advantageous to learning. Immersion education is a great means toward achieving ends of bilingualism or even multilingualism. However, in so many ways, elementary education is more than just a means to an end. It is the basis of how students may identify themselves as learners and language speakers.

Part Three

Frameworks promoting learner autonomy

I appreciate the viewpoint that Mike (Mahon) brings to the discussion in regard to the IB framework that has learner autonomy at its core. Not unlike the underlying principles of the Writers' Workshop that support writers at all stages of the writing process (pre-writing /

drafting / revisions / editing / publishing), the essential elements of the Primary Years Programme are all interdependent and sustain the progression of inquiry-based learning. Units of inquiry, guided by interdisciplinary themes, central ideas, as well as teacher and learner questions, promote the exploration of concepts leading to the building of skills and knowledge through facilitated, learner-centred outcomes (formative and summative assessments). Comparing the Writers' Workshop, and its emphasis on mentor texts or the usefulness of explicit instruction leading to individual creativity, with the IB program and how PYP teachers facilitate learning while ceding autonomy to learners, lets us highlight a correlation between the two constructs. Formative tasks that allow for the use of the L1 help to support learners in their journey to complete a summative piece of writing in the L2; often the Grade 6 homeroom teachers, with whom I have collaborated, decide to use a summative writing assignment as part of their summative assessment for a unit of inquiry. The option of using the L1 exists within this program, and this IB guideline has gained teacher support for respecting the use of the L1 in the planning-before-publishing stages of a Writers' Workshop.

Analysis of key questions

In order to gain further insight into how this language-use strategy is perceived by learners, I have since conducted a survey of the graduating Grade 6 classes (see Appendix 1) to discover whether, from their perspective, the use of the L1 in the process of writing had been beneficial or not. The Canadian International School has many different cultures represented, with the most common being Asian. Japanese tops the list followed by Korean, and there are pockets of other languages used by a much smaller number of children at the school. The languages indicated as being L1s in the survey were:

- Japanese (9)
- Korean (5)
- Swedish (2)
- English (1)
- Mandarin (1)
- Russian (1)
- Tagalog (1)
- Urdu (1).

Out of the 21 learners who took the survey, eight indicated that they do not rely on or use their L1 when planning their writing. One of these learners was the only participant to indicate that her L1 is English. Both Swedish-speaking students were in this group as well. The Russian learner, the Philippine learner, and the Urdu learner were also in this group of eight. Finally, there were two Japanese learners and one Korean learner who indicated that they did not use their L1 in the planning stages of writing during the Writers' Workshop: This was in contrast to the survey answers indicating that most Japanese and Korean learners did like to plan in the L1 before production in the target language of English. Discussions with the two Grade 6 teachers, as well as through my own observations, led to the conclusion that ability in English played a role in their language production choices. That is, the three Asian students who commented that it was easier to start in English have been in the international school system since early elementary and are bilingual in terms of both BICS and CALP. The other five in this group are also high functioning in English in regard to their Communicative Academic Language Proficiency (or CALP). English was also the lingua franca and promoted inclusion in the planning stages of writing. When the survey

was given, the 13 learners who responded that the L1 was useful in their Writers' Conference experience were generally less proficient in all areas of their academic language proficiency. Their comments referred to the writing process being easier if it involved translation into English than if they were required to use the target language from the start. As noted in Part Two, the L1 had been seen as a tool to start more quickly and to remain on task longer. It may also have been instrumental in learning about language since the children were allowed to function in both the L1 and the target language, and similarities and differences may have been noticed independently or through explicit editing before publishing.

In Mike Mahon's analysis of language learning strands, in particular learning about language, respecting the usefulness of applying prior knowledge to a language-learning situation would seem to support the position that there is a continuum between a target language and the L1, as well as the view that the two languages are interdependent rather than separate entities in SLA processes. It has also been proposed that the L1 might help to foster higher-order thinking in the planning stages of language use, and that noticing similarities or differences between the L1 and the target language can be facilitated by a teacher in order for learners to learn about language. Reinforcing this position, as mentioned above, were the discussions between myself and the Grade 6 homeroom teachers of the students who were surveyed. Our discussions led us to agree that academic language proficiency levels played a role in the results of the survey and that the L1 was probably useful for production in the target language of English for those who decided to take advantage of the opportunity.

Conclusion

Subtractive language strategies, or 'English-only' policies, exist in many schools worldwide. These policies, I propose, eliminate useful tools in the process of SLA and can have a negative effect on learners' actual target language production. This is especially true for learners with minimal Communicative Academic Language Proficiency. I have seen how the disrespect of a learner's language identity can negatively affect creativity and other social development at the pre-kindergarten level. I have also witnessed the benefits of allowing learners the opportunity to code-switch in the planning stages before production of the target language. Localized language policies need to reflect the needs of the learner and should consider the L1 as a key component in the process of learning another language. Strategies can be agreed upon to ensure that this language-use strategy also promotes an inclusive learning environment for all involved in such learner development.

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Appendix 1 Writers' Workshop Survey

Q1: Do you speak more than one language? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Q2: What is the language spoken in your home? What is your mother tongue (L1)?
☐ Japanese ☐ Korean ☐ Chinese ☐ Arabic ☐ Swedish ☐ English

Other _____

Q3: Do you sometimes use both your home language (mother tongue / L1) and English when planning your writing?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Q4: If you answered yes, when do you use multiple languages when planning your writing?
☐ Independent Work ☐ Group Work (friends / siblings / parents) ☐ Both

Q5: Do you find using your mother tongue (L1) useful in the planning stages of writing in the target language of English?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Q6: If you answered yes to Q5, briefly explain how it is useful.
