

# The L1-inclusive classroom: Learning English with all our languages

Jason Anderson

## Where shall I sit?

- Please sit on the left side of the room (your left) if you do speak the first language of most of your learners.
- Please sit on the right (your right) if you don't speak the first language of most of your learners.
- Please sit towards the front if you're a primary or secondary teacher (ages <16).
- Please sit towards the back if you're a tertiary or adult teacher (ages >17).
- If you're not a teacher, choose the context of the teachers you work with!





# Can we use other languages in India?

Indian National Council of Educational Research and Training: National Focus Group on Teaching of English Position Paper (2005, p.12):

- “[The mother tongue] can be given its due place by being used for discussion and understanding along with an engagement with English.”
- It suggests 6 ways of using other languages, and notes: “Linguistic purism, whether of English or the Indian languages, must yield to a tolerance of code-switching and code-mixing if necessary.”



# So, how do you use other languages?

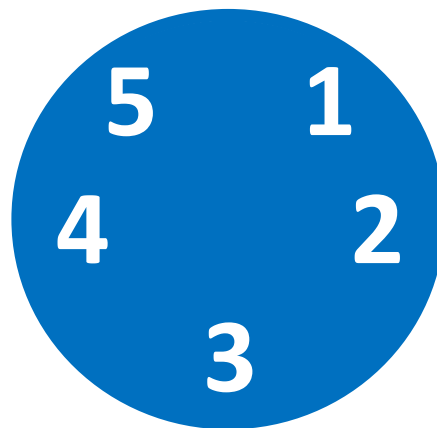
Think about...

clarifying, understanding, checking, helping,  
differentiating, managing, allowing...

Listen to your partner and tell them whether  
you think their ideas would be useful in your  
classroom or not.

Discuss in pairs:

5 minutes



... and if you don't, how do you think your  
learners use L1, and why?



# Recent research on L1 use in Indian contexts

**Rahman (2013):** 65% of 25 teachers reported using Assamese ‘frequently’. Why? To explain concepts (65%); to save time (15%); to engage ss. (10%); and because ss. demand it (10%). 95% of ss. said they needed help of Assamese in English classes.

**Chimarala (2017):** 95% of 112 teachers use other languages. 71% allow students to use them. Why? To explain concepts and difficult words (69%); to reprimand or bond with ss. (11%); to check comprehension (11%).

**Durairajan (2017):** summarises esp. PhD studies (1981-2017): ‘These varied growths, mostly ‘small gains’ ... may not be statistically significant but – in terms of pedagogic implications and student growth and feeling of confidence – nearly exponential.’ (p.313)



# British Council survey (Anderson 2017): Key findings

## 1. Framework tasks

I use OLs for classroom management during English lessons. **1.07**

I use OLs to discipline my learners during English lessons. **0.69**

## 2. Using L1 as scaffolding resource

I use OLs to explain things. **1.11**

I allow my students to speak OLs during English lessons. **1.02**

I actively encourage the use of OLs during my lessons. **0.53**

I allow my students to make notes in OLs during English lessons. **0.44**

I think about OLs when preparing and teaching my lessons. **1.06**

## 3. Crosslinguaging

I translate for my students during English lessons. **1.06**

I get my students to do translation activities. **0.83**

I allow my students to translate using bilingual dictionaries, etc. **1.01**

I get my students to compare the way languages express things. **1.25**

I compare sounds from OLs to English to help with pronunciation. **1.20**

## 4. Meshing

I allow my students to mix English with OLs for speaking activities. **0.75**

I allow my students to mix English with OLs for writing activities. **0.21**

I use texts and audio that include OLs during English lessons. **0.49**

0 (never)

1 (occasionally)

2 (regularly)



# Practical ideas for translanguaging

## 1. Culture share (from Prof. Julu Sen)

- Works well with students from diverse cultures (e.g. multicultural cities, teacher training groups).
- Ss bring items of cultural importance to class.
- Students talk about and explain the importance of these items in any languages (L1, L2, English).
- Then they prepare either a text, or give a brief presentation on the item in English.



# Practical ideas for translanguaging

## 2. Five sentences (from Dr. Heera Rajwani)

- An appropriate topic is chosen (e.g. social media, addictions, IT).
- Working in pairs, students write five sentences on the topic in a shared language, but not English, then they read them out to other students.
- The next day the task is repeated, but this time in English. The teacher supports as necessary.
- Then on the third day, students try to remember their 5 sentences without opening their books, using as much English as possible.



# Indian NCERT: National Focus Group on Teaching of English Position Paper (2005)

Suggestions (p.12-13) include:

- At the lower primary stage, or at least in Classes I–III, English can occur in tandem with the first language(s) for learning activities designed to create awareness of the world around the child.
- Introducing parallel texts in more than one language. Such parallel texts may not be precise translations of one another but may convey the same or similar meaning, or involve similar language activity such as rhymes, sound games, etc. that sensitise the child to language-sound structures.
- Use of bilingual learning dictionaries. (Today this can include use of Google translate – now available for 12 Indian languages).
- Providing inputs in a foreign language with production in a familiar language.





## 5 L1-inclusive ideas from Jason:

- 1. Be L1-inclusive:** E.g. Let your learners know that whenever they don't know a word in English, they can say it in a shared language. Let them finish, then ask: "Can anyone say that in English?"
- 2. Use L1 to check understanding:** E.g. After explaining the meaning of a word (you can explain it in English or L1), elicit the L1 equivalent: "How do we say this in Marathi?"
- 3. Encourage L1 'buzz groups':** E.g. After a grammar presentation, give students a few minutes to discuss with peers in L1 (in some classes, you can put them into L1 groups). Tell them to explain what they understood and to think of 1-3 questions to ask you if needed.
- 4. Give regular, short translation tasks:** E.g. for homework, they translate a text from English to L1. Next lesson, get them to take out their translations and with their partner reconstruct the sentence / text in English (they can speak or write). No homework marking!
- 5. Keep a vocabulary box in the class:** Write new words on slips of paper, with English on one side and L1 on the other. If there are many languages in the class, the students can write several translations on the back. Use the vocab. box for games and tests.

*Remember to be critical when trying out someone else's ideas in your own classroom!*



# Mr. Banglish

- Good at primary level
- Bilingual poster
- Each card is stuck on with sticky tape
- English on one side
- L1 on back
- Helps to develop an understanding of equivalence between languages



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Thanks to Julu Sen,  
Heera Rajwani,  
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Richard Smith

PDF for this talk: [www.jasonanderson.org.uk](http://www.jasonanderson.org.uk) (go to 'Talks')

My translanguaging talk from ELTAI 2017:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=w93mMJzGgnA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w93mMJzGgnA)

### References

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