

Using learners' mother tongues for teaching English in Egypt



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My slides and handouts are here:

http://www.jasonanderson.org.uk/articles_and_talks.htm

What's your opinion?

Structure

- Introduction
- History of MT question
- Recent research
- Egyptian context
- Discussion activity
- Resources
- Conclusion

Which of the following opinions most closely reflects yours:

- A) We should exclude the mother tongue (Arabic) from our English teaching completely.
- B) We should try to exclude the mother tongue from our teaching, but in reality there will always be a little use of it.
- C) The mother tongue is useful on occasion, but only if we cannot use English.
- D) The mother tongue is a useful and effective resource that we should use appropriately to facilitate the learning of English.

Structure of the workshop

Structure

- Introduction
- History of MT question
- Recent research
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- Resources
- Conclusion

- a brief overview of the history of the mother tongue (MT) question
- some important recent research
- status of MT use in Egyptian mainstream education
- discussion activity
- try out one resource
- provide further resources to take away

Definition of ‘mother tongue’

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In this workshop:

Any language that the learners have learnt during childhood (mainly Egyptian Arabic in Egypt) but also other mother tongues (e.g. Dom, Beja, Siwi). Other ‘prior linguistic resources’ could include Modern Standard Arabic, Classical Arabic, etc.

History of the 'mother tongue question'

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When

1700 – now

1900 – now

1940s – now

1970s – now

Method

Grammar translation

Direct method

Audiolingual method

Communicative language teaching

For or against?



- 1980s/1990s - expansion of ELT.
- 'Monolingual native speakers' going abroad to teach. Many can't use the mother tongue.
- 'Zero mother tongue' approach supported the idea of the native speaker as the ideal teacher.
- Commercial interests benefitted from English-only.



A revival in interest in using the MT

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- Changes started in early 1990s
- Vivian Cook: 'multi-competence' (e.g. 1995)
- Famous names began to argue for it: e.g. Michael Swan, Henry Widdowson, Mario Rinvoluti.
- 2000s: 'plurilingualism' of the new European Union
- Butzkamm & Caldwell – The Bilingual Reform (2009)
- Guy Cook – Translation in language teaching (2010)
- Philip Kerr – Translation and own language activities (2014)

Hall and Cook's research (2013)

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- Sample of 2785 teachers from around the world
- The majority use the learners' mother tongue in class
- The learners themselves use their mother tongue in class
- However, teachers report little opportunity to discuss how, when and why to use the mother tongue, either in preservice or in-service teacher education

The MT question in Egypt

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- Egyptian secondary school teachers make extensive use of the mother tongue in classroom (Abdel Latif, 2012)
- Most teachers report that they teach English primarily through the medium of English (McIlwraith & Fortune, 2016)
- Translation is part of the *thanaweya amma* (high school leaving exam) (Gebril & Brown, 2014)

My key points/arguments

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- Discussion of use of MT has been absent for almost a century
- The 'zero MT' status quo has disadvantaged non-native teachers
- There is a current revival in interest in the positive use of the MT
- Recent research by Hall and Cook (2013) indicates strongly that both teachers and learners make use of the MT (this seems to also be true in Egypt)
- Their research also indicates that there is very little discussion of how to use the MT in preservice or in-service teacher education
- Teachers need to develop their critical awareness of when it is and isn't a good idea to use the MT in their own contexts
- Teachers need to be empowered to make their own informed decisions about when, how and why to use (or not to use) MT
- **We need to discuss the mother tongue question!**

Let's Discuss it!

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Two key questions to discuss:

1. When should and when shouldn't we use MT, and why?
2. How can we use it?

One activity

Discussion activity

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When should and when shouldn't we use mother tongue (MT) in our English teaching?

Age of my learners: 0-11 (primary) / 12-17 (secondary) / 18 or older

Where I teach: state school / private school or institute

Get together with other teachers from your teaching context, and tell them what you do, how and why. Tick one box in each row. If you tick sometimes or occasionally, add an 'if...' (see the example).

	always	sometimes	occasionally	never
1. I use MT when I am giving instructions.		only if it's a complex or a new activity.		
2. I use MT for classroom language (e.g. "Good morning, pupils." "Sit down." etc.).				✓
3. I make use of MT when teaching vocabulary (e.g. eliciting / giving translation).		if I need to check they've understood my explanation.		
4. I allow my learners to use MT during English speaking practice activities.				
5. I think about differences between MT and English				

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2. I use MT for classroom language (e.g. <i>"Good morning, pupils."</i> <i>"Sit down."</i> etc.).				
3. I make use of MT when teaching vocabulary (e.g. eliciting / giving translation).				
4. I allow my learners to use MT during English speaking practice activities.				
5. I think about differences between MT and English when I am preparing my lessons.				
6. I listen to what my learners say in MT during lessons to help me decide what to do next.				
7. I use the mother tongue to explain grammar to my learners.				
8. I allow my learners to use the mother tongue when they are doing a grammar exercise in pairs.				
9. I allow my learners to take notes using MT (e.g. grammar, new vocabulary).				
10. I use translation activities.				

Opinions of 18 experienced Egyptian teachers

All 'private' education: 4 primary, 6 secondary and 10 adult

	always	sometimes	occasionally	never
1. I use MT when I am giving instructions.	2	2	3	11
2. I use MT for classroom language (e.g. "Good morning, pupils." "Sit down." etc.).		3	1	15
3. I make use of MT when teaching vocabulary (e.g. eliciting / giving translation).		7	8	1
4. I allow my learners to use MT during English speaking practice activities.		1	3	12
5. I think about differences between MT and English when I am preparing my lessons.	5	8	2	2

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	always	so	
1. I use MT when I am giving instructions.	2		
2. I use MT for classroom language (e.g. "Good morning, pupils." "Sit down." etc.).		3	15
3. I make use of MT when teaching vocabulary (e.g. eliciting / giving translation).		7	8
4. I allow my learners to use MT during English speaking practice activities.		3	12
5. I think about differences between MT and English when I am preparing my lessons.			2

Only with v. difficult, esp. abstract words.

"If I can't find a picture or ask a CCQ to check meaning"

Especially if there is a clear equivalent in Arabic.
"If I feel they can't understand after all my tries."

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	When there is no equivalent, or when thinking of problem occurrences. "Putting myself in the students' shoes: What would come into their mind in MT about what they are learning."				always	never
1. I use MT when I am giving instructions.						11
2. I use MT for classroom language (e.g. "Good morning, pupils." "Sit down." etc.).						15
3. I make use of MT when teaching vocabulary (e.g. eliciting / giving translation).						1
4. I allow my learners to use MT during English speaking practice activities.					3	12
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6. I listen to what my learners say in MT during lessons to help me decide what to do next.	10	3	3	
7. I use the mother tongue to explain grammar to my learners.		4	3	10
8. I allow my learners to use the mother tongue when they are doing a grammar exercise in pairs.	1	3	5	7
9. I allow my learners to take notes using MT (e.g. grammar, new vocabulary).	5	4	5	3
10. I use translation activities.	1		2	14

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8. I allow my learners to use the mother tongue when they are doing a grammar exercise in pairs.	1	3	5	7
9. I allow my learners to take notes using MT (e.g. grammar, new vocabulary).	5	4	5	3
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"It shortens the explanation."

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6. I listen to what my learners say in MT during lessons to help me decide what to do next.	10	3	<div> <p>"It depends on task and levels of learners"</p> <p>"This may help them more"</p>  </div>	
7. I use the mother tongue to explain grammar to my learners.		4		
8. I allow my learners to use the mother tongue when they are doing a grammar exercise in pairs.	1	3	5	7
9. I allow my learners to take notes using MT (e.g. grammar, new vocabulary).	5	4	5	3
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8. I allow my learners to use the mother tongue when they are doing a grammar exercise in pairs.	1	3		7
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"If they want to."
 "If they are comfortable about it."
 Also: when very weak or difficult.

"If it's helpful to translate."

○ Conclusion

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"Only into English."



Ideas and resources for bilingual teaching

- How could you use this one?

Interviewer: Where are you from?

Ed Fawley: I'm from Vancouver in Canada.

Interviewer: Where do you teach?

Ed Fawley: I teach at a language school in Alexandria.

Interviewer: What do you do at the school?

Ed Fawley: I teach English and prepare my lessons every day.

Interviewer: Why did you choose to work in Alexandria?

Ed Fawley: I wanted to learn Arabic, and to live in a historic city.

Interviewer: How many hours do you work a week?

Ed Fawley: Usually 36 hours.

Interviewer: How much holiday do you have?

Ed Fawley: I have two months holiday every year.

Interviewer: What do you like about your job?

Ed Fawley: I like living in Egypt. I have good friends here,
and I also enjoy travelling in the Middle East.

Interviewer: What would you like to do in the future?

Ed Fawley: I would like to open a language school in Cairo.

Interviewer: أنت منين؟

Ed Fawley: أنا من فانكوفر في كندا.

Interviewer: بتدرس فين ؟

Ed Fawley: أنا بدرس في مدرسة لغات في اسكندرية.

Interviewer: بتعمل ايه فل المدرسة؟

Ed Fawley: بدرس انجليزي و بحضر للحصص كل يوم.

Interviewer: ليه اخترت تشتغل في اسكندرية؟

Ed Fawley: أنا عايز اتعلم عربي و اعيش في بلد اثريه.

Interviewer: بتشتغل كام ساعه فالاسبوع؟

Ed Fawley: عادة 36 ساعه.

Interviewer: أجزاءك ادايه؟

Ed Fawley: عندي شهرين اجازة كل سنة.

Interviewer: بتحب آيه في شغلك؟

Ed Fawley: انا بجب العيشة في مصر و

عندي اصدقاء كويسين و بستمع بالسفر للشرق الاوسط.

Interviewer: عايز تعمل ايه في المستقبل؟

Ed Fawley: انا عايز افتح مدرسة لغات في القاهرة.

One idea for using the mother tongue

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Bilingual dialogues

- Can be used at any level of proficiency to encourage English speaking practice
- Can be adapted to any dialogue
- Can be used quickly
- Great fun

UNIT 12

Communication

1 Prepare to speak
You are going to prepare for a job interview. Match the interviewer's questions to her notes on Ed Fawley's answers.

Interviewer's questions

- a ☒ 6 Where are you from?
- b ☐ Where do you teach?
- c ☐ What do you do at the school?
- d ☐ Why did you choose to work in Alexandria?
- e ☐ How many hours do you work a week?
- f ☐ How much holiday do you have?

Ed Fawley's answers

- 1 36
- 2 life in Egypt, good friends here, travelling in Middle East
- 3 teach English, prepare lessons
- 4 two months, national holidays
- 5 open a language school in Cairo
- 6 Vancouver, Canada
- 7 at a language school, Alexandria

Ideas for using the mother tongue

See my website for the following resource:

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MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR ALGERIAN TEACHERS - PHOTOCOPIABLE

Multilingual Language Learning for Algerian Teachers

Below you will find a range of ideas for you to try out in your classrooms that can work when teaching English or French. Most have been contributed by Algerian teachers and teacher trainers.

Thanks to everyone who contributed!

BACK-TRANSLATION CLASS ACTIVITY

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Translation of short texts
TYPE OF CLASS WITH WHICH IT WORKS WELL	high school / Pre-intermediate level Pair work
TIME NEEDED	20-30 minutes
RESOURCES AND PREPARATION REQUIRED	Handouts : Find 2 short texts (50-100 words each) in English
HOW TO DO THE ACTIVITY	Select texts for re-translation. Each pair receives one of the 2 texts in English (L2). The pairs translate the text into L1 (Arabic or Berber). They then exchange their translation with a different pair, and translate their peers' text back into English. Finally the double translations L2-->L1-->L2 are examined and compared with the original texts. They can do this in groups of 4, including both pairs

Final 'vote'

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Recap

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- a brief overview of the history of the mother tongue (MT) question
- some important recent research
- status of MT use in Egyptian mainstream education
- discussion activity – when, how and why do we use MT as teachers
- tried out one resource
- provided further resources to take away

Don't miss 'Multilingual language learning for Algerian teachers' on the 'Resources for Teachers' page of my website: It includes many ideas for Arabic speakers!

شكرا

Visit my website for slides and resources:

www.jasonanderson.org.uk (go to 'Articles and Talks' page)

Email me feedback: **jasonanderson1@gmail.com**

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