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Introduction

Hans Anderson has a story in which an emperor is tricked by some tailors into solemnly walking through the capital with no clothes on. Because of his status, the townspeople persuade themselves to think he is wearing sumptuous robes. One child, however, shouts out:

MUMMY, WHY HAS THE EMPEROR GOT NO CLOTHES ON?

This book shouts out:

DON'T THE STUDENTS HAVE A MOTHER TONGUE?

Orthodox thinking over the past forty years in the US, UK and Europe has been that the use of mother tongue should be excluded from the foreign language classroom.

Our contention is, on the contrary, that **mother** tongue (MT), is indeed the mother of the second, third and fourth languages. It is from this womb that the new languages are born in the student's mind, so to exclude MT from the English classroom is like trying to wean a baby on day one of their life.

What we propose is that teachers use the students' mother tongue in clearly-defined circumstances (see Part A, Section 1) and in the carefully crafted activities that make up the main body of this book.

The overriding aim of the book is that your students should willingly come to reduce their dependence on MT. Paradoxically, this will come about earlier in their learning process than would be the case if MT were 'banned' from the classroom.

The judicious use of MT in the classroom benefits everyone.

Benefits for the Student

Students feel safe and grounded in the English classroom.

- At beginner level in particular, students' progress is much faster.
- At the upper levels, judicious use of MT allows students to fully enjoy the exercise of their linguistic intelligence.
- English grammar can be better understood by looking into the MT grammar mirror.

- New items of English vocabulary can be introduced in a clear and defined way, with students learning where a word is the same or different in their MT.

Benefits for the Teacher

- This book breaks the constraints imposed by the taboo of 'no mother tongue in the English classroom'. It offers varied and student-centred activities exploiting this important resource. If you have always made use of MT in the classroom, this book offers you new ways of doing this.
- The juxtapositioning of two languages provides opportunities to develop linguistic awareness of the metaphorical, grammatical, phonological, prosodic, lexical and collocational aspects English and MT.
- In multilingual as well as monolingual classes, there is greater scope for developing student autonomy.
- Including MT allows maximum use of limited linguistic resources (the students' English or the teacher's knowledge of MT).

Who is this Book for?

If you are a native speaker of your students' MT, then all the activities in this book are for you.

If you are a native speaker of English with advanced knowledge of your students' MT, you will find the whole book open to you.

If you are a native speaker of English, with a working knowledge of the students' MT, teaching monolingual classes, you need only be shy of a minority of the activities. The headings 'working knowledge' and 'monolingual' in the summary box at the beginning of the activity indicate this.

If you are a native speaker of English, teaching multinational classes, or a monolingual class whose language you don't know, you will be able to use the activities labelled 'zero knowledge' and / or 'multilingual' in the summary box. These activities work on the assumption that you are happy to allow the students **full autonomy** in the work using their MT. Sheelagh and Mario have often worked this way in their own multinational classes.

If you teach languages other than English, we should point out that *Using the Mother Tongue* is published by an EFL publisher and in the text we refer to the target language as English. However, the overwhelming majority of the activities would work just as well in a Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF), Français Langue Étrangère (FLE) or Chinese as a Foreign Language classroom. We very much hope that teachers of many different languages will find this book a boon.

What is in this Book?

Most teacher resource books and photocopiables offer ready-made activities that require no preparation. There are plenty of neat and well-cooked activities in this book. There are, however, a number of activities that require some preparation related to the students' MT.

1 Organisation

This book is divided into Part A and Part B. The sections in Part A deal with aspects of classroom management. The sections in Part B contain activities that use MT to work on different areas of language.

Part A: Classroom Management

These three sections look at the ways that MT can be used to create a safe and cooperative working environment.

Section 1 includes activities designed to set the parameters for the use of MT in class.

Section 2 shows how MT can be used to encourage cooperation in new groups.

Section 3 looks at bilingual ways of getting on-going feedback from the students. This is something that we believe is central to student-centred teaching.

Part B: Living Language

These four sections focus on different areas of language and include activities that use MT to enhance the students' awareness of how English and MT work.

Section 1 will add substantially to your grammar teaching repertoire, providing you with activities that contrast English and the students' MT.

Section 2 deals with teaching words and is packed with short activities that you can easily fit into your present way of doing things.

Section 3 deals with Input, listening and reading, where this book's bilingual focus really comes into its own, speeding up the students' learning process.

Section 4 deals with Output, speaking and writing, where the use of MT gives students the confidence to produce texts that would otherwise be beyond their level.

Section 5 looks at ways of using translation. This section will also be of direct use to people who teach translation as a skill in its own right.

2 Headings

At the beginning of each activity there is a summary box with headings for the teacher, type of class, level of class, and purpose.

Teacher We have chosen three categories for the teacher: zero knowledge of MT, working knowledge of MT and full knowledge of MT. Our understanding of zero knowledge is that we as teachers do know all sorts of things about our student's language even if we can't speak or understand it. Their English gives us that information.

Class Many of the activities are suitable for multilingual as well as monolingual classes.

Feedback and Other Ideas

If you want to contact us about anything in this book, our e-mail addresses are:

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If you have bright bilingual ideas of your own that you would like to share with others, write them up as an article for either:

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