

Explicit Reflection upon Language and Code-Switching in EFL Classroom Discourse

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to describe the interactional and pedagogical relevance of episodes of explicit reflection upon language (i.e. the presence of metalinguistic and metacommunicative comments) and code-switching between the first and the foreign language. These are two types of linguistic phenomena which appear very frequently in EFL classroom discourse and that are seen by the authors as closely interrelated.

From an analytical point of view, the study stands within the field of discourse analysis. The data analyzed have been obtained through the method of participant observation and consist of five hours of recorded and transcribed EFL classroom discourse.

Introduction

The notion of explicit reflection upon language has been a very important object of discussion in the last ten years in the field of language teaching/learning, especially under the labels of Language Awareness (LA) and Knowledge About Language (KAL). Appropriated by theorists, practitioners and researchers, these terms have increasingly appeared in a widening range of academic and educational contexts in the last decade. However, its nature and status, along with the way in which it should be implemented in the classroom, still remain the cause of considerable controversy and disagreement among the experts. Thus, when examining the various interpretations of Language Awareness, we find that Hawkins (1984:4), the pioneer of the British Language Awareness Movement, conceives Language Awareness as a “bridging subject” which should be jointly taught by English and foreign language teachers across the curriculum. Among other things, he intends language awareness to provide a meeting place and common vocabulary for the different fields of language education, to facilitate discussion of linguistic diversity, and to develop listening skills as well as confidence in reading and motivation for writing. Donmall (1985:7), in turn, provides a more general, and therefore less easy to implement, definition of the term. According to this author, “LA is a person’s sensitivity to and conscious awareness of language and its role in human life”. The development of such

sensitivity and awareness should take place within three broad parameters, namely: a cognitive parameter (which would involve, for instance, developing awareness of pattern in language), an affective parameter (concerned with forming attitudes) and a social parameter (devoted, among other things to improve learners' effectiveness as citizens or consumers). To mention one more author, van Lier (1995: xi) defines Language Awareness as "an understanding of the human faculty of language and its role in thinking, learning and social life". The term includes an awareness of power and control through language, and of the intricate relationships between language and culture. Van Lier also stresses the fact that, as an educational goal, LA holds that it is necessary at times to focus systematically on language both to deal with problems that occur in the language-using process and to reach higher levels of understanding and use.

Having reviewed some of the wider interpretations of the concept Language Awareness, the question now arises as to the domains of this term. According to James and Garrett (1991:12), we can define at least five such domains. First of all there is the affective domain, concerned mainly with forming attitudes, awakening and responding attention, sensitivity, curiosity, interest and aesthetic response towards language. Next we find the social and power domains. The former focuses on fostering social harmonisation by arousing the learners' awareness of the linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity increasingly prevalent in classrooms, whereas the latter deals with the role of language as an instrument of manipulation and deceit. The cognitive domain of LA stresses the cognitive advantage that learners can derive from explicit reflection on both the forms and functions of language. Thus, within this domain we find the need to make learners aware of their mother tongue (MT) intuitions as a stepping stone to increasing their explicit knowledge of what happens in the foreign language (FL). This is achieved by analyzing the contrasts and similarities holding between the structures of the MT and the FL.

Finally, the performance domain highlights the fact that raising the learners' implicit knowledge of language to awareness can increase their linguistic resources and therefore result in the improvement of their command of both their MT and their L2/FL. In this respect it is important for the learners (i) to notice the gap between present and target degree of skill and (ii) to be able to talk about it using the appropriate metalanguage.

In our opinion, one of the possible functions that code-switching may fulfill in the language classroom is that of raising language awareness. Our understanding of code-switching is based on the work of Grosjean (1982: 145), who defines it as the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance

or conversation. The interest in this language phenomenon in the FL classroom is not a new enterprise. In the last five years, a number of researchers, among them Nussbaum (1991), Cambra (1992) and van Dam van Iselt (1991), have studied this language contact phenomenon in the foreign language classroom. The above mentioned authors conceive the classroom as a context in which language contact takes place, specifically in the form of endolingual and exolingual exchanges. The former are those exchanges in which no significant differences between the codes used by the speakers can be appreciated: this is the case of the exchanges in the MT. In contrast, exolingual exchanges take place in the TL and are considered as asymmetric exchanges, since one of the speakers (the Teacher) has a fluent command of the TL, whereas the other/s have a limited linguistic and communicative competence in that language. In brief, to these authors code-switching constitutes one of the main features that characterises the FL classroom and they have set out to discover the functions which it serves and its role in FL discourse from an interpretive, functional and micro-sociolinguistic perspective.

Echoing one of the main concerns of most of the latest movements for education reform (among them the new National Curriculum in the UK) the New Curriculum for Secondary Education in Catalonia lays special emphasis upon the need for the development of language awareness skills by the learners. This particular point is very much stressed in the section devoted to foreign language (1993: 42), where an articulated and explicit understanding of the nature of language and the language learning process, along with the study of its functions in communication is pointed out as one of the procedures that will lead to a more effective and autonomous learning.

The present paper reports on a pilot study which constitutes the first step in a research project which aims to describe and analyze the role currently assigned to the development of an awareness of language (both as a system and as a means of communication) in the language classroom in the Catalan context. Our project was inspired by and follows closely a study by Mitchell, Hooper and Brumfit (1994) with the title "Knowledge about Language, language learning and the National Curriculum". This is basically an empirical investigation of the teaching of English and foreign languages at Year 9 in three case study schools, which documented the teachers' current beliefs and practices with regard to KAL through observation and interview. It also provided information on the current state of KAL in Year 9 pupils concerning 5 different KAL areas, elicited by means of a range of group discussion tasks.

The Data

The data on which we have based our analysis consist of the recordings and transcriptions of 5 EFL class periods of 55 minutes each in two secondary schools (ages 14-18). Of the five periods observed and recorded two correspond to the second year; the other three to the first, third and fourth and last year. Each class was taught by a different teacher and the average number of pupils per class was 35. All the teachers and most of the pupils had Catalan and Spanish as their first and second languages, respectively.

The method of collecting the data can be defined as half-way between participant and non-participant observation (van Lier 1988: 40-41). On the one hand, the pupils were already familiar with the researcher since she had not only observed previous classes but also organized some classroom activities for them. On the other hand, the researcher was not taking an active part in that specific class.

In the transcriptions we have adopted an orthographic approach supplemented with other symbols which are listed at the end of the article. On some occasions the orthographic representation of a word is accompanied by its phonetic transcription, mainly to indicate a particular pronunciation on the part of a pupil.

Our approach to the analysis of the data is basically a qualitative one, since our main goal in this paper is not to quantify the presence of episodes of language awareness in the classroom, but rather to discover and interpret the methods through which language awareness penetrates the interactional structure of the classroom. We are aware, however, that in order to fully investigate the relevance of language awareness in the language classroom we should follow the advice of Allwright and Bailey (1991: 65-68) to combine our qualitative analysis with a quantitative study. This is what we intend to do in the next stage of our research.

Analysis of the Data

Language Focus and Degree of Explicitness

In this section we will concentrate, first, on what aspects of language appear in our data as being taken as object of reflection and, second, on the degree of explicitness in which this reflection is made. In connection with the language awareness focuses, Mitchell et al. (1994) propose five main areas: (i) language as system, (ii) language acquisition/development, (iii) language variation according to use, (iv) language variation according to user, and (v) language change across time. Of these areas, the first one, language as system, has a clearly dominant role in the EFL classes which we observed. This result agrees with Mitchell and

Hooper's (1992) findings, according to which both first and foreign language teachers tend to identify language awareness work with morpho-syntactic knowledge, and it is specially the FL teachers who assign to it a most important role in the development of the learners' linguistic competence. Within this area of language as system most of the language awareness episodes we find deal with vocabulary and they basically consist of explanations of the meaning of a word.

(1)

T: (...) You understand coal? If you are a bad boy, if you are a bad boy, the three kings are going to bring you coal, it's black. (A20: 141)

Another level of language which is taken as object of reflection in the EFL classes observed, although with a lower frequency, is the morpho-syntactic one. The episodes in this case, as in extract (2), take mostly the form of corrections / explanations by the teacher, who is responsible for introducing specific metalinguistic categories (e.g. verb, past, infinitive).

(2)

P: Our family to break up after our parents were divorced.

T: OK, the verb that is needed here is break up, but you have to use the correct verbal tense and not the infinitive. Our family?

P: Breaking up

T: After our parents were divorced. We are talking in the past again. The past of break?

PP: Broke

T: Broke up. Can you read again, please, Silvia. (B27: 58)

The level of phonology is the third one in terms of frequency of appearance. It always involves the repetition by the Teacher of a certain lexical item incorrectly produced by one Pupil:

(3)

P: Uh Paul and his sister were always falling out when they were young
/jɔʊŋ/

T: When they were young /jʌŋ/ (B28: 100)

Finally, the level of spelling also appears in our data, although, as in the case of phonology, with a very low frequency compared especially with the lexical and morphosyntactic level:

(4)

T: Inherit, can you spell it? Oscar, can you spell it again, please? It's not here, I said it. A synonym of to, to come into is to inherit, I told you. Can you spell inherit, please?

P: Inherit? I, n, h, e, a |.....| h, e, a, Ai! r <XX>

T: |inherit|

T: Ok, inherit. I'm going to write it. (B30: 175)

Apart from the occurrences of fragments of classroom interaction which take the linguistic system as object of reflection, in our data there appears a fairly important group of episodes in which the participant reflects upon the process of acquiring/learning a language. They are mainly contributions by the Teacher intended to make the Pupils aware of this process and, consequently, to increase its effectiveness:

(5)

T: Wait a minute, wait a minute. First we'll try to do these exercises without having any, any theory. Then we'll look at the theory. (C38: 219)

Of the other three areas of language awareness pointed out at the beginning of this section (namely language variation according to use, language variation according to user and language change across time) we have only found two examples which correspond to "language variation according to the user":

(6)

P: (...) so she broke up her engagement to Ian (/aian/)

T: To Ian (/i: n/). It's an Irish name. It's pronounced (/i: n/) (B27: 61)

In connection with the question of the degree of explicitness in which this reflection is made, it is important, in the first place, to define explicit and implicit reflection. By explicit reflection we refer to those episodes in which there is some direct reference to metalinguistic categories. This is the case mainly when dealing with the morphosyntactic level:

(7)

P: Our family to break up after our parents were divorced.

T: Ok, the verb that is needed here is break up, but you have to use the correct verbal tense and not the infinitive. Our family?

P: Breaking up

T: After our parents were divorced. We are talking in the past again. The

past of break?

PP: Broke

T: Broke up. Can you read again, please, Silvia. B27: 66)

On the other hand, implicit reflection takes place when there is no direct reference to a metalinguistic category. This is the only type of language awareness which we have found in episodes dealing with the phonological or lexical levels of language and it basically involves the Teacher simply supplying the correct version of the lexical item the Pupil has produced incorrectly. A case in point is extract (3).

The absence of any explanation appealing to linguistic rules or phenomena when dealing with the phonological and lexical levels of language seems to be in accordance with the expectations of the Pupils as well. An aspect that confirms this impression is that whereas the Pupils may demand an explanation from the Teacher concerning a morphosyntactic aspect of language (see example 8), this is never the case with the other two levels mentioned. Therefore, we can say we are in front of two different approaches to learning different levels of the same language: the morphosyntactic level of language is conceived as a rational system of rules; the phonological and lexical levels (and probably other levels like spelling, pragmatic, textual, etc.) as the accumulation of independent items (i.e. sounds, words) which do not follow any rational rule.

(8)

P: **L'adjectiu acabat en -ing, en espanyol, com es traduiria?** [How would you translate the adjective ending in -ing into Spanish?]

T: **Uh, aburridas, per exemple** [uh, boring, for instance]: English lessons are ((WRITES ON BOARD))

P: Bored

T: Boring

P: **Ah, i per què boring? I no pot ser** bored? [O.k., but why boring? Can't it be bored?]

T: **No**

P: **I per què?** [Why?] (C40: 296)

This extract contrasts with extracts (1) and (3), where we can see the unquestioned acceptance of the "solution" proposed by the Teacher when dealing with the phonological and lexical levels. As we have said above, the Teacher's task in this case is simply to supply the correct version of what the Pupil has said. Example (9) is significant in order to appreciate the different attitude of the

Teacher towards a morphosyntactic problem (i.e. use of the past progressive with “always”) and a phonological one (pronunciation of “young”). In the first case, he gives the rule for the past progressive. In the second case he simply repeats the word “young” with the correct pronunciation.

(9)

- P: Paul and his sister were always... **ehem, aquesta no la sabia** [uh, I didn't know this one], break up?
- T: <XX> it's already used. Falling out, were always falling out. Go on, Manoli
- P: Uh Paul and his sister were always falling out when they were young (/jɒŋg/)
- T: When they were young (/jʌŋ/). Uh, falling out. This is an idea in the past, it's something that is repeated in the past, it was repeated in the past. Were always falling out, **sempre s'estaven barallant** [they were always falling out], ok? Good let's continue. (C40: 296)

The only attempts to make the reflection a little more explicit with the phonological level involve the Teacher's addition to the correct version of the lexical item of some token intended to focus the attention of the Pupil towards the incorrectness of what he/she has said. In extract (10) we can see three successive examples of these tokens: verbalization “mh?”, repetition of the incorrect pronunciation and repetition of correct pronunciation:

(10)

- P: (...) The Great (/grɪt/) Wall of China (/tsaɪnə/) is 6,460 km long
- T: Long, eh?, the Great (/greɪt/) Wall of China (/tsaɪnə/), mh? The other.
- P: <XX> is five (/fɪfθ/) thousand eight hundred and ninety metres high.
- T: Five (/faɪv/) thousand. You said fifth thousand. Five thousand
- (...)
- P: The Dead (/di:d/) Sea is over 3000 m. deep
- T: Dead Sea, Dead Sea (/ded/)
- P: Dead Sea
- T: Not the Dead (/di:d/) Sea, the Dead (/ded/) Sea. Listen.
- TAPE The Dead Sea is over 300 m deep. (E55: 134)

International Structure of Language Awareness Episodes

In order to discover the mechanisms through which language awareness becomes an integral part of the classes we observed, we must pay attention to the different interactional patterns which appear at the beginning of language

awareness episodes and the role Teacher and Pupils adopt. The other aspect we need to concentrate on is the strategies (understood as specific utterances) which seem to be favoured by the Teachers in order to promote linguistic reflection. We have found 4 main interactive patterns through which explicit reflection upon language appears in the classes:

In the first pattern the Teacher initiates the language awareness episode by checking the Pupils' understanding of a specific language item. This item is a lexical one on four of the five classes observed. However, in the the fifth class observed, even though the activity is the same as in the others (i.e. correcting exercises), the Teacher shows a tendency to check the Pupils' understanding of the morphosyntactic items. This act usually takes the form of an elicitation, using Coulthard's terminology (1985: 126) and, as in example (11), it is realized mainly by a yes/no question,

(11)

T: (...) If you have, if you have no idea, just have a guess. You understand "have a guess"? OK, good. What you think, ok? (A19: 134)

Wh-questions also occur as elicitation to check understanding. In this case the teacher usually expects the Pupils to supply a translation, although a synonym or a definition can also be accepted as answers, as can be seen in example (12).

(12)

T: To receive something. To come into. What's the meaning? Can you translate this ... in Catalan? To receive something, money, (property)after someone's death, >

PP: **Heredar, heredar** [inherit, inherit].

>T o.k.? **Heretar alguna cosa, eh?** [to inherit something, o.k.?]

The second pattern is also characterized by the fact that it is the Teacher who initiates the language awareness episode, although this time with the goal of providing a correction or explanation of the error which the Pupil has just made. This initial contribution by the Teacher usually involves an informative act in the form of a statement in which he/she supplies either the correct alternative (mainly when dealing with phonological and lexical errors) as in (13) or suggests the necessary explanation that will allow the Pupil to understand why his/her contribution is correct or incorrect, as it occurs in (14).

(13)

P: When he arrived (/arived/) at the hotel |he checked|. **Joder! Sempre em**

>

T: |When he arrived (/araivd/)|, >

>P: **passa el mateix!** [Fuck, I always make the same mistake] at the hotel he checked in.

>T please, when he arrived. (B32: 303)

(14)

P: Julia decided that she was too young to get married so she break up |her|>

T: |We are talking in the past| Julia decided ...

>P: so she broke up her engagement to Ian. (B27: 58)

The second possible way of reacting in front of the the Pupil's output is by means of one or more elicitation which help the Pupil to understand why what he/she has said is correct or incorrect. In example (15) we see how the Teacher first adopts the strategy of simply supplying the correct version of what the Pupil has said but, after realizing that the Pupil has not understood the correction, then he adopts the second strategy of eliciting the correct answer from the Pupil.

(15)

P: They makes

T: They make

P: They makes it.

T: Wait a minute! ((WRITES ON BOARD)) Parties. Singular or plural, Nerea?

P: Plural.

T: Plural, so **si no vols dir parties què diràs?** [so if you don't want to say parties, what will you say?]

P: They.

The third pattern is initiated by the Pupil by means of an elicitation, to which the Teacher responds with an informative act. The most frequent level of language which is the object of reflection through this interactive pattern is vocabulary (and this in itself an indication of what the Pupils are most worried about). The Teacher's response is realized by means of an informative act which contains the translation or definition of the item in question. Another important characteristic of this pattern that can be seen in extract (16) is that when the translation is not directly supplied by the Teacher, the Pupil supplies it, tentatively expecting the Teacher to confirm it.

(16)

P: Crops, crops.

T: Crops... crops, mh crops, uh in Alcarràs, for example, right? a lot people... f...OK farmers, right? look after their crops, understand?

P: Trees.

T: No, no. no, no. It's the thing, it's the thing, uh...

P: **Cultius, cultius** [crops, crops].

T: Sorry?

P: **Cultius** [crops].

T: Ok, OK,

P: Soil.

T: Soil? Soil, you understand ground? OK. It's the same but soil is when it is cultivated. It's the same, in Spanish it's the same translation.

P: <XX>

T: Yes, yes. We say something like that. It's **la terra** [the soil] . (B27: 58)

Finally the fourth pattern (17) is initiated by the Teacher when he/she thinks it necessary to focus the Pupils' attention upon a specific aspect of language awareness. The initial contribution consists of an informative act (or a series of them) which is not produced in response to a specific act by the Pupils. In this case the Teacher takes the initiative to introduce a new focus of reflection. This informative act is usually followed by an elicitation which is probably intended to direct the attention of the Pupils towards what is being talked about.

(17)

T: We are going to... do phrasal verbs today. Phrasal verbs. You know what a phrasal verb is? Vicky, what is a phrasal verb?

P: **Què? Un verb que va amb una preposició** [a verb that appears together with a preposition].

T: A verb that goes together with a preposition? And the same verb with a different preposition can have another completely different meaning (...)(B27: 58)

Code-Switching and Language Awareness

This section is devoted to exploring the close relationship between code-switching and language awareness. Specifically, we will show that the use of code-switching is different in the case of the teachers and the students, and that it fulfills a number of functions, among them showing the students and the teachers' focus of language awareness.

The analysis of the LA episodes detected and coded in the transcripts, shows

that the default language of the teachers' contributions was definitely English. However, the above mentioned episodes very often included switches to the teachers' L1 (i.e., Catalan) and, occasionally to their L2 (namely Spanish). The default language of the learners, on the other hand, was definitely Catalan or Spanish, and the TL only appeared in the form of citations in two cases:

(i) Asking for the meaning of a word, as in extract (18):

(18)

P: Què vol dir **improve**? [what does improve mean?](B 32:283)

(ii) Reading aloud and correcting an exercise:

(19)

P: She went to E-, **ah, començo** [I start], she went to England to brush up her knowledge of English.(B 32:270).

Thus, as the pattern for exchanges containing code-switching slowly emerged, we found that the type of switches done by the learners was significantly different from those of the teachers. The Pupils' instances of code switching tended to be intrasentential, they typically involved units smaller than the sentence and they seemed to stem from their limited linguistic and communicative competence. See the three examples under (20) :

(20)

- a) P: The ultraviolet rays will **desfer** [melt] the ice (A 40:300)
- b) P: Uh, take food... **amb les mans** [with your hands] (D 48:130)
- c) P: How can I say **plena** [full] (D 48:137)

In a way, as was commented above, code switching can be seen to function as an index of the learners' current focus of Language Awareness, which in this case was the acquisition of vocabulary, morphology and syntax.

In connection with the teachers' contributions, we discovered that, when compared to those of the learners', their code-switching was both quantitatively and qualitatively different. To start with, in the five classes observed the teachers switched the most, both at an intra- and intersentential level. Most switches involved units which were clausal or larger than the clause. Moreover, far from being a random matter of inclination or efficiency, or the result of a poor command of the TL, the instances of code-switching encountered conveyed meaning and could be assigned specific functions. Thus, a number of the switches

could be assigned the function of clarifying problematic areas of language, or, what is the same, promoting explicit reflection upon language as a system. Within this broad group we find the switches in the context of the following acts by the teacher:

(i) Correcting the student's pronunciation:

(21)

S: I am so pleased /pliased/

T: **No havíem dit** pleased /pli:zd/? Listen to the tape and check the pronunciation, **perquè ja no sé com fer-ho, eh, això de la -ed!** [Didn't we say pleased? Listen to the tape and check the pronunciation, because I don't know how to deal with this -ed thing!] (E:100-104).

(ii) Discussing the spelling of a given word. Example (23):

(22)

T: To bet. Bet, B, e, t ((CATALAN PRONUNCIATION)). Bet. B, e, t. **És el verb apostar** [It's the verb to bet]. (C:111-112).

(iii) Establishing comparisons with other languages familiar to the learners in order to clarify shades of meaning:

(23)

T: (...) **el verb és** check in, **diuen** check in, **mh?** **Fins i totals països sudamericans ha arribat un moment que hi ha paraules d'aquestes angleses que les han adaptat a la llengua, les han adaptat tant que si te'n vas a Sudamèrica, quan vas a parar a l'aeroport també és com un** check in (...)

[the verb is to check in, they say check in, mh? Even in South America there has come a point in which some of these English words have been adapted into the language, they have adapted them so much that if you go to South America, when you reach the airport it is like a check in, too]

(iv) Commenting on the meaning of a word:

(24)

T: What is an engagement? Edmon, what is an engagement? **Un compromís amb algú, eh?** When you are engaged **vol dir que tu estàs lligat amb algú, eh?** **Una relació**[What is an engagement? Edmon what is an

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engagement? An agreement with someone, o.k.? When you are engaged, it means that you are involved with someone, o.k.? A relationship.] . (B:21-23).

Code-switching was also extensively used by the teachers in the contexts of verbal acts intended to manage the learning process:

(i) Giving instructions on how to do a specific activity or exercise:

(25)

T: Page 82. Let's go...**quina pàgina és aquesta?** o.k., exercise, o.k. **Venga!** Be quiet. **Anem a corregir, eh?** Pedro, the first one. **Havieu de ficar** past simple o past perfect. [Page 82. Let's go... what page? o.k., exercise, o.k. Come on! Be quiet. Let's correct, o.k.? Pedro, the first one. You had to write past simple or past perfect](E: 5-7).

(ii) Commenting on the development of the learning process:

(26)

T: If you look at page, page 89 from your book here you have when, the theory. When we use -ed and when we use -ing. **Com he, de lo que he pogut veure és que a l'hora d'utilitza'l el sabeu utilitzar. Lo que no sabeu és la teoria, no? Sabeu, vosaltres sabeu pel sentit quan hi va -ed i quan hi va -ing.** [If you look at page, page 89 from your book, here you have when, the theory. When we use - and when we use -ing. As I, from what I've seen, when you have to use it you know how to use it. You know, from the meaning you know when to write -ed and when to write -ing] (C: 262:266).

(iii)- Commenting on specific tasks:

(27)

T: The teacher waited until everyone stopped talking. This was the most difficult, **aquesta era la més difícil**, but the other previous ones, do you understand them? **Enteneu les frases d'abans?** [The teacher waited until everyone stopped talking. This was the most difficult, this was the most difficult, but the other previous ones, do you understand them? Do you understand the previous sentences?] (E: 54-56).

From the examples we can conclude that code-switching in the foreign language classroom is closely related to the development of language awareness:

The students resort to it to make up for their lack of command of the T language, and thus to some extent signalling the areas which should be dealt with by the teachers. These, in turn, make use of code-switching in order to heighten the students' awareness and clear understanding of those aspects of language (namely pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, morphology and syntax) which they consider to be crucial in the development of the learners' competence.

Final Remarks

From the analysis of the recordings and transcriptions of 5 EFL class periods we have found that, of the 5 foci of KAL proposed by Mitchell et al.(1994) (namely language as system, language acquisition and development, language variation according to use, language variation according to user, and language change through time) language as system played a dominant role in the EFL class. Within this area, vocabulary is the most frequent aspect, followed by morpho-syntax, phonology and spelling, in this order, even though only syntax and morphology were the subject of explicit reflection on the part of the teachers. The other four foci described by Mitchell et al. only received passing attention (as in the case of language acquisition/development and language variation according to user) or were not dealt with at all (as was the case with language variation according to use and language change through time).

Secondly, and closely related to the prior comment, it is significant to mention that the majority of the teachers observed only looked for systematicity in the domain of morpho-syntax, which was clearly one of the main focuses of their lessons. Thus, they did not encourage their learners to formulate and test hypotheses at the phonological and functional levels, merely providing implicit corrections (not always understood as such by the learners) whenever they felt it necessary. This might be due to either the fact that 'rules' at these levels are thought to be more complex, and therefore more difficult to infer, or to a lack of background in these areas on the part of the teachers.

Another of the findings of this pilot study is the important part played by code-switching in the raising of Language Awareness. Indeed, this language contact phenomenon often occurred when explicit reflection upon language was being carried out, and it was used as a means of (i) clarifying problematic areas of language and (ii) managing the learning process. Nevertheless, other aspects such as the degree of explicitness of Language Awareness activities and the interactive structure of Language Awareness episodes have been found to play a crucial role in the study of the development of metalinguistic and metacommunicative competence.

One of the crucial ideas in language teaching and learning which we have developed from the occurrence of code switching in the classroom is the clear distinction that most of the teachers and pupils established between what constitutes 'theory' and what constitutes 'practice'. Indeed, both the teachers and the pupils seem to distinguish between, on the one hand, some abstract knowledge (i.e. theory) which had to be acquired in order to deal efficiently with the TL and which could be delivered indistinctly in the L1 or the TL and, on the other hand, the implementation of that knowledge (i.e. the practice), which had to be done in the L1. Thus, following Krashen, we could say that the teachers clearly distinguished between, on the one hand, some learning phases in which a specific form was presented to the students and, on the other hand, acquisition phases, devoted to the internalisation and automatization of the knowledge previously introduced and where it is important to avoid the L1.

Finally, in connection with code-switching and translation we have to say that neither of them seemed to be felt to be negative practices by the teachers. On the contrary, they were used extensively and systematically as a means to, first, enhance understanding on the part of the students, second, manage the learning process and, finally, to avoid breakdowns in communication.

Symbols for discourse transcription

Speaker identity/ turn start :		Uninterrupted turn	<
Speech overlap		Uncertain hearing	< xx >
Truncated word	-	Researchers' comments	(())
Phonetic transcription	(/ /)		

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