

# Primary school teachers L1 and target language use in foreign language instruction

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## Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the early stages of foreign language learning in classrooms. Governments across the world have introduced a foreign language into their national curriculum for younger and younger children. These moves are partly motivated by research into first and second language acquisition which suggests that the earlier foreign language education begins, the more successful it is likely to be. In addition to this research-based motivation, governments around the world recognize the need to globalize their workforce for the international marketplace, and lowering the age at which the children in the country begin to study a foreign language is one way of meeting this need.

The research presented in this paper stems from a general interest in understanding the processes and efficacy of foreign language learning in the primary school classroom. It was originally planned as a response to the introduction of compulsory English language education for Grades 5 and 6 in Japan in April 2011. I have taken a contrastive approach in this comparison of primary school foreign language lessons in England and Japan, and concentrate on teachers' classroom practices and their use of the students' first language (L1) and target language. In the Japanese school, the target language was English, and in the British school the target language was French.

## Recent Studies

The increase in teaching foreign languages to young learners has led to a growing body of research in this area. A number of studies have

been collected in Enever, Moon, and Raman (2009), the proceedings of a conference held in Bangalore in 2008. The conference was intended to enable the sharing of experiences, to broaden perspectives and to influence future policies in the introduction of English as a foreign language in primary schools. The book presents 12 national case studies of implementations of early English programmes, together with 12 smaller scale innovations, experiments and projects. An excellent introductory chapter by the editors provides an overview of the current challenges and issues in teaching English to young learners. Other recent research includes investigations of the cognition of language teachers in primary schools in Korea (Moodie & Feryok, 2015), the effects of individual differences on English learners of French (Courtney, Graham, Tonkyn, & Marinis, 2015), teacher training for TEYL (Kırkgöz, 2008; Zepeda, Castro & Cronin, 2011), learners' imagined communities (Yim, 2016) and the introduction of content-based language learning into primary schools (Barnard, 2010).

Moodie & Feryok (2015) worked with four primary school teachers in South Korea who were teaching English as a foreign language. They collected and analysed data from reflective writing, interviews, and classroom observations and showed how teachers' early commitment to their own language learning contributed to their commitment to improve both their English proficiency and their classroom practices via ongoing professional development. Courtney et al. (2015) presented a longitudinal study which investigated the interaction of first language literacy, self-efficacy, gender and motivation in students, and the influence of these factors on second language learning outcomes. Courtney et al. followed English learners of French across three school years, from age 9 to age 12, and illuminated the complex relationships between the four factors. The authors concluded that girls had more positive attitudes than boys and

were more successful overall, although they noted that L1 literacy ability and prior learning experience played a part in mediating attitudes and learning outcomes. Another developing area of research in TEYL, particularly in the United States, is dual language learners. Zepeda et al. (2011) reviewed the content of the training suitable for teachers of young dual language learners, and identified six areas: (a) understanding language development, (b) understanding the relationship between language and culture, (c) developing skills and abilities to effectively teach DLLs, (d) developing abilities to use assessment in meaningful ways for DLLs, (e) developing a sense of professionalism, and (f) understanding how to work with families (Zepeda et al. 2011: 10). Kirkgöz (2008) reported on a study that was conducted after the introduction of a new communicative language curriculum into Turkish primary schools. The research focused on the impact of training on teachers' cognition and practices. Kirkgöz concluded that it was crucial to provide continuous teacher training and professional development opportunities, particularly during the first few years of a curriculum innovation. Yim (2015) explored how South Korean primary school students approached learning English. Yim interviewed twenty students from two primary schools about their language learning experiences, and found that the most influential experiences were those outside school, including private lessons, English test systems, and parental attitudes towards English. These factors, together with an emphasis on grammar in out-of-school teaching and learning, meant that there was a mismatch between students' experiences and the national primary foreign language curriculum, which focuses on communicative language teaching. This dissonance resulted in students failing to engage fully in the classroom when taking English lessons at state schools.

## Research Questions

I have taken a contrastive approach in this study of primary school foreign language lessons in England and Japan, in order to assess how the sort of communicative approach often advocated in teaching young learners is interpreted by teachers in these two pedagogical cultures. In particular, as the Japanese education system overall moves towards teaching English in English, it seems timely to focus on the teachers use of the target language in their classrooms. It is hoped that the contrastive approach taken in this study will be able to help shed light on these issues, among others.

The study draws on different types of evidence: classroom observations, interviews with the teachers, and teaching materials. The study aims to answer two research questions:

Research Question 1: What foreign language teaching activities and materials are used in primary classrooms in England and Japan?

Research Question 2: How do the teachers in those primary classrooms use the L1 and the target language?

## Research Contexts & Participants

The two research contexts were selected to be as similar as possible, given the fact that L2 education is compulsory in Japan but not in England. The research in Japan focused on a Grade 5 classroom in an elementary school in northern Japan, but also included two Grade 6 lessons. In the UK, research was conducted in all four years of a junior school located in central England. Junior schools teach children from age 7 to age 11, starting in Year 3 and finishing in Year 6. In this paper I present data from the British Year 3 class and the Japanese Grade 5 class because although there is an age discrepancy, pupils were at a similar level and had had approximately equal exposure to the foreign language at

school.

Both schools were medium-sized, with two-form entry. The classroom environments were similar with movable desks and chairs for all pupils, although these were arranged differently, as I will describe later. There were plentiful classroom supplies and access to a variety of technology, including CD players, video recorders, overhead cameras or projectors, and in the British classroom, an electronic whiteboard. In Japan, the pupils were engaged in their first year of compulsory English education, while the pupils in Britain were learning French as an addition to the National Curriculum, on the initiative of the head teacher. One immediate consequence of this difference was that Teacher J based her lessons on a government-approved textbook, while Teacher E had to find or make her own materials. In both cases, however, the focus was on speaking and listening skills, with somewhat less attention paid to reading and writing.

At the time of the study, Teacher E was in her mid-40s and had been teaching part-time at the school for four years. After finishing her degree in French some 20 years earlier, she started a secondary Postgraduate Certificate in Education in French in 2007. She undertook classroom observations at a local secondary school, and was then sent on teaching practice to a different secondary school in a neighbouring town. At this school, she was given weird tasks to do, and she did not like the atmosphere. This experience seemed to put her off teaching somewhat, and she did not go on to teach French in a secondary school. However, she found work as a private tutor for children taking GCSE French. Teacher E also attended one-day conferences at a local teacher-training college which were designed for teachers interested in teaching foreign languages at junior schools. At the time, modern foreign languages were going to be made compulsory in junior schools, hence the availability of the training; however, this plan was later cancelled. Teacher E was

therefore a trained secondary school teacher of French, with experience teaching French to teenage pupils in private classes, and with four years experience of teaching French part-time in the junior school where the research was conducted.

Teacher J was also a language specialist. She graduated in English and trained as a middle school teacher. She had taught English in middle schools to pupils aged 12-15 for eight years before switching to elementary schools. At the time of the research, she was teaching a Grade 5 class, although she had experience of teaching a variety of grades in Japanese elementary schools, as it is common for teachers to continue with the same group of pupils across the school grades. Her middle school training consisted of theoretical courses supplemented with teaching practice, and was followed by considerable in-service peer observations and support in her first year of teaching. She had later decided to embark on a career in elementary school teaching. Teacher J was well respected in her school as an English teacher as a result of her language specialism and teaching background. Her experience in secondary foreign language education forms a fortuitous parallel with Teacher E.

The lessons that I observed were made up of boys and girls of all abilities. One exception in the British class was a boy whose parents were native speakers of French, but as he was allowed to sit out the lesson this did not affect the teacher's practices. The classes were of different sizes and arranged in different ways. In Japan, the Grade 5 class was made up of 31 children seated in pairs at desks facing the teacher. The lessons were held in the children's usual classroom where they study for most of the day with the same teacher. As is usual in Japan, the start and finish of the English lessons were marked with a short comment from a pupil to the effect that the lesson was about to begin, or had just ended. In the Year 3 groups in the British school, the children sat on a carpet at the front of the room, which is common practice with early year

pupils in British schools. There were 27 and 28 children in the British groups, who were allowed to sit according to gender and friendship preferences, while those in the Japanese classroom were seated by the teacher in mixed gender pairs. In one of the British groups, the class teacher stayed in the room, marking work at her desk, while Teacher E conducted the lesson. The other class teacher was working in a communal area just outside the classroom. Another difference was the length of the lessons: in Japan the lesson was 45 minutes long, whereas in the English school the French lessons were 30 minutes long. In terms of content, the lessons in Japan and England both included similar vocabulary items, focusing for part of the lesson on different types of food. This is an indicator of the similarity in the levels of the two groups.

#### Classroom Practices: Teacher E

##### Outline of activity types

Teacher E began her Year 3 lessons with a review of language that she had taught in previous lessons. She used a soft toy frog as a conversational partner to model the short dialogues, before drilling them briefly with the whole group, and then practising them with individual pupils. Teacher E asked questions such as *Quel âge as-tu?* [How old are you?] to the whole group and pupils volunteered to answer by raising their hands. Teacher E then threw the soft toy to one of the volunteers in order to nominate him or her to answer the question. The new material in the lessons I observed was food vocabulary included in a song called *C est bon pour la santé* . Half the children were given a lyric sheet with the names of the foods printed in black, and half the pupils were given a lyric sheet with the refrain printed in green and they were directed as to which part of the song to sing. Then the teacher played the song twice for the pupils to sing along with.

After the song had finished, the teacher practised the vocabulary using two sets of flashcards. The first set was held by a pupil, and each card had a picture of a different food included in the song. The teacher held the second set of cards, each of which had the name of a food printed on it in French. Teacher E drilled the vocabulary, correcting pronunciation as she went, commenting and asking in English about spelling differences and translating where necessary. After drilling the vocabulary, the teacher and pupils played a version of Kim's Game. This involved placing real food items on a tray, covering them with a towel and then telling the pupils in French to close their eyes. A nominated pupil then removed one of the items, before telling the pupils in French to open their eyes again and removing the towel so that the children could identify which item had been taken away. Finally, Teacher E drilled the food vocabulary once more, before finishing the lesson.

The following two extracts are from the beginning of the lesson and the vocabulary drills.

#### Excerpt 1

In this extract from the beginning of the lesson, Teacher E (TE) reviews the language that she has taught in previous lessons. The children are sitting on the floor around the teacher, and the teacher throws a soft toy frog called Gabrielle to nominate a child to answer the questions that she drills with the whole group. In this extract, the equal symbol (=) is used to show that utterances are made almost simultaneously; the teacher pauses slightly and then begins the first word slowly, and the children join in almost immediately so that they continue and end the phrase or sentence together.

TE: [Produces soft toy frog] Bonjour, Gabrielle. Bonjour, c'est la grenouille, oui, oui? [Hello, Gabrielle. Hello, it's the frog, yes, yes?] J'ai

dit, quel âge as-tu, Gabrielle, quel âge as-tu, Gabrielle? [I said, how old are you, Gabrielle, how old are you, Gabrielle?] Ah, j ai quatre ans, comment ça va, Gabrielle? [Ah, I am four years old, how are you, Gabrielle?] Comme ci comme ça. [So-so] [Clapping a rhythm] =Quelle est ta couleur préférée? [What is your favourite colour?]

Ss: =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

TE: Super, encore. =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

Ss: =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

TE: Ah! Vert, bien sûr, vert, oui? En anglais, c est Jack? Vert, la couleur vert. [Green, of course, green, yes? In English, is it Jack? Green, the colour green.]

S: Green.

TE: Oui, green, c est ça. OK, et comment t appelles tu? Gabrielle, bien sûr. Madame TE est stupide! [laughter] [Yes, green, that s right. OK, and what s your name? Gabrielle, of course. Mrs. TE is stupid!]

TE: Alors, et maintenant, vous, oui, vous. Alors, on va dire, comment t appelles tu, oui? Alors, OK, [rhythmically] comment =t appelles tu? [So now, you, yes you. So we re going to say, what s your name, yes? So, what s your name?]

Ss: =t appelles tu?

TE: Je =m appelle [My name s]

S: =m appelle Guy.

TE: Super, merci. Encore. =Comment t appelles tu?

Ss: =Comment t appelles tu?

S: Je m appelle Jessie.

TE: Super, et encore, un garçon, un garçon, oui. =Comment t appelles tu? [Super, and again, a boy, a boy, yes]

Ss: =Comment t appelles tu?

S: Je m appelle Daniel.

TE: Bravo. Et on change, on change de question maintenant. On dit,

comment ça va, OK? Comment ça va? Ça va bien, ça va très bien, comme ci comme ça, ça va mal. [Good. And we change, we change the question now. We say, how are you, OK? How are you? I m fine, I m very well, so-so, I m not well.]

S: [whispering] Comme ci comme ça.

TE: OK. Comment ça va?

S: Ça va ... bien.

TE: Bravo. Et on peut dire aussi, merci, oui, merci? En anglais, en anglais, merci? [Good. And you can also say, thank you, yes, thank you? In English, in English, thank you?]

S: Good?

TE: En ang- ça va bien, merci, merci. [gestures to S] [In Eng- I m fine, thank you, thank you.]

S: Thank you.

TE: Thank you, c est ça, OK. Holly, ça va? Ça va, Holly?

S: Ça va bien.

TE: Superbe. Encore un, encore un. Ça va? [Superb. One more, one more. How are you?]

S: Comme ci comme ça.

TE: Très bien, on change de question, on change. Quel âge as-tu? Quel âge as-tu? J ai huit ans? J ai sept ans, OK. Quel âge as-tu, Selma? Quel âge as-tu? =J ai [Very good, change of question, change. How old are you? How old are you? I m eight years old? I m seven years old, OK. How old are you, Selma? How old are you?]

S: =J ai huit.

TE: Huit ans, OK huit ans.

S: Ans.

TE: And I m going like this because I m saying I have, didn t I, I have eight years, j ai, indicating having something. Er, oui, tout le monde ensemble, quel âge as-tu? Bravo. [Yes, everyone together, how old are

you? Bravo.]

S: J ai huit ans.

TE: Superbe. Et un garçon, il y a un garçon? Oui? [Superb. And a boy, is there a boy? Yes?] Super. Quel âge as- [rhythmically] =Quel âge as-tu?

Ss: =Quel âge as-tu?

TE: Fantastique.

S: J ai huit ans.

TE: Bravo, bravo. OK, on change de question, on fait comme ça, [OK, change of question, we do it like this] [clapping, rhythmically] =quelle est ta couleur préférée? [what s your favourite colour?]

Ss: =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

TE: Et en anglais, en anglais?

S: What s your favourite colour?

TE: C est ça, parfait! OK, on va demander, qui va- qui va la prendre, voilà. Tout le monde ensemble, [clapping, rhythmically] =quelle est ta couleur préférée? [That s it, perfect! OK, I ll ask, who s going to take it, here you are. Everyone together, what is your favourite colour?]

Ss: =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

S: Violet. [Purple]

TE: Superbe, et on peut dire aussi, violet, c est ma couleur préférée, OK, violet, c est ma couleur préférée. [Superb, and you can also say, purple is my favourite colour, OK, purple is my favourite colour.]

S: Violet, c est ma couleur préférée.

TE: Formidable, OK. Et George, tu vas le faire? Oui? [Wonderful, OK. And George, will you do it?] [clapping, rhythmically] =quelle est ta couleur préférée?

Ss: =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

S: Bleu. [Blue]

TE: Bleu, oui? Une phrase longue? [Blue, yes? A long sentence?] Bleu

c est ma couleur préférée, OK? Bleu c est [whispering] =ma couleur préférée.

S: =ma couleur préférée.

TE: OK, bien. Imogen, tu vas le faire? Oui? OK, encore tout le monde [clapping, rhythmically] =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

Ss: =Quelle est ta couleur préférée?

S: Roje. Red.

TE: Rouge, rouge, comme ça [pointing to red], rouge ou rose? [looking around for something pink] Je ne sais pas si je vois rose. Rouge, oui? [Red, red, like that, red or pink? I don t know if I can see pink. Red, yes?] C est [whispering] =ma couleur préférée.

S: =C est ma couleur préférée.

TE: [Applauds] Fantastique. OK, bien, c est suffisant, maintenant, oui, je pense. [Fantastic. OK, good, that s enough now, I think.] Alors, [in a sing-song voice] qu est-ce qu on va faire? What are we going to do? =Qu est-ce qu on va faire? What are we going to do?

Ss: =Qu est-ce qu on va faire? What are we going to do?

TE: Right, on va apprendre onze, dix, onze, [counting on her fingers] oui? Onze mots pour la nourriture. We re going to learn eleven words for food.

TE spent seven minutes at the beginning of the lesson reviewing the language that she had taught in previous classes: Comment t appelles tu? Comment ça va? Quel âge as-tu? Quelle est ta couleur préférée? The children repeat the questions together with the teacher in a kind of shadowing routine and then individual children respond to the question. The teacher throws a frog to the children to nominate them to answer and helps them to express an individual answer: name, favourite colour and feeling on that day.

The first section of the lesson as shown in this excerpt is a good

demonstration of the communicative approach at an elementary level with young learners. The teacher uses a considerable amount of French, notably in the continuity language ( Now we re going to... ; Will you do it? etc.) in between practising the target structures. In addition, the teacher asks for individual responses to the group s questions, thus giving the opportunity for authentic communication. The pupils have the chance to give personal information (age, name) and to express their own feelings and preferences even with a very restricted amount of language. The teacher provides support in the form of alternative answers to questions such as Comment ça va? and allows the children to select their own truthful response, rather than dictating or drilling what they should say. However, the teacher also checks the children s comprehension carefully and at regular intervals, asking for translations from the children of words and expressions like merci , vert and quelle est ta couleur préférée? She also gives parallel translations herself whenever this seems important and appropriate, for example, when she introduces the main activity of the lesson in which the children will learn eleven new words for food: Right, on va apprendre onze, dix, onze, oui, onze mots pour la nourriture. We re going to learn eleven words for food. Teacher E provides short grammatical explanations, for example of the structure J ai huit ans , reminding the children: I m saying I have...I have eight years, j ai, indicating having something. Finally in this excerpt, Teacher E demonstrates an awareness of stronger and weaker pupils, calling on the stronger ones first, and then helping the weaker ones as is evident from the children s hesitant replies and whispered responses, together with the teacher s whispered support. Teacher E also indicated in an interview after the lesson that she followed this pattern: I decided to opt for people who I thought would have a bit more confidence and ability to do it well. (TE: Interview 1).

## Excerpt 2

In this extract from the lesson, Teacher E introduces food vocabulary. She uses two sets of flashcards, one with pictures of the different foods, and the other with the corresponding words written in French. One of the children holds the picture cards and Teacher E holds the word cards. I have chosen to present these data because they exemplify a number of Teacher E's key practices concisely, and because they are directly comparable with Teacher J's use of flash cards to teach food vocabulary.

TE: Merci beaucoup. OK, et regardez et répétez. Les =bananes. [Thank you very much. OK, and look and repeat. Bananas.]

Ss: Les =bananes.

TE: Ecoutez, écoutez. =Les ba- [Listen, listen. Ba-]

Ss: =Les ba-

TE: =Non, non, non, non. Ecoutez, écoutez. Les =bananes, ssh!

One or two Ss: =Les bananes.

Ss: Les bananes.

TE: Encore, les bananes! [Again, bananas]

Ss: Les banana!

TE: Non, il n'y a pas de a à la fin. Bananes! [No, there isn't an a at the end. Bananas!]

TE: =Bananes.

Ss: =Bananes!

TE: Bananes. Bananes.

Ss: [quietly, individually] Bananes, bananes.

TE: OK, on change. C'est n'est-ce pas banana, non, non, non. Ecoutez, écoutez. Les- non, écoutez! [OK, we change it. It isn't banana, no, no, no. Listen, listen. The- no, listen!] Ssh. Les carottes.

Ss: Les carottes.

TE: Parfait, super.[Perfect, super.] What do you notice about the spelling, compared with the English? Guy? Is it the same?

Ss: No.

TE: No, how does it differ?

S: Two Ts.

TE: Two Ts, instead of two Rs in English, and an E here, les carottes, OK, merci. Ecoutez. =Les- Ssh.

Ss: =Les

TE: Les oranges.

Ss: Les oranges.

TE: Ah, oui. Oui.

S: Tomates.

TE: Les =tomates.

S: =Tomates.

TE: Ecoutez, =les- ssh, ssh.

Ss: =Les-

TE: Les tomates. A vous. [Your turn.]

Ss & TE: Les tomates.

TE: What s all this, they re all just the same aren t they? Bananes, oranges, tomates, what else was there?

Ss: Fish, fishies!

TE: Tomates, oranges, bananes-

S: =Carrot.

S: =Fish.

TE: Carottes, oui, c est ça. All just the same aren t they, easy-peasy.

S: Fish!

TE: Oh, la-la.

Ss: Poison, poison, poison! Fish!

TE: Ssh, ssh. Ecoutez!

Ss: Fish! =Poison, poison!

TE: =Le- Ssh. Year 3, do you need to listen? Ssh. Unless you've lived in France for a year or two and you really know how it's pronounced, le poisson, le poisson. [fish, fish]

Ss: Poisson.

TE: Le poisson, c'est ça, le poisson. [Fish, that's it, fish.]

S: It sounds like- it sounds like croissant.

TE: It sounds a bit like croissant but that ends in A-N-T.

S: The spelling's like poison.

TE: It is, there's no connection with poison, but it does look similar and you might remember that some fish have got too much mercury in them-

S: It's the same as poison.

TE: And that's poisonous, if you want to remember it. [General hubbub]. Ssh! Ssh. Let's hurry up so we can play the game. Les pommes, à vous. [Apples. Your turn.]

Ss: Les pommes.

TE: Super. On change. [shows different flashcard]

Ss: Les chips. [tch] [Potato chips]

TE: Les chips. [sh] =Les chips.

Ss: =Les chips. [sh]

TE: Les chips.

S: Instead of the [general hubbub]

TE: Remember, all your naughty chitter-chatter is recorded on there [indicating the video camera]. So examiners at GCSE, they like to trick people by putting les chips, because everybody- well, people might think it means ships, yeah, les chips, that's a trick one, a false friend.

Les- les =sucettes.

Ss: =Sucettes. [Lollipops]

TE & Ss: Les sucettes.

TE: Les sucettes, and that means little things you suck, because the ette means like, like cute little things [hubbub].

TE: Les bonbons. [Sweets]

TE & Ss: Les bonbons.

TE: A vous. Les bonbons.

Ss: Les bonbons.

TE: Now, what s the English equivalent of bonbon, not sweets but like what it means? Do you know?

S: Sweet things?

TE: It means good-goods, like good-goods, bon-bon. On change.

Ss: Chocolate, chocolate!

TE: Le chocolat. What did I say about listening? Listen now. Le chocolat. A vous.

TE & Ss: Le chocolat. [Ss pronounce T].

TE: Chocolat. On ne prononce pas la T. Don t pronounce the T, le chocolat.

Merci. =Le gâteau. A vous.

Ss: =Le gâteau.

TE & Ss: Le gâteau.

TE: And in the plural, look, it has an X on the end. And in cafes in Britain you ll often see it with an X when they mean just one, but that s when there s more than one, le gâteau-

S: =Does that mean like, cake?

TE: =Le gâteau, in the singular. Yes, yeah, cakes.

S: It s a gâteau.

TE: Yeah, OK, merci beaucoup, OK. [Hubbub].

In this extract we see how Teacher E elaborates on a simple vocabulary drill in a variety of ways. First, as one might expect, she focuses on pronunciation, asking the pupils to repeat until she is satisfied with their pronunciation ( Ah, oui, oui ; Parfait, super ). Unlike Teacher J, she uses word cards to accompany the pictures and this enables her to focus on spelling, similarities and differences between French and

English, and false friends. She is keen to emphasize the similarities between many of the words (All just the same aren't they, easy-peasy) but the false friend *poisson* threatens to derail the lesson as the children are so excited by the similarity to the English word *poison*. Using the word cards also causes some confusion because of the different pronunciation in French and English of *ch-*. The teacher's reason for using the word cards is apparent, however, as she is able to raise the pupils' awareness of the problem, and explain how examiners use such examples to try to trick candidates. Teacher E reported that mentioning the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) examination was intended to motivate the more able students in the class (Teacher E Interview 2).

#### L1 and Target Language Use

Teacher E used L1 English in order to suggest memorization techniques and to teach generalizations about the target language. Making a link between the poisonous mercury found in some fish and the French word *poisson* is a useful aide-memoire, although its basis may perhaps be a little beyond the general knowledge of eight-year-olds. Teacher E also used L1 English to teach generalizations such as the suffix *-ette*, indicating small, cute things.

A further use of English was to make connections between the classroom and the French that the children might encounter in their lives. In this excerpt, Teacher E draws the pupils' attention to the spelling of *gâteau* and how it might be found (perhaps misspelt) in cafe menus in England.

Teacher E became increasingly impatient with her noisily enthusiastic pupils. She began her classroom management in the target language French (*Regardez et répétez ; Ecoutez, écoutez*) supplementing it with shushing noises to try to make the children quiet. She finally

switched into L1 English for this when the flashcard poisson (fish) appeared because the similarity to the English word poison caused great excitement among the children: Ssh. Year 3, do you need to listen? Ssh. Unless you've lived in France for a year or two and you really know how it's pronounced. Teacher E also used English in an attempt to expedite the flashcard drill, promising that it would be followed by a game and finally she came close to losing her temper, warning the children that their naughty chitter-chatter was being recorded on the researcher's video camera.

In summary, Teacher E's use of L1 English was partly a response to what she perceived as discipline problems in the classroom. However, she also used it to focus the children's attention on French spelling, and similarities between French and English, including problematic false friends. In addition, she used English in order to teach memorization techniques, to raise the children's linguistic awareness, and to make connections between classroom French and the children's own lives.

#### Classroom Practices: Teacher J

##### Outline of activity types

Teacher J began by asking the pupils about their health, the day of the week and the weather. She then used sets of flashcards to drill fruit, other food and the alphabet. She used the fruit and other food cards in conjunction with wh- questions in order to elicit the patterns I want... and I like... from the pupils. She extended these patterns with the question Do you like...? and allowed the pupils to give a genuine (as opposed to prompted) response by raising their hands. After she had drilled the letters of the alphabet with the pupils, they played a karuta game in pairs at their desks. Each pair had a set of alphabet cards that they spread over the desk and then they raced to touch the letter card that the teacher called out. When this game was finished, the

teacher played another game with her alphabet flashcards on the board. She called for a volunteer and asked that pupil to bring her several letters from the board. She then asked the pupils to identify the acronym or abbreviation. So for example, one volunteer was asked for the letters H, N and K (making NHK, the Japanese state broadcaster) and another was asked for L, E and T (making ELT = Every Little Thing, a J-Pop group).

As in the analysis of Teacher E's classroom practices, in the following two excerpts from a classroom observation, I focus on how the teacher began the lesson and then on the teacher's use of cue cards for drills. I then go on to discuss the teacher's use of L1 and the target language, her code-switching and possible reasons for this.

#### Excerpt 1

Teacher J began her class by inquiring after the pupils' well-being and continued by asking them about the day of the week and the weather in English. Many of the pupils responded in English and the teacher translated their contributions in Japanese into English:

TJ: Good morning, class!

Ss: Good morning, Ms. [Teacher J]!

TJ: How are you today?

Ss: [hubbub] I'm fine! I'm happy! I'm fine! I'm sleepy!

TJ: Are you hungry? [T puts her hand up, some Ss put their hands up to show agreement]

Ss: Hungry! Yes, yes!

TJ: Me too! Are you sleepy? [some Ss put hands up] 悲しいですね。[That's sad, isn't it?]

TJ: Are you hot? Are you cold? [T and Ss put hands up] 心配ですね、大丈夫。[I'm worried about you, are you OK?]

TJ: Are you fine?

Ss: [hubbub] はい、はい [yes, yes] I m fine!

TJ: Me too, me too. Are you happy?

Ss: [hubbub] はい、はい [yes, yes] I m happy! Happy!

TJ: I m really happy because today s lunch is curry and rice.

S: ヤッター ! [Yay!]

TJ: I love curry and rice so I m very happy.

S: I love curry rice.

TJ: So, do you remember the question, what day is it today, what day?

S: 今日は [Today]

S: It s

TJ: [Nominates S]

S: It s Tuesday.

TJ: It s Tuesday, Tuesday? OK, it s Tuesday. How s the weather today?

Weather, weather. [Looking out of the window]

S: 天気 [weather]

S: 雨 ! [rain]

TJ: 雨降ってる ? [Is it raining?]

S: 曇り曇り [cloudy, cloudy]

S: クーモリ , クーモリ ! [cloudy; Japanese with English pronunciation]

TJ: In English, cloudy.

S: Cloudy.

TJ: Everybody says, cloudy.

Ss: Cloudy.

TJ: Cloudy.

Ss: Cloudy.

TJ: OK, it s cloudy, so do you remember the cards?

The children were very vocal throughout this section, calling out responses in English and Japanese. In the hubbub, it was clear that

enthusiastic communication was taking place: first of all, at least one student responded to the teacher's comment in English that lunch that day would be the ever popular curry and rice; similarly, another student translated the teacher's repeated weather into Japanese. Secondly, pupils repeated the teacher's English phrases to themselves, without being prompted ( I love curry rice ), in this case possibly to express their own preference. Finally, pupils showed an awareness of English pronunciation and stress patterns by playing with the Japanese word *kumori* in an attempt to communicate, lengthening the first syllable and emphasizing the second. Given the number of loan words in this first exchange (curry, rice, lunch) it is perhaps not surprising that pupils feel that English is merely Japanese with different pronunciation.

#### Excerpt 2

Teacher J went on to an activity using flashcards. She had a set of A4 flashcards showing different fruit and she also had an A4 card with a circular hole cut in it that she held over the fruit cards, thus showing only a part of each fruit. She used these cards to practise the grammar patterns, *What do you want?*, *I want...* and *What do you like?*, *I like...*, which are included in the textbook *Hi, Friends!* Teacher J was thus following the national curriculum in this section of the lesson. The following excerpt illustrates the teacher's practice as she switches from the first drill ( *What do you want?* ) to the second ( *What do you like?* ).

Ss: I want orange.

TJ: OK, you want orange. [changes card] What do you want?

Ss: I want [hubbub: apple! strawberry! cherry!]

TJ: You want cherry! [changes card] What do you want?

Ss: I want lemon.

TJ: You want lemon, OK? [changes card] What do you want?

Ss: I want pineapple.

TJ: You want pineapple, OK. [changes card] What do you want?

Ss: I want peach.

TJ: You want peach, OK good. [changes card]

Ss: I want strawberry.

TJ: OK, you want strawberry. [changes card] What do you want?

Ss: [hubbub] I want grapes! Grapefruit! Lemon!

TJ: You want grapes. [changes card] What do you want?

Ss: I want banana.

TJ: You want banana. [changes card] What do you want?

Ss: I want apple.

TJ: OK, you want apple. Next, next question is, what do you like?

Ss: [hubbub] I like, I like, I like...

TJ: [changes card] You like curry and rice.

S: I don't like-

TJ: Do you like curry and rice? [some Ss put hands up] Yes, happy day.

[Changes card] What do you like?

Ss: I like bread.

TJ: OK, you like bread. [changes card] What do you like?

S: Yes, I do.

TJ: What do you like? 何が好きですか [What do you like?]

Ss: I like omelette.

TJ: OK, do you like omelette? [some students put their hands up] ああ、いますね [some of you, right?] [changes card] はい [OK], what do you like?

Ss: [hubbub] Soup, miso soup. Miiiiisoooo souuup. [English pronunciation].

TJ: Do you like miso soup? [some students put their hands up] こっちが多いですね、はい、日本人ですね [More people like this, right? You're Japanese, right?] [changes card] What do you like?

Ss: I like hot dog.

TJ: Do you like hot dog? [TJ puts hand up; Ss raise hands to show agreement]

S: アメリカ人! [Americans!]

TJ: [changes card] What do you like?

Ss: I like pizza.

TJ: Do you like pizza [some students put their hands up] [changes card]

OK, what do you like?

Ss: I like sausage.

TJ: Do you like sausage? [hands up] お弁当に入っていると嬉しいですね、はい [You're happy if it's in your lunchbox, right? OK] Ah, next, do you remember the alphabet?

The cover card increases pupils' interest and enthusiasm as in some cases it really obscures the fruit and causes the pupils to guess (apple! strawberry! cherry!). We see again how both the teacher and the students see some real communicative value in the drill, with at least one pupil stating 'I don't like...' in response to the curry rice flashcard. At other times, the teacher puts up her hand after a cue in order to prompt pupils to show their personal preference by putting up their hand. She also adds the question, 'Do you like...?' in order to elicit the pupils' personal preferences, which they again indicate by raising their hands. In this section, the pupils also play with the pronunciation of 'miso soup' to make it more English. The final point concerns the correlation of national identity with food: miso soup is not just a popular food (like curry rice) but identifies its fans as Japanese; similarly, fans of hot dogs are labelled as 'Americans' by their classmates.

### L1 and Target Language Use

In the first of the two extracts above, the teacher uses English vocabulary connected with well-being, days of the week and the weather

which it seems that the pupils already know. She extends the pupils vocabulary by adding *cloudy* and drilling it briefly. When inquiring after the pupils' health, she code-switches in order to express sympathy with those pupils who say they are sleepy and cold. The teacher thus demonstrates that she considers the pupils' utterances to be genuine and accurate expressions of their well-being and responds accordingly, while at the same time being aware of the limited nature of the pupils' English and switching into Japanese as necessary for effective communication.

In the second extract also, Teacher J code-switches in order to maintain her rapport with the pupils, by passing comment on their responses to her questions about food. For example, she notes that more children like miso soup than omelette and ascribes this to the children being Japanese. This comment reinforces the group's identity; similarly, recognizing the general joy produced by sausages in the lunchbox helps to strengthen the affinity between teacher and pupils.

Teacher J employs a simple but effective approach to the English grammar and vocabulary included in the textbook and thus the national curriculum. Her basic approach is to ask *Wh-* questions to drill the pupils, with their responses governed by a cue card. She then extends the exchange, supplementing her *What do you like?* drill prompts with a genuine question, *Do you like...?* to which the pupils respond by raising their hands. There is an indication that the pupils can reply *Yes, I do* to these questions, as one pupil mistakenly uses this response to a *Wh-* question, but I did not observe this pattern being practised. The pupil's mistake elicits the teacher's only use of direct translation in this excerpt and for the most part translation is absent from the teacher's practices.

Thus, L1 Japanese is used in these extracts in order to maintain and fortify good group relations, while target language grammar and vocabulary is practised efficiently using cue cards, and extended

beyond basic drill patterns to genuine communication wherever the teacher sees a way of doing so.

## Conclusion

In this article I have attempted to show some of the foreign language teaching activities that are used in primary classrooms in England and Japan. Teachers in both countries rely on cue cards to present vocabulary with pictures. In the French lesson, Teacher E also used cards with the written words so that she could teach spelling and point out similarities between English and French. She was, in a sense, following Johnstone's somewhat controversial suggestion about including reading, writing and grammar at around age seven or eight. This, he argues, helps children to think analytically and strategically in their learning and can be very effective (Johnstone, 2009). Teacher E's drills were broken up by short explanations, and study and memorization tips, given in L1 English. Teacher J, on the other hand, took what might be considered a more mainstream approach to teaching young learners by concentrating on spoken rather than written forms of the target language. She enlivened her drills by using a cover card with a hole in it, which obscured part of the picture cues and introduced an element of mystery and excitement into the routine. Because her drills included questions, Teacher J was able to include some authentic communication and personalize the drills for her pupils in a way that was not possible for Teacher E, with her single word drills. Teacher E's extended opening section, however, gave the pupils a chance to express themselves in genuine communication.

The two teachers in these primary classrooms used the L1 and the target language in somewhat different ways. Teacher J used L1 Japanese to maintain a good relationship with her pupils and very rarely used the L1 to explain grammar or vocabulary. Her use of the target language

English was limited to vocabulary and grammar comprehensible to the pupils and she was thus teaching English in English. Teacher E's use of L1 English and target language French was more complicated. Teacher E used more continuity and classroom language in the target language French but this seemed to lead to some discipline problems, which she solved by reverting to L1 English. As has been noted above, Teacher E used L1 English to focus the students on French spelling, and on similarities between the two languages. She also used English to teach memorization techniques, and to raise linguistic awareness, both inside and outside the classroom.

In a limited cross-sectional study like this one, it is impossible to evaluate the overall success of the two approaches over time, but the enthusiasm and excitement among the students in both classes demonstrated that both were motivational. A future longitudinal study would be necessary to compare the efficacy of the two approaches.

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