CODE CHOICE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM
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The use of the mother tongue in the language classroom is an aspect of language teaching that has undergone a number of changes in recent history. From being an integral part of the learning environment in grammar translation methodology, the learner's first language (L1) has come to be almost stigmatised out of existence in more communicative approaches to language teaching, at least in ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching contexts in English-speaking countries. Most initial training courses emphasise the need for the teacher to keep their students' work as exclusively in the target language (L2) as possible. However, perhaps this is not the best way to work in the classroom and actually excludes a resource with the potential to aid language acquisition. It is this notion with which Glenn S. Levine introduces Code Choice in the Language Classroom. Levine, a professor of German at University of California, Irvine, recounts his own recent classroom experiences, in which he, following in the communicative tradition of Krashen, attempted to make his classroom almost entirely an L2 environment. Nevertheless, he notes that this seems to be at the cost of students operating with lower levels of accuracy, however fluent they may be. Despite penalising use of L1, he would find students slipping back into their mother tongue. The questions Levine sets out to investigate in the course of the book focus on when students make the choice to use a particular code to communicate (primarily L1 and L2, but possibly also including body language, etc.) and possible reasons why they would favour one code over another.

Code Choice... is not a book of practical tips for using the students' mother tongues in the language classroom, but is rather a journey through theory, empirical study and potential practical applications for reconsidering the use of L1 in language teaching. The book is divided into three parts:

In Part One, Levine explores the conceptual framework behind a multilingual approach in the language classroom. Stemming from his own experience in teaching German in the USA, in chapter one Levine addresses the monolingual norms often followed and imposed in language teaching, such as banning L1 in the classroom, as opposed to the reality that

people face in the modern age, i.e. that people often live in largely multilingual societies in different parts of the world. Levine then addresses five myths concerning the use of a learner's first language in a second language classroom: whether monolingual L2 use is the most intuitive method of communication; the appropriateness of native-speaker norms as a target for learners to emulate; whether a monolingual approach reflects the reality of the classroom; that use of the L1 leads to fossilisation of learners' developing language; and that using the L1 minimises time spent in class on the second language. Levine deals with these myths in such a way that they are easily for the reader to digest, preparing them for the main body of the book.

Chapter two moves on to discuss the place of code choice within second language learning theory, with particular focus on psycholinguistics and an ecological approach to language teaching. Here Levine draws on the biblical parable of the Tower of Babel, in which the people try to reach Heaven by building a soaring tower and are punished by being scattered over the globe and rendered unable to understand one another's speech. Levine cites this as the 'source of the Western attitude to code choice' (2011, p.19), i.e. that the multitude of languages we find in the world is a curse rather than a blessing. Rather, he suggests here that we see this diversity as richness, and that the place of multiple languages or codes in the classroom recognises this fact. Instead of seeing different languages as a barrier to communication, we should appreciate them as part of a second language learner's linguistic repertoire.

Chapter three looks at the definition of the term code itself, and the phenomenon of code-switching. It should be noted that this book is not about code-switching itself, but rather investigating the reasons why people do switch codes (in this case, in the language classroom). This leads on to Part Two, which consists of empirical data about code choice and use in University of California, Irvine's modern foreign languages department. Chapter four consists of data collected by Levine in first year Spanish and second year French university sessions, in which he has recorded the interlocutors at different times during teaching sessions (teacher-student, student-teacher, student-student); whether they were using the L1, L2, or a combination of both; and what the topic of their talk was (e.g. about content, grammar, or off-topic small talk). The aim here is to uncover the default condition for L1 and L2 use in this particular context. Chapter five then moves on to look at the students' and teachers' use of different codes in more detail, through analyses of

transcripts of two instances of classroom conversation. This detail allows Levine to draw conclusions as to the possible reasons why learners and teachers may switch between L1 and L2.

Part Three sees Levine move forward to discussing ways in which a multilingual community of practice may be established in the language classroom, and recognising each individual's multiple codes as a resource to be taken advantage of, rather than seen as a barrier to learning. In chapter six, he suggests ways of introducing to students the idea of code switching, using the L1 and L2, as a valid activity through methods such as questionnaires and class discussion, with the underlying aim of showing how working in the L1 can aid the acquisition of an L2.

Chapter seven addresses some of the issues that arise when implementing an holistic approach to L1 use across a curriculum, both horizontally at particular levels of language competence (beginner, intermediate, etc.) and vertically across these levels in the teaching of any one language. In particular, Levine notes that ecological approaches to language teaching, as in considering learners and their linguistic resources, and the language taught, as a whole, make implementing a curricular architecture to cover all eventualities very difficult. He also charts out a possible path that a classroom community of practice may follow in moving from a situation where L1 use is stigmatised and the L2 is a marked code of communication to a multilingual community, where both codes are used sensitively by the learners and teacher in the classroom.

Rather than explaining particular steps that should be taken to develop a classroom community in this way (as this would most likely be impossible to do), Levine states that participants in the community, i.e. the teacher and the learners, would engage in critical reflection on their use of the L1 and L2. In this way, the markedness of both codes can shift and there is an appreciation of everyone's complete linguistic resources as the learners study the foreign language, investigate their 'multilingual selves ... [and] develop as 'nascent bilinguals' (Levine, 2011: 168)

This is a very accessible book, on an area that is perhaps overlooked by many language teachers, and especially those who are newer to the field. Although the context that Levine focuses on is a monolingual, modern foreign language one, the book provides a lot of food

for thought for those who teach in multilingual environments. The fact that Levine's research focuses on French and German language provision does not mean that it is solely of benefit to teachers of those languages. Rather, this is a useful insight for teachers of all languages to consider in their practice, no matter what, where or who they teach.

Biodata

Mike Harrison has worked in ELT for six years both as a teacher and part-time materials writer. He currently works at Bromley college of Further and Higher Education in London, England, where he teaches English for Speakers of Other Languages. His main interests include using sound effects and images as stimuli in the classroom and experimental practice.