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Abstract:

The article is intended to highlight the educationally neglected young learner potential for operational thinking about language and discuss language mosaic as the tool conducive to accomplishing this aim. It begins with a psychological and empirical justification for drawing children's conscious attention to formal properties of the L2 as opposed/compared to the L1. Consequently, language mosaic is shown as providing opportunities for contrastive linguistic instruction which has been subsumed by the present author within the framework of the sociocultural theory stressing the importance of assisted performance and prolepsis in assimilating a foreign language with reliance on the native language learning experience. The advantages of language mosaic-driven exploratory talk in L2 classroom are presented with reference to the concept of personal-social equilibrium. Overall, language mosaic appears to encourage children to function as little scientists and analysts concerned with examining L1/L2 rules.

Introduction

Children are commonly perceived as endowed with a natural feel for language exploited by them on an intuitive, playful and imaginative basis. This propensity co-occurs with another, pedagogically underestimated though recently more and more insightfully researched potential of young learners for operational (i.e. inferential, cause-and-effect, analytical) thinking about language properties, which might feed into common underlying proficiency across languages. One of the ways likely to optimize this process is through language mosaic as the tool enabling children to benefit from the vast linguistic and cognitive L1 resources in L2 classroom.

The present article begins with a brief presentation of learning goals crucial for and capacities characteristic of this age group to be followed by a multidimensional discussion of language mosaic including its definition, research findings and socio-culturally underpinned teaching implications. I would like to show how language mosaic-driven ability to draw on L1 learning capital might excite children's constructive curiosity about and contribute to their understanding of a new language.

1. Young learner L2 education goals

The European Council indicated L2 teaching goals for children have been divided into the educational-pedagogical and pragmatico-linguistic ones, of which the former are regarded as more important at the initial stage of the learning process. They are further categorized into affective and cognitive goals, the latter deserving more attention in this paper which purports to reflect on the opportunities for accomplishing them. Cognitive goals are meant to foster young learner metalinguistic awareness, encourage abstract concept formation and prepare to make inferences (E. Zawadzka 2004), which capacities appear to be the cornerstones of operational thinking about language.

2. Cognitive and linguistic flexibility

The Interdependence Hypothesis formulated by J. Cummins (1978) highlights L2 learning as running parallel with L1 competence, which entails the transferring of conceptual knowledge from one language to another, thus contributing to the additive enrichment of L1/L2 experience and to the enhancement of common underlying cognitive proficiency across languages and cultures. This principle works particularly strongly in the case of children for whom the mother tongue performs the function of a cognitive sponge facilitating understanding the target language as a symbolic system governed by a variety of rules and conventions (J. Cummins 1979, E. Bialystok 2002, 2009, M. Datta 2007).

A wide spectrum of cognitive and linguistic skills brought from mother-tongue environment into L2 classroom sensitizes children to various aspects of a new language encompassing its rhyming properties, grapheme-phoneme distinction and grammatical correctness, and as such is likely to accelerate the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Young learner first language can, therefore, be treated as the cognitive tool for teaching a foreign language and adding it to the already existing L1 knowledge rather than replacing it (M. Datta, C. Pomphrey 2004, M. Schwartz et al. 2010). It appears that a good possibility of creating conditions conducive to a systematic L1/L2 exchange is the implementation of language mosaic.

3. Language mosaic as viewed from the theoretical and empirical perspectives

Language mosaic is a term coined by A. Mor-Sommerfeld (2002) who defines it as a new approach to investigating young learner writing as the capacity for

using more than one language within the same text. It is a written extension of interlanguage that can be referred to as both a product and a process indicative of inventive ways in which children attend to and deal with different languages and scripts (C. Kenner, E. Gregory 2003). Similarly to mosaic constructions in biology, architecture and impressionist art, language mosaic is comprised of small and diverse patterns constituting a new coherent entity. It can also be termed an ongoing consequence of written code-switching or writing switching (M. Sebba 2000) which is part of discursive practices of L1/L2 users engaged in systematically and alternately selecting the material from two or more codes (J.J. Gumperz 1982, G.S. Levine 2010). Young learner language mosaic draws on the intersentential, intrasentential and even word-internal switches as will be shown in the discussion below.

The intriguing phenomenon of language mosaic has been investigated with regard to transference from one language to another not only within a single script, as is the case with Spanish and English or Polish and English, but also within varying systems of writing such as Chinese and English, Thai and English, and Hebrew and English.

M. Pennington's (1996) and C. Kenner's (2002) research findings show how children combine logographic and alphabetic systems such as Chinese and English. The products of the children's work comprised drawings which were accompanied by written comments of bilingual nature. In another research C. Kenner (2000) discusses the process of constructing a text which turned out to be an imaginative combination of English alphabet letters, Thai symbols, numbers, repeated circles and drawings. Such behaviours can be understood as the manifestation of the first stages of writing development, in the course of which drawing and writing become complementary means of expression also called a mixed medium that is exploited with playful manipulation and exploratory involvement (J.B. McLane, G.D. McNamee 1990). By borrowing between formal, semantic and symbolic properties the children appeared to benefit from the contrastive potential of the learned languages making their own deductions about how particular writing systems work.

A. Mor-Sommerfeld (2002) provides examples of messages, stories and poems in which Hebrew was intertwined with English and which are the evidence of the children's ability to inventively deal with different directionalities of the two scripts. The production of bilingual texts entailed the young learners' questions about the formal characteristics of English as opposed to Hebrew, which seems to have enhanced their understanding and acceptance of two different sets of rules. The said author also describes a young learner's creative attempt to write a poem-story in which he followed poetry-making rules and therefore took a successful risk of rhyming an English word with a Hebrew one. Another example refers to script transference within two single words in which the alphabetic system letters

were used to represent the Hebrew sounds. The language mosaic thus created can be regarded as having assisted in the child's mediation not only between the L1 and the L2 but also between spoken and written language.

C. Kenner and E. Gregory (2003) exemplify a word-internal switch with the case of a six-year-old boy attempting to combine Spanish and English semiotic resources for the purpose of writing a caption for his drawing. He used two letters occurring only in Spanish loan words to relate to the English sounds which turned out to a good representation of their Spanish counterparts. Similarly to the above-discussed Hebrew-English example, the Spanish-English mosaic reveals the boy's growing sensitivity to the distinction between spoken and written codes as well as highlights his ability to meaningfully call upon his L1/L2 knowledge and incorporate its elements into an original piece of writing.

My own research (J. Zawodniak 2011), though primarily concerned with the development of print awareness, also has interesting, further in-depth investigation deserving implications for the understanding of the role played by language mosaic in L2 classroom. It shows language mosaic as the result of contrastive linguistic instruction on the one hand and as the reflection of children's discoveries about L1/L2 print and spoken vs. written language on the other. The children were observed to enjoy searching for L1 lexical items that would rhyme with L2 words (e. g. *buy/kraj*, *naj*, *pen/sen*, *bush/susz*), which culminated in a variety of illustration-accompanied intrasentential switches. Furthermore, they took pleasure in providing their drawings with two single-word bilingual captions each, which behaviour encouraged the comparison between L1/L2 items in relation to length and pronunciation, thus feeding into the subjects' word awareness. As for intersentential switches, they were an inherent part of short message exchanges consisting of L1 questions to be followed by L2 answers. The children's attempts to reply to mother tongue questions in the target language drew their conscious attention to and made them acute perceivers of certain aspects of English which pose special difficulties to Polish learners, like third person singular, telling the age or existential sentences. Last but not least, while working on their language mosaics the children came up with questions asked for the clarification of various linguistic issues, such as Saxon Genitive, plural noun forms, spelling rules etc.

The foregoing reflections incline towards accepting A. Mor-Sommerfeld's (2002) characteristics of language mosaic in terms of creativity, metalinguistic awareness and L1/L2 relationship. Language mosaic is a creative form of early writing as it capitalizes on child deliberate, inferential and at the same time game-like guesses at the rule-governed nature of both languages, it might, therefore, be asserted that it is bi-developmental and bi-directional creativity. Besides, language mosaic is creative in the same sense as interlanguage (A. Moore 1999) for it builds on a series of internal interim systems that are repeatedly revised to accommodate

new L1/L2 hypotheses. Children can be, thus, viewed as behaving grammatically, i.e. in accordance with the norms of their own permeable and dynamic grammars. Language mosaic is also the evidence of children's growing metalinguistic ability to reflect on how languages work and differ, including questions about the L1 and L2, common linguistic features of rhythm and rhyme or the degree to which sounds correspond to letters. Finally, A. Mor-Sommerfeld (2002) claims that the process of creating a piece of writing in more than one language is a catalyst leading young learners to gain a fresh, i.e. deeper and more differential insight into their mother tongue. Hence, the need for a few comments on first language role in L2 pedagogy.

4. L1 use in L2 classroom

Despite the above discussed advantages of selecting from a wide repertoire of more than one code, the contemporary mainstream communicative language teaching principles, though rejecting the behaviourist stance (L. Bloomfield 1942), are still embedded in a monolingual bias with the target language as the *lingua franca* of L2 classroom (D. Hymes 1972, S.D. Krashen, T.D. Terrell 1995). Consequently, there is a pervasive tendency to stigmatize the L1 and therefore treat it as a hindrance in L2 learning or at best consider it to have little pedagogical value (E. Macaro 2001). Various organizations, such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), insist on the exclusive target-language use by teachers and their students, which puts the L1 in the position of forbidden code and at the same time enhances the primary importance of the monolingual native speaker norms in L2 pedagogy (G.S. Levine 2010).

However, in the light of a large corpus of empirical data currently gathered by various scholars (e. g. J.A. Belz 2003, M. Chavez 2003, G.S. Levine 2003, G. Liebscher, J. Dailey-O'Cain 2004) L2 classroom appears to be a multilingual environment; even though the teacher aims at the total exclusion of the L1 from his/her students' performance, it is being used in a number of situations such as small talk, negotiation of meaning, task completion and private speech, which reveals the mother tongue as the cognitively and socially dominant language whose productive role in L2 learning should be by no means ignored. This is why the voice of H. Büttner (1910, cited in: G.S. Levine 2010: 71) who over a century ago spoke against the banishment of L1 use in L2 classroom sounds strong and convincing. Accordingly, rather than avoiding what is inevitable, it might be more reasonable to adopt C. Kramsch's (1998) position and replace a monolingual L2 pedagogy of the authentic with an L1-underpinned L2 pedagogy of the appropriate. In line with this assumption, the next section concentrates on language mosaic as an educationally relevant opportunity for a principled use

of the L1 expected to act as a cognitive sponge (M. Datta 2007) dynamically operating on and processing L2 data.

5. Towards the socioculturally situated implementation of language mosaic

I would like to propose to approach language mosaic from the perspective of the Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) (1978 [1960]) continued, i. e. rethought and enriched by L.C. Moll (1997), B. Rogoff (1990), R. Rueda (1997) and A. Stetsenko, I. Arievidch (1997) to mention just a few.

In SCT, education is viewed as a sociohistorically determined activity during which young learners' higher psychological processes develop via enculturation into social practices. Correspondingly, cognition is a social product belonging to a substantially open system (D. Atkinson 2002) and resulting from interaction between a more knowledgeable teacher and language learning children as well as between (among) equally competent peers (M.C.M. de Guerrero, O.S. Villamil 2000). In effect, language constructs emerge and mature on the interpsychological, think-aloud plane from which they are shifted to the intrapsychological, think-inside-the-head plane, the whole phenomenon being referred to as internalization. The learning and teaching process is, thus, centered on collaborative activities owing to which language can become a cognitive tool for individuals who first use it to mediate social interaction and then to mediate thought (L.C. Moll 1997, A.S. Ohta 2000).

L.S. Vygotsky (1997 [1934]) opts for the cooperative organization of instruction based on social and semiotic mediations, and he meant to develop children's conscious awareness and voluntary control of knowledge. The basis for instruction is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) defined as "the discrepancy between a child's actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance" (ibid.: 187). The teacher's main responsibility is to activate and foster the child's ZPD, thus making performance possible before competence. L.S. Vygotsky conceptualizes teacher guidance as hinging on assisted performance and prolepsis; while the former is connected with the provision of cues conducive to the unpredictable, novel behaviours of young learners (R.G. Tharp, R. Gallimore 1988), the latter refers to treating students as if they were able to use the skills they have not yet possessed, which is synonymous with teacher reliance on children's incipient skills that are about to emerge (D. Bakhurst 1991).

At this point it seems necessary to briefly discuss the socioculturally flavoured stance on L1/L2 relationships (see Fig. 1). According to L.S. Vygotsky (1997), the L1 and the L2 sprout on the grounds of reciprocal dependence, as a consequence of which the child's understanding of his/her mother tongue is reinforced by learning the target language. This state of L1/L2 overlapping influence liberates

young learner thought from concrete operations and moves it towards more conscious and deliberate work on linguistic forms and expressions. In this complex process, the L1 gains the status of mediator between the world of objects and the L2. A foreign language also has an important role to play as it facilitates approximating higher-order levels of L1 development at which the young learner begins to realize that his/her native language is one of many systems and this in turn inspires him/her to view its properties in more general terms.

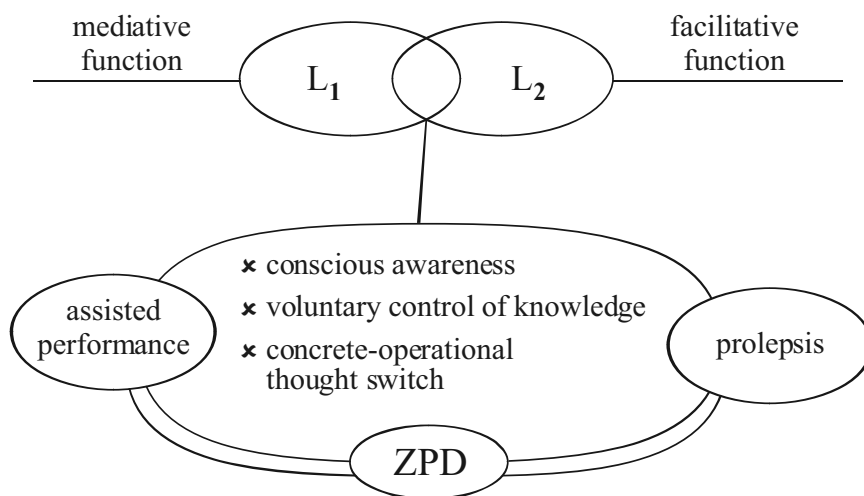


Figure 1. The sociocultural perspective on L1/ L2 interrelations (the author's own design)

The SCT-highlighted role of mutually inclusive L1/L2 knowledge in developing young learner cognition deserves to be benefited from in L2 classroom, hence my attempt to discuss its practical implications with regard to language mosaic (see Fig. 2). Accordingly, the creating of children's texts might be preceded or accompanied by what is referred to by L.C. Moll (1997: 13) as exploratory talk as a special kind of schooled discourse enabling the mediatively oriented transfer from linguistic invention to convention or, in other words, from the centrifugal force of language to its centripetal counterpart (Y.M. Goodman, K.S. Goodman 1997). Strictly speaking, exploratory talk is meant to revolve around teacher-guided L1/ L2 comparison that could be a vehicle for young learners' own linguistic inquiries. As for teacher assistance, which is in this article connected with contrastive linguistic instruction, I suggest that it be based on feeding back, questioning and cognitive structuring (R.G. Tharp, R. Gallimore 1988). Questioning is an open-ended means of assisted performance provoking an active linguistic and cognitive involvement during which the teacher might regulate his/her students' use of logic as when asking, for example, about the reasons for which some Polish and

English words may be hard to spell (e. g. *kółka/wheels*, *książka/book*) or about plural noun forms in both languages. Feeding back is equipping students with performance information and as such it marks a borderline between the centrifugal and centripetal language forces, helping in approaching and understanding the latter, which is possible by setting standards for accuracy that are subject to comparison in relation to how a child has done in the task; feeding back can, therefore contribute to young learner readiness for self-assistance in general and self-correction in particular. Cognitive structuring consists in providing students with a structure for mental operations (R.G. Tharp, R. Gallimore 1988) that are, in the case of work on language mosaic, expected to enhance the understanding of an underlying rule-like nature of L1/L2 codes; this kind of assisted performance draws on the teacher's general statement as a prompt indirectly introducing final solution elements and requiring inferential work that is to culminate in children's conclusive remarks made about some grammatical categories or features such as Saxon Genitive and third person singular (J. Zawodniak 2011). Concerning child linguistic inquiries, on the one hand expected to directly optimise their work on language mosaic and on the other hand to indirectly foster the capacity for operational thinking and thus for logically manipulating L1/L2 symbolic systems, I would like to propose the use of socioaffective strategies with a special respect to peer feedback and correction, and to question for clarification comprising children's conscious decision to ask the teacher for explanation, repetition and other examples (H.D. Brown 2000).

Exploratory talk can, therefore, be treated as the driving force of language mosaic whose internal structure would depend on which L1/L2 aspects are actually under children's discussion and investigation. As mentioned above, they might be engaged in seeking L1/L2 rhymes to be incorporated into their own light verses as well as in exchanging bilingual question-answer messages or the ones in which the L1 would be used as a means of persuasion. In matching L1, a good point of departure for the creation of language mosaic might also be matching L2 words with their L2 equivalents or the analysis of lyrics of young learners' favourite songs which would be studied for tricky words to become part of bilingual self-assessment grids (e.g. "Już umiem napisać wiele trudnych wyrazów, np. *wriggle*, *knock*, *phone*") or for L2 words in certain aspects similar to L1 words with the same meaning (the length and/or the initial letter as in *shop/sklep*, *day/dzień*, *telephone/telefon*) which in effect might constitute intersentential switches referring to, for example, shops in Poland and England (J. Zawodniak 2011, 2012).

The child absorbed in creating a language mosaic can be viewed as a little scientist (J. Piaget, B. Inhelder 1999 [1969]) and symbolist (L.S. Vygotsky 1978 [1960]) initially working within the interpsychological plane where he/she relies the centrifugal force of language to make his/her own, more and more

abstract-quality discoveries about L1/L2 rules. The collaborative investigation and verification of the child's ideas with reference to the socially sanctioned linguistic conventions allows him/her to begin to use the centripetal force, i.e. to approach the intrapsychological plane and thus internalize (mentally understand, process and store for future retrieval) the previously discussed standard rules. In this way, the young learner reaches the area of equilibrium between invention and convention, making the social become the personal (Y.M. Goodman, S.K. Goodman 1997).

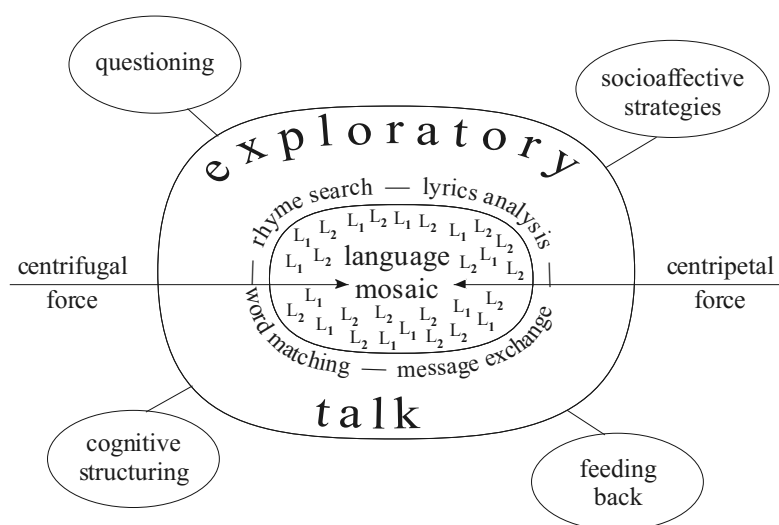


Figure 2. The sociocultural dimension of language mosaic (the author's own design)

6. Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing reflections, exploratory talk-driven language mosaic appears to be the tool for encouraging a challenging, cognitively underpinned encounter with the L1 and the L2 based on the interplay of young learner active creation and deliberate analytical action. Work on language mosaic makes it possible for individual invention to be adapted to social conventions, the realizing of which gives children a sense of utility, participation and shared knowledge. It excites children's linguistic curiosity, thus leading them to make intellectually inspiring comparisons between their L1 and L2. Drawing on the L1 as a cognitive sponge helps children to attend to the L2 meaningfully and critically, and therefore avoid learning it from scratch. Accordingly, the writing

of language mosaic allows young learners to gain creative control over both languages, which is optimized by teacher responsiveness to individual students' zones of proximal development.

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