




Reflecting on the links between learners' language repertoires and their productions in the target language

 Document for teacher educators

Teachers often notice that learners draw on various language resources available in their individual repertoires when expressing themselves in the target language and do not have enough resources. Often referred to under the umbrella term of errors, interferences or transfers between languages show a transitional and evolving state of learners' communicative competence which, far from being banned, should be analysed and taken into account in a constructive way for future learning. Competence in identifying and analysing interferences and transfers in learners' discourse according to the languages present in their language repertoires is therefore an important resource for teacher education. This relates to both the metalinguistic level (Dimension 4) and the didactic level (Dimension 5) because, if used appropriately, it can improve teaching practices to help learners draw on their linguistic and cultural repertoires for language learning, make use of similarities between languages to understand and learn them, and to use the resources provided by language switching for better communication and learning.

Nota Bene

Research mainly discusses interference when it comes to elements that lead to errors or false friends (cf. Bogaards, 2004; Forlot and Beaucamp, 2008), and on transfers when it involves elements that help build bridges between languages (cf. Caid, 2008; Ringbom, 2007, among others). Research also observes that learners do not sufficiently exploit previously learned other (foreign) languages, and that transfers could be facilitated by teachers (See Cummins' hypothesis, 1981).

Competences (primarily) targeted	
Dimension 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Competence in analysing learners' productions in the target language in the light of the languages in their repertoires. 4-b-2</i> 	 <p>4 Metalinguistic [...] competences</p>
Dimension 5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Competence in helping learners to draw on their linguistic and cultural repertoires for language learning. 5.2-c</i> • <i>Competence in helping learners to make use of the similarities between languages to understand and learn them. 5.2-e</i> • <i>Competence in helping learners to use the resources provided by switching between languages for better communication and learning. 5.2-f</i> 	 <p>5 Didactic and pedagogical competences</p>

Scenario

A reminder: Scenarios provide an overview of the sequence of tasks and highlight some alternatives.

Total estimated length: 45'

Steps	Aims	Tasks	Remarks
I. Analysis of excerpts of learner/teacher interactions taken from self-confrontation interviews following the administration of a French as a foreign language test. The teacher points out elements that do not conform to the expected norm in French and asks the learners what led them to produce them.	To facilitate the development of competences in analysing written productions in the target language, by A) identifying areas of interference that arise between the target language and other languages in the learners' language repertoires and B) reflecting upon and discussing the learners' arguments regarding the justification of interferences and transfers between languages.	A) Identify the main elements considered by the teacher as areas of interference between the target language and other languages known by the learners B) Classify the arguments provided by the learners to justify interference according to certain criteria (similarity/ difference, easy/difficult, intuition, etc.).	Alternative (described in the suggestions for follow-up). You can use extracts from interviews from your own work context. Additionally, if analysing the extracts from the tests seems difficult, focus on the learners' answers alone and solve only point b) of Task I.
II. Examination of written productions in which there are interferences between the target language (French) and other languages that the learners know. Formulation of questions to be put to the learners in order to make them aware of these interferences and to help them progress in learning the target language.	To facilitate the development of competence in helping the learner to verbalise the reasoning behind the interferences between the target language and other languages in their language repertoire and to assist in progressing in their learning of the target language.	Working in groups to formulate questions based on excerpts of written productions that exhibit interferences between French and other languages in the learners' repertoires."	Alternative (described in the suggestions for follow-up). You can use extracts from your own work context and propose questions about them.

Tasks : see the [handout](#)