

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS- INGLÊS**

**THE USE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE
CLASSROOM OF THE GREAT FLORIANÓPOLIS (SC) REGION:
A STUDY OF STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS**

por

MARIA APARECIDA RITA MOREIRA

**Dissertação submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
para obtenção do grau de MESTRE EM LETRAS**

FLORIANÓPOLIS

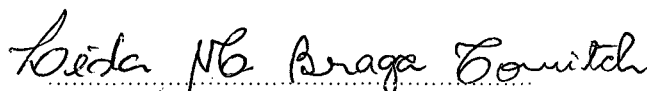
Mai 2001

Esta Dissertação de Maria Aparecida Rita Moreira, intitulada "the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom of the great Florianópolis (sc) region: a study of state school teacher's perceptions" foi julgada adequada e aprovada em sua forma final, pelo programa de Pós-graduação em Letras/Inglês e Literatura Correspondente, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, para fins de obtenção do grau de

Mestre em Letras

Área de concentração: Inglês e Literatura Correspondente

Opção: Língua e Literatura Aplicada

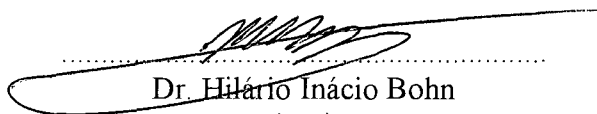


Dr. Lêda Maria Braga Tomitch
Coordenadora

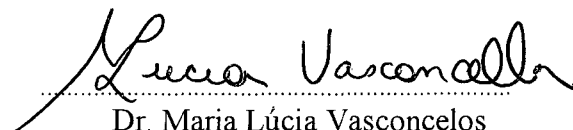
BANCA EXAMINADORA:



Dr. Gloria Gil
Orientadora e Presidente



Dr. Hilário Inácio Bohn
Examinador



Dr. Maria Lúcia Vasconcelos
Examinador

Florianópolis, 07 de maio de 2001

To my father, Tomaz Caetano Rita Filho, who cannot be with me physically, but I am certain that spiritually he has always followed my work and given me strength and persistence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank

Tânea Quintanilha, Martha Zanatta, and Viviane Heberle who encouraged me to face different challenges related to the English language, their powerful words lead me to the MA course;

Gloria Gil for being more than an advisor, but a friend and a special human being, who shared her knowledge and encouraged me all the time. For her inestimable enlightenment and patience, for her linguistic and psychological support, I am eternally grateful for all I have learned with you;

my mother, Doraci, for her care and love;

my husband, Valdori, and my children, Anderson and Maiara, for their presence in my life;

my sisters, brothers and their families, for their help whenever I need it.

my friend, Martha, for the care and love she dedicated to me and my children.

all my friends, especially Zaira, Paulo, Jean, Maria and Joana, for listening to my complaints and anxieties;

Alyson, for listening to my doubts and helping to solve them;

Silvia R. Neves, for sharing her knowledge and suggesting methodological procedures;

Secretaria Estadual de Educacao de Santa Catarina, for excusing me from my teaching duties during the development of this study;

all the State teachers who agreed to participate in this study;

the principals of Colégio Marista and Municipal São Jose, Vilmor and Silvana, for believing in the importance of teacher development;

Roselei, Cecilia, two special friends, and Aureci, my sister, for showing to me that *"nothing is impossible for God"*.

Finally, I praise **GOD**, for being my shepherd, for giving me strength, and for being beside me during my entire life.

ABSTRACT

THE USE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM OF THE GREAT FLORIANÓPOLIS (SC) REGION: A STUDY OF STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Maria Aparecida Rita Moreira

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
2001**

Supervising Professor: Gloria Gil

The use of the mother tongue in the Foreign Language classes is a topic which authors in the field of applied linguistics avoid to talk about. Translation, one way of using the mother tongue, seems to be an exception. This study aims to investigate the use of the mother tongue by a group of seventy-two English teachers from state schools in the Great Florianópolis area. The objective focus of this study is to know, through these teachers' perceptions (1) whether these teachers do translation activities in their classrooms or not; (2) what other use of the mother tongue the teachers make use of; (3) when they use the target language; (4) whether they think the mother tongue helps their learners to learn English or not; and finally, (5) why they use the mother tongue in the EFL classes.

The data collection of this study was carried out with two elicitation techniques: questionnaires and interviews. The data analysis showed that according to these teachers' perceptions, the mother tongue is used in translation activities, and it corroborates the claims of other studies that the mother tongue is used by the teachers for different functions in the classroom such as to give instructions, explain grammar, discuss methodology, and give administrative information. The results of this study also indicate that, in some cases, the target language is used to give instructions and to begin the class, and that the investigated teachers think that the use of the mother tongue does not help English language learners. Finally, this study suggests that teachers' lack of proficiency and confidence are the main reasons for using the mother tongue, as well as the existence of two contextual reasons: large classes and poor infrastructure.

RESUMO**O USO DA LÍNGUA MATERNA NAS AULAS DE LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA NA
REGIÃO DA GRANDE FLORIANÓPOLIS (SC):
UM ESTUDO DAS PERCEPÇÕES DOS PROFESSORES DAS ESCOLAS
ESTADUAIS****Maria Aparecida Rita Moreira****UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
2001**

Supervising Professor: Gloria Gil

O uso da língua materna no ensino de línguas é um assunto que não tem sido abordado por autores ligados a área da linguística aplicada. A tradução, uma forma de usar a língua materna na sala de aula, pode ser considerada uma exceção. Este estudo investiga o uso da língua materna num grupo de setenta e dois professores de inglês de escolas Estaduais da Grande Florianópolis. O objetivo deste estudo é conhecer, através das percepções desses professores (1) se eles desenvolvem atividades de tradução nas aulas; (2) que outros usos os professores fazem da língua materna; (3) quando eles usam inglês; (4) se eles pensam que a língua materna ajuda os alunos a aprenderem inglês e, finalmente, (5) porque eles usam a língua materna nas aulas de inglês.

Os dados deste estudo foram coletados através da utilização de duas técnicas elucitatórias: questionários e entrevistas. A análise dos dados mostrou que, de acordo com a percepção destes professores, a língua materna é usada nas atividades de tradução e ao

mesmo tempo confirma as afirmações de outros estudos que sugerem que a língua materna é usada pelos professores para a realização de diferentes atividades na sala de aula, tais como: dar instruções, explicar gramática, discutir metodologia e dar informações administrativas. Os resultados indicam que, em alguns casos, a língua estrangeira é usada para dar instruções e para iniciar uma aula. Finalmente, a análise dos resultados deste estudo sugere que, de acordo com as percepções dos professores investigados, a língua materna não ajuda os alunos a aprenderem uma língua estrangeira e, que a falta de proficiência e a insegurança desses professores são as razões principais para que eles usem a língua materna nas aulas de inglês; de igual importância são, outras duas razões contextuais: turmas grandes e a falta de infra-estrutura nas escolas.

**THE USE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE
CLASSROOM OF THE GREAT FLORIANÓPOLIS (SC) REGION:
A STUDY OF STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS**

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	vi
Resumo	viii
Chapter I - Introduction	1
1.1. Objective of the dissertation.....	1
1.2. Research Questions.....	2
1.3. Organisation of the dissertation.....	3
Chapter 2 - Review of Literature	4
2.1. Introduction.....	4
2.2. Translation: L1' the most traditional function in the EFL classroom.....	5
2.3. Other uses of the mother tongue in the FL classroom.....	8
2.4. Positions for and against the use of the mother tongue in the FL classroom..	9

2.5. Summary of Chapter 2.....	10
Chapter III – Methodology	12
Introduction.....	12
3.1. An interpretative study.....	12
3.2. The context.....	13
3.3. Research questions.....	14
3.4. Data collection and analysis.....	15
3.5.1. Data collection.....	15
3.5.2. Analysis.....	16
3.6. Conclusion of Chapter Three.....	16
Chapter IV - The Questionnaire	17
4.1. Introduction.....	17
4.2. The questionnaire design.....	17
4.3. Questionnaire application.....	18
4.4. Results of analysis and interpretation.....	19
4.4.1. Section I: Analysis of the answers to Questionnaire Questions 1,2, and 3 related to research question 1.....	20

4.4.2. Section 2: Analysis of the answers to Questionnaire Questions 4 to 11 related to research question 2 and 3.....	24
4.4.3. Section 3: Analysis of the answers to Questionnaire Question 12 related to research question 4 and 5.....	31
4.5. Summary of Chapter 4.....	33
4.5.1. Looking at the results of the questionnaire in the light of the research questions.....	33
Chapter V - The Interviews	35
5.1. Introduction.....	35
5.2. Characteristics of the interview.....	35
5.3. The interview design.....	36
5.4. Procedures and analysis.....	38
5.5. Results and interpretation of the interview questions.....	38
5.5.1. Section 1: The use of translation activities in the classroom.....	39
5.5.1.1. Summary of Section 1.....	45
5.5.2. Section 2: Uses of the mother tongue and the target language in the EFL classroom.....	46
5.5.2.1. Summary of Section 2.....	52
5.5.3. Section 3: Teachers' beliefs about the use of the mother tongue in the English class.....	53
5.5.3.1. Summary of Section 3.....	56

5.6. Summary of Chapter 5.....	57
5.6.1. Looking at the results of the questionnaire in the light of the research questions.....	57
Chapter VI - Final Remarks.....	59
6.1. Summary.....	59
6.2. Pedagogical implications.....	61
6.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research.....	62
6.4. Afterwords.....	63
References.....	65
Appendixes.....	67
APPENDIX A:	67
<i>A. 01. The questionnaire.....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>B. 02. Teachers' response to open question.....</i>	<i>70</i>

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 - The use of translation activities in EFL classroom.....	21
Table 4.2 - The use of translation activities as one question in the test.....	22
Table 4.3 - The use of translation activities as the test itself.....	22
Table 4.4 - Translation of words, sentences and/or text.....	23
Table 4.5 - Answers to QQs 4 to 10.....	25
Table 4.6- Comparisons of the answers given by teachers who answered negatively QQ6	26
Table 4.7 - Answers to QQ10 to 12 teachers who reports to conduct the classes in English.....	30
Table 4.8 - Summary of QQ 12 teachers' responses.....	33
Table 5.1 - Summary of answers to Interview Questions 1to 4.....	46
Table 5.2- Summary of answers to Interview Questions 5 to 9.....	53
Table 5.3 - Summary of answers to Interview Questions 10 to 12.....	57

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 - Using Portuguese, English or both in the English classes.....	29
Figure 4.2 - The relationship between the Questionnaire Questions and the Research Questions.....	34
Figure 5.1 - The relationship between the Interview Questions and the Research Questions.....	58

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Objective of the dissertation

The main aim of this dissertation is to investigate the use of the mother tongue by English as foreign language (EFL) teachers in regular state schools in the Great Florianópolis region in the State of Santa Catarina (SC). This investigative choice was made due to the fact that apart from some books and articles which deal with the topic of *translation* in the foreign language classroom, one special way of using the mother tongue, little has been said about the use of the mother tongue in this context.

It is important to mention that this research has arisen out of my anxieties and needs to observe and understand how and when the mother tongue is used in the EFL classroom. I have been working in state schools since 1991, and ever since I began to teach I have wondered whether or not there is a right attitude regarding the use of the mother tongue in the classroom.

Moreover, while research on EFL teaching has predominantly been based on classroom observation, this study is based on the analysis of teachers' perceptions or beliefs. Malatér (1997) points out, in this respect, that "the inclusion of teachers' perceptions when dealing with the classroom can significantly contribute to the understanding of teaching practices" (p. 3). Therefore this study aims at investigating teachers' beliefs on the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom of regular state

schools in the Great Florianópolis region (SC). The present study also aims at understanding more deeply the realities of those teachers.

1.2. Research Questions

In order to investigate how these state school teachers in Santa Catarina understand the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, this study intends to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Do teachers use translation activities in their classroom? If so
 - 1a) are teachers using translation in the classroom as a tool for testing students?
 - 1b) are they using translation to check comprehension of words and/or sentences?
 - 1c) are the translation activities being contextualised?
- 2) What other uses of the mother tongue are there in the classroom?
- 3) When do teachers use the foreign language, i.e., the English language?
- 4) Do teachers think that the use of the mother tongue helps learners to improve their English knowledge?
- 5) Why do teachers use the mother tongue in the EFL classroom?

It should be clear that this study aims at giving only an overview of the state school teachers' perceptions of the use of the mother tongue in the State of Santa Catarina, since only two groups of teachers from the Great Florianópolis region were investigated.

1.3. Organisation of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. In this chapter, the Introduction, the objective of the study and the Research Questions are described.

In Chapter Two, some of the relevant literature related to the use of the mother tongue is reviewed.

In Chapter Three, the methodology is described, including the research participants, the context of this study and the data collection and analysis techniques.

In Chapter Four, specific parts of the methodology are reported on: the *questionnaire* design, application, data analysis, findings and discussion.

In Chapter Five, other specific parts of the methodology are reported on: the *interview* data collection, analysis, findings and discussion.

In Chapter Six, the conclusion of the study, a summary of the previous chapters, some pedagogical implications, and suggestions for further research are provided.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

SOME STUDIES ABOUT THE USE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

2.1. Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to review some works that deal with topics related to the use of the *mother tongue* (MT)¹ in the foreign language (FL) classroom. First, I will review what some authors say specifically about the role of *translation*, which has traditionally been the main activity involving the use of the mother tongue in the FL classroom. Although for some years, translation as a tool for teaching/learning has been severely criticised, nowadays some authors are beginning to state again its importance in the classroom.

After doing that, I will report on what some authors say about the main uses of the mother tongue in the classroom. Finally, I will discuss what others have to say about considering the mother tongue as a positive or a negative influence for foreign language development.

¹ The term used here to refer to the language already spoken by the participants of the classroom is mother tongue (MT). Some authors refer to this language as first language (L1). The two terms are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

2.2. Translation: L1's most traditional function in the FL classroom

As I have already suggested, the use of the mother tongue is increasingly being shown to play an essential role in translation activities in the classroom. *Translation* was considered a basic tenet of teaching for many years, and had its apex in the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) (Leffa, 1988). At the same time it is the most ancient and the most criticised method. Costa (1988) says that although *translation* is part of the learning process, *it* was banned from the classroom probably because of its overuse during the GTM. So, it is possible to say that throughout the years the status attributed to *translation* in the FL classrooms has been controversial.

Rivers and Temperley (1978), for example, also point out the importance of *translation* in the foreign language classroom context by writing about the history of *translation* in the FL classroom and about some of its uses. According to these authors, in the last forty years, the use of *translation* in the FL classroom has been less and less advocated by applied linguists and authors who talk about FL teaching.

Furthermore, Duff (1989) considers that *translation* "tends to be used not for language teaching, but for testing" (p. 5). He argues that this happens because teachers almost always relate *translation* to reading and writing skills, and think that *translation* is time-consuming, wasteful and boring. Yet, according to Duff (ibid.), *translation* "became less and less associated with the excitement of new discoveries, more and more with the tedium of book learning" (p. 5). The reason could be that *translation* has not been used properly, because to practice *translation* in the classroom does not mean to give a text to be rewritten in the L1 or the L2, "it means, rather, giving the students regular opportunity to compare and discuss their work with others, and to respond to suggestions" (p. 8). In other words, Duff (ibid.) suggests that there are teachers who just relate *translation* activities to the process of finding correspondence in L2 for a text (or

sentences) given LI, or vice versa. They do not explain to the students why they are doing a *translation* activity, and “as a result, they are not mentally prepared for the activity” (ibid.). If the teacher does not have a clear idea of the activity, and does not explain it to the students, they can feel frustrated. Thus, it is extremely important to know how a *translation* activity can be inserted in a FL program and why it is to be inserted. Finally, Duff (1989) suggests that *translation* is essential because: (1) *translation* can help people to understand the influence of the mother tongue on the target language and vice versa; (2) *translation* can be used in different activities outside the classroom; (3) *translation* can help people to communicate into and from the foreign language; (4) the proper material of *translation* is authentic, not ‘made up’; (5) within *translation* activities there are rarely correct answers, this can then help speculation and promote discussion; (6) *translation* can be used according to the students’ and teachers’ needs; (7) working with *translation* can give us the possibility of working with real language, and at the same time to take account of styles and registers of the target language and the mother tongue; (8) *translation* is useful because *it* can be used by translators and “translators will always be needed. Without them, there would be no summit talks, no *glasnost* or *perestroika*, no Cannes Film Festival, no Nobel prizes.” (p. 7, author’s italics).

Some authors, such as Rivers and Temperley (1978) and Duff (1989) share similar ideas regarding the use of *translation* in the FL classroom, proposing different activities to enlarge the range of possibilities of using *it* purposefully and imaginatively within the foreign language classroom. Rivers and Temperley (1978) provide us with a variety of *translation* activities and suggest how teachers can use them in an effective and meaningful way, such as translation of labels, slogans, and advertisements; and translation of historical documents for use in a history class.

In addition, House (1981) suggests that *translation* can be used in FL teaching “as a technique, not as an objective” (p. 229). She states that *translation* can involve

the explicit comparison of cultural phenomena in the source and target language communities, the creative production of source and target language texts, the change of individual situational dimensions in ST and/or TT, as well as a context - sensitive evaluation of translation and versions (ibid).

Some authors, such as, Costa (1988), Valette (1991), Rivers and Temperley (1978) highlight the uses of *translation* related to “speaking” skills. They stress that oral *translation* is helpful to clarify the meaning of a word that students do not understand, that oral *translation* drills are helpful to elicit grammar points and vocabulary and to encourage the *translation* of sentences. In sum, these authors suggest that different *translation* activities can improve students’ accuracy and fluency within speaking activities. These authors also suggest that the *translation* of short sentences focusing on a particular grammar point can be used as an oral activity. Yet, they do not advocate *translation* of isolated words and highlight the importance of contextualising *translation*. Valette (1991), for example, says that “many teachers avoid items of this sort [translation activities] because of their lack of context and their tendency to make students feel that a one-to-one correspondence exists between words in the target language and their native language” (p. 227). She gives an example of the translation of words out of context, as seen below:

Give the French equivalent of the following words: a broom, a frying-pan, sponges

she then expands on this by suggesting that teachers write a simple text to contextualise the words, such as the following (pp. 227-28):

Imagine you are in Paris. An American friend has arrived and she wants to purchase a few items at the neighbourhood hardware store. Tell her the names of the following objects in French:

1. a broom

2. *a frying-pan*

3. *sponges*

2.3. Other uses of the mother tongue in the FL classroom

Apart from some studies on *translation* it is difficult to find other research studies related to the use of the mother tongue in the FL classroom, and even some known authors of courses designed for non-native teachers omit talking about this topic in their EFL teaching books. One of the exceptions is Atkinson (1987) who wrote about the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, where he says that, it “seems to be true, in general, that in teacher training very little attention is given to the use of the native language” (p. 241). And he also stresses that this use needs more exploration, warning that “this gap in methodological literature is presumably partly responsible for the uneasiness which many teachers, experienced and inexperienced, feel about using or permitting the use of the students’ native language in the classroom” (ibid.).

Atkinson (1987) suggests that the mother tongue can have many different functions in the FL classroom: (1) discussing methodologies during classes; (2) explaining the meaning of words or grammar topics; (3) giving instructions and administrative information to the students; (4) checking comprehension of structures; and (5) sharing ideas in group work. According to Spratt (1985), teachers seem to have doubts about whether they should or should not use the mother tongue in the FL classroom, and may ask themselves questions as such (p. 190).

Can I stop the students using the L1 in the classroom?

Do I always want to stop them using it?

When could it be useful for them to use the L1?

Why do students use L1?

Are there any means I can provide students with stop them using the L1?

Should I ever use the L1?

After providing these questions, Spratt (ibid.) shows some situations of the use of the mother tongue based on FL classroom observation. According to her, the mother tongue is used: (1) when students lack vocabulary, (2) when students do not know “what they have to do,... (3) when they want to release tension”, and teachers use the mother tongue: (1) “for instructions and classroom management; (2) for explanation and justification; (3) for communicating meaning or checking comprehension” (ibid., pp. 200-201).

Schweers (1999), in his reports on EFL research conducted in Puerto Rico regarding the use of the mother tongue, comes to the conclusion that the students participating in his study felt that Spanish should be used in their English classes, since the majority of them said that they “like their teachers using at least some Spanish in the classroom” (p. 6). He also observed that teachers deal with the mother tongue in three different ways: there were teachers who did not use the mother tongue, teachers who did not use the mother tongue but permitted their students to use it, and teachers who used the mother tongue.

In the same article, Schweers (ibid.) also refers to his own experience as an EFL teacher and says that he uses Spanish in his first two classes *to guide his students*, and also during the whole semester *to check comprehension*, i.e. he checks if students have understood by asking someone to translate what he has said.

2.4. Positions for and against the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom

As pointed out before, authors, in general, do not talk about the use of the mother tongue within the FL classroom, mainly because this seems to be a very controversial issue.

Two exceptions to this general state of affairs are Atkinson (1987) and Harbord (1992). On the one hand Atkinson (ibid.), in spite of warning about the overuse of the mother tongue, advocates its use in the FL classrooms, by suggesting “that to ignore the mother tongue in a monolingual classroom is almost certainly to teach with less than maximum efficiency” (p. 247). On the other hand, Harbord (1992) challenges the use of the mother tongue, and criticises those teachers who encourage students to use the foreign language as much as they can. He argues that the mother tongue can be replaced by different strategies in the foreign language, such as “visual prompts, mime, and evoking situational context to create a need for the item in question (for eliciting), together with paraphrase, definition and multiple exemplification” (p. 354). He emphasises that using the mother tongue to save time is not acceptable, and warns that if students and/or teachers do so, they may become dependent on translation, they may use inaccurate translation, and finally, they may use the mother tongue when they should be talking in the foreign language. Yet, at the end of his article, Harbord (ibid.) accepts the use of the mother tongue “to provoke discussion and speculation, to develop clarity and flexibility of thinking, and to help us increase our own and our students awareness of the inevitable interaction between the mother tongue and the foreign language that occurs during any type of language acquisition” (p. 355).

2.5. Summary of Chapter Two

In this chapter, I have presented what some authors say about the use of the mother tongue in the FL classrooms. First, I presented the traditional view that supports the use of the mother tongue through *translation*. Then, I presented some other uses of

the mother tongue in the FL classroom. And finally, I closed the chapter describing the position for and against the use of the mother tongue in the FL classroom.

Chapter 3 will provide a description of the methodological procedures used to carry out this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

As stated before in Chapter 1, the objective of this dissertation is to investigate the perceptions of seventy-two English teachers in the state schools in Santa Catarina (SC). In order to carry out this study, I have used two elicitation techniques: questionnaires and interviews.

This chapter aims, first, at situating the reader to understand the context of State Schools in SC by giving some general information about the relationship among the Secretaria Estadual de Educação (SEE), the Coordenadorias Regionais de Educação (CREs) and the EFL teachers. The second goal is to describe the data collection process.

3.2. An interpretative Study

This study was conceived within an exploratory interpretative paradigm. It is qualitative in methodology and aims at investigating the perceptions of the use of the mother tongue (Portuguese) among a sample of seventy-two teachers of English of the state network in Santa Catarina, Brazil.

3.2. The context

The data of this study were based on the responses given by English teachers who work in state-sector institutions administered by the government of Santa Catarina. Therefore, all these teachers were subordinate to the Secretaria Estadual de Educação (SEE). In order to administer the state schools, the SEE has created the Coordenadorias Regionais de Educação (CREs), formed by schools from different districts. There were twenty-six CREs in the State of SC when this study was carried out, and the data were collected among teachers from the first and twenty-sixth CREs. These two groups were selected due to their central location, close to the University.

The 1st CRE headquarters is situated in Florianópolis, the Capital of the State, and includes four districts, fifty-six schools and a hundred and seventeen EFL teachers: fifty-nine permanently hired teachers and fifty-eight temporarily hired teachers.

The 26th CRE headquarters is situated in São José, and includes ten districts, forty-two schools, and ninety-eight EFL teachers: thirty-three permanently hired teachers and fifty-six temporarily hired teachers.

At this point, I would like to clarify that teachers at the SEE of Santa Catarina are divided into permanently and temporarily hired ones. To become permanent teachers, the applicants must pass an examination administered by the SEE, and an essential requirement to apply for this position is to be a university graduate in English. Temporarily hired teachers, on the other hand, may or may not have graduated in English, and teachers are hired as a replacements for permanent teachers.

Two main problems were detected when this study was carried out. First, many of the teachers who have not graduated in English do not have sufficient knowledge of the educational area of teaching English. Secondly, there exists a problem in teacher turnover

rates. Frequently, at the beginning of the year, students do not have classes because of the lack of teachers. Thus, throughout the year, students experience a variety of teaching methods by different teachers. For example, when I left my English classes due to my leave of absence to begin my MA course in 1999, I was replaced in one class by four different teachers, consecutively.

Within this context, I would like to investigate how teachers are dealing with the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, since its use is a common occurrence.

3.4. Research Questions

In enlarging upon the previous studies related to the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, my commitment, through the study proposed here, is to describe some of the perceptions of the state teachers about the use of the mother tongue in order to answer the following Research Questions:

- 1) Do teachers use translation activities in their classroom? If so,
 - 1a) are teachers using translation in the classroom as a tool for testing students?
 - 1b) are they using translation to check comprehension of words and/or sentences?
- 2) What other uses of the mother tongue are there in the classroom?
- 3) When do teachers use the Foreign Language, i.e. the English Language?
- 4) Do teachers think that the use of the mother tongue helps learners to improve their English knowledge?
- 5) Why do teachers use the mother tongue in the FL classroom?

3.5. Data Collection & Analysis

3.5.1. Data Collection

Data collection was made through the application of a questionnaire and interviews. Wallace (1988) classifies these techniques as 'introspective'. According to him these techniques are used "when we want to tap into the knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences of our learners, fellow teachers, parents or whatever" (p. 124). Therefore, this study will deal with two samples of data, one related to the questionnaires, and the other to the interviews.

The purpose of the first sample, obtained through the questionnaires, was to cover a greater number of teachers from the first and the twenty-sixth CREs, in order to provide an overview of the use of the mother tongue in the state schools of the Great Florianópolis area. The second sample, obtained through the interviews, has the purpose of checking and clarifying the data obtained from the first sample. At this point it seems to be important to clarify that both techniques were based on the review of the literature and designed to investigate some perceptions of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, as well as the use of translation.

The data were collected throughout the first and second school semesters of 2000, from June to September. During this period, I administered the questionnaires, analysed the data, and interpreted the perceptions of various teachers. Subsequently, I interviewed ten teachers to get a more detailed account of their beliefs regarding the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.

3.5.2. Analysis

The analysis was made based on Rubin and Rubin (1995) and McDonough and McDonough (1997), who presented some guidelines to deal with the analysis of questionnaires and interviews. The analysis will first provide an overview of all the data. The questionnaires will be interpreted numerically and also a cross-tabulation will be done. After that, in order to validate the questionnaire results, they will be compared with the information obtained through the interviews.

3.5. Conclusion of Chapter Three

Chapter 4 and 5 will also deal with two other methodological issues by describing, in a comprehensive way, the two elicitation techniques, the questionnaires and the interviews, and presenting the findings and interpretations of the data from the two samples.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

4.1. Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to describe the first elicitation technique, i.e., the questionnaires, by reporting on all the procedures involved during the questionnaire design and application, as well as the results and interpretation of the analysis of the questionnaires.

4.2. The Questionnaire Design

As suggested in Chapter Three, the design of the questionnaire was based on the review of the literature. Most of the questions were elaborated based on Atkinson's (1987) article in which he suggests that some of the uses of the mother tongue are: "eliciting language, checking comprehension, giving instructions, co-operation among learners, discussion of classroom methodology, presentation and reinforcement of language, checking for sense, testing, development of useful learning strategies" (pp. 243-4).

Before designing the questionnaire for the research reported here, I had previously designed and applied a questionnaire on the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom in 1999, while attending a translation course. At that time, I applied the questionnaire to teachers from four schools: two private and two state ones. This was a

pilot phase which helped me to design the final questionnaire. Although the pilot phase was carried out with private and state schools, I decided to focus this study on teachers from the state schools for three reasons. First, a large number of EFL teachers work in the State system and, consequently, a larger number of students attend these teachers' classes. Second, there are few research studies related to state schools and the EFL classrooms. Third, state schools are places where most of the teachers, experienced and inexperienced, seem to be using or permitting their students to use the mother tongue in the English-class.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was written in the teachers' mother tongue, Portuguese, to facilitate the teachers' comprehension, since all of them are Brazilian native speakers of Portuguese.

4.3. Questionnaire Application

I applied the questionnaire twice to two different groups. The first time was on May 29th during a course on continuing professional development for EFL teachers, which was attended by fifty three teachers, of which, thirty-nine completed and returned the questionnaire.

The second time was on July 6th, 2000. I sent a hundred and ten questionnaires: sixty to the 1st CRE and fifty to the 26th CRE. These questionnaires were sent through the Diretoria de Ensino, a department within the CRE which deals with the pedagogical matters. I asked the teachers to return them by July 20th, 2000. The questionnaire format was the same as the one answered by the first thirty-nine teachers. However, this time I added an open question at the end to identify the teachers' perceptions of the use of the mother tongue (The answers to the open question are included in Appendix

2). This time, thirty-three teachers returned the questionnaires. Thus, a total of seventy-two questionnaires from fifty-nine different schools were fully completed (a response rate of roughly 34% of the teachers and 60% of the schools of the regions being investigated).

4.4. Results of analysis and interpretation

The results and interpretation of the questionnaires are presented in percentages and are grouped in three different sections. Each section will present, apart from the percentage results, some comments on these results pointing out, for example, some contradictions that appear across questions, and also bringing, whenever relevant, theoretical and/or empirical information from other studies. Furthermore, each section will evaluate the scope and clarity of the results generated by the questions.

In Section 1, I present the Questionnaire Questions (QQ) 1, 2 and 3 which are related to Research Question (RQ) 1:

1) Do teachers use translation activities in their classroom?

1a) are teachers using translation in the classroom as a tool for testing students?

1b) are they using translation to check comprehension of words, sentences and/or texts?

1c) are the translation activities being contextualised?

In Section 2, I present the results and interpretations from Questionnaire Questions 3 to 11 which are related to Research Question (RQ) 2:

2) What other uses of the mother tongue are there in the classroom?

And to Research Question (RQ) 3:

3) When do teachers use the foreign language, i.e. English language?

Finally, in Section 3, I present the results of Questionnaire Question 12, an open question, which is related to my Research Questions (RQs) 4 and 5 :

4) Do teachers think that the use of the mother tongue helps learners to improve their English knowledge?

5) Why do teachers use the mother tongue in the classroom?

4.4.1. Section 1: Analysis of the answers to Questionnaire Questions 1, 2 and 3 related to Research Question 1.

Questionnaire Question 1- QQ1: Do you do translation activities in your EFL classes?

QQ1 was an attempt to understand the importance that translation has in the EFL classrooms of the teachers investigated. It should be emphasised that the answers indicated that translation activities were usually done by the questionnaires' respondents, since the majority of them answered that they usually do some translation activities in their English classes. It certainly seems worthy to note that more than 90 per cent of the respondents answered positively to this question, taking into consideration "yes" and "sometimes" answers. Table 4.1 shows the results of this question. Thus a high percentage, (94%) of the respondents, seem do translation activities in the EFL classroom.

Table 4.1: The use of translation activities in EFL classroom

Answers	Yes		Sometimes		Adding Yes and Sometimes answers		No		Non-answered	
	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%
Results	49	68	19	6.3	68	94.3	01	2.7	03	4

NT means the number of teachers among the whole population of teachers studied

On the other hand, the rates of “no” responses (2.7%) and “non-answered” responses (4%) call for comment. Although representing less than ten per cent, these rates can be relevant, because considering the context: in state schools where teachers deal with large classes, it seems unusual that these teachers did not use any kind of translation activities.

Questionnaire Question 2 - QQ2: Do you use translation activities to evaluate your students. If so,

a) Is it one question in the test?

b) Is it the test itself?

This question was aimed at finding out a little more about the teachers’ practice, namely the type of translation activities they do with their students. It is related to RQ1a: are teachers using translation as a tool for testing their students?

As QQ2 was divided into 1a and 1b, its results are shown in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3, respectively. These results show that quite often the respondents use translation activities as a tool for testing their students. It may therefore be concluded that these teachers do as some authors, such as Ur (1996), suggest in using the mother tongue within translation activities, mainly for testing in a monolingual class.

Table 4.2: The use of translation activities as one question in the test

Answers	Yes		Sometimes		Adding Yes and Sometimes answers		No		Non- answered	
	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%
Results	08	11	48	66.7	56	77.7	11	15.3	05	7

Table 4.3: The use of translation activities as the test itself

Answers	Yes		Sometimes		Adding Yes and Sometimes answers		No		Non- answered	
	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%
Results	13	18	32	44.5	45	62.5	22	30.5	05	7

The results shown in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, which related to the use of translation activities in the EFL classroom, present some mismatches in the responses. Considering the number of teachers who answered “yes” and “sometimes”, it is possible to say that 94.3 per cent (Table 4.1) of the respondents did translation activities in their EFL classroom; 77.7 per cent of them used translation activities as a part of testing (Table 4.2), whereas 62.5 per cent of them used translation as the test itself (Table 4.3). In attempting to explain these differences, one might reasonably assume that it simply reflects the fact that the respondents did translation activities (Table 4.1), but not only to evaluate their students (Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

On the other hand, these results do not indicate whether teachers are aware or not of why they are doing translation activities.

Questionnaire Question 3 – QQ3 : Do you use translation of words, sentences and/or texts?

QQ3 attempts to investigate the type of translation activities that teachers do with their students: translation of words, sentences and/or texts.

The results of Table 4.4 below suggest that a low number of teachers worked with translation of words (1.5%), which seems to reflect that translation of isolated words was not a preferred translation activity among the teachers who answered the questionnaire.

Table 4.4 : Translation of words, sentences and/or text

Answers	<i>only trans. of Words</i>		<i>only trans. of sentences</i>		<i>only trans. of texts</i>		<i>trans.of words/ sentences/texts</i>		<i>don't use translation</i>	
	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%
Results	01	1.5	02	3	13	20.3	42	65.6	03	4.6

The result of this question (see Table 4.4) does show an increase of teachers' responses, from less than 5 per cent (translation of words and sentences) to more than 20 per cent, related to translation of texts. As expected, the item which included the three kinds of translation was the preference of more than 50 per cent of the respondents. This choice could point to the teachers' awareness of the different possibilities of using translation activities in their English classes.

In addition, it is possible to say that teachers seem to be contextualising their translation activities, since the number of teachers who worked with translation of texts was about thirty-five. Twelve of these carried out activities related exclusively to translation of texts, and forty-nine mixed the three kinds of translation activities, in which the translation of texts was included.

4.4.2. Section 2: Analysis of the Answers to Questionnaire Question 4 to 11 related to Research Question 2

Questionnaire Questions 4 to 11 were designed to check some specific uses of the mother tongue. The results are shown in Table 4.5 and delineate some of the teachers' perceptions.

Questionnaire Question 4 - QQ4 : Do you use the mother tongue to give instructions?

QQ4 was the only question in which the answers were divided into "yes" and "sometimes", since nobody answered "no" (see Table 4.5). These results seem to indicate that the teachers investigated give instructions in the mother tongue, at least sometimes to help students in the learning process.

As QQ4 was not an open question it was not clear what teachers (those who answered "sometimes") do in order to check the students' comprehension of the instructions given in the target language, and therefore, how they know whether their students understand them or not. Perhaps they do what Atkinson (1987) suggests as being a satisfactory solution for this use: to "give the instructions in the target language and to ask for their repetition in the students' language in order to ensure that everyone fully understands what to do" (p. 243).

Here, all the teachers admitted that they used the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, and perhaps I could risk suggesting, as regards instructions that 100% of the teachers who answered the questionnaire used, at least sometimes, the mother tongue to give instructions in their classroom.

Table 4.5: Answers to QOs 4 to 10

Uses of mother tongue	Number of teachers/percentage					
	Yes		Sometimes		No	
	NT	%	NT	%	NT	%
<i>QQ4 Instructions</i>	42	58.4	30	41.6	-	-
<i>QQ5 Grammar</i>	47	65.3	23	32	02	2.7
<i>QQ6 Methodology</i>	48	66.7	17	23.6	07	9.7
<i>QQ7 Administrative information</i>	46	63.9	17	23.6	09	12.5
<i>QQ8 Students can use the mother tongue during group work</i>	57	79.2	14	19.4	01	1.4
<i>QQ9 Text comprehension</i>	35	48.6	36	50	01	1.4
<i>QQ10 Motivation</i>	43	59.7	23	31.9	06	8.4

Questionnaire Question 5 - QQ5: Do you use the mother tongue to explain grammar?

Comparing the answers to this question to those to QQ4, it is possible to observe that the number of teachers who answered “yes” increased from 42 to 47, and the number of “sometimes” fell down. But, taking together “yes” and “sometimes” responses, it is possible to observe that giving instructions in the mother tongue (100%) had a higher percentage than explaining grammar (97%). On the other hand, two teachers answered “no”. So, I can conclude that these two teachers explain grammar using the target language (TL), a result that shows that although explaining grammar in a large class is difficult, these two teachers forward it.

Regarding this issue, Harbord (1991) suggests that teachers should use the mother tongue to explain grammar because “they feel that L2 explanation is too complicated and may even feel themselves incapable of giving a clear and unambiguous explanation of the structure in question exclusively in English” ¹(p.353).

Questionnaire Question 6 - QQ6: Do you use the mother tongue to discuss methodology?

Atkinson (1987) stresses the importance of using the mother tongue, mainly for “discussion of methodology at early levels” and adds that this is “best conducted either in a mixture of both languages or exclusively in the students’ mother tongue” (p. 244). The results of the questionnaire show that most of the teachers do what Atkinson suggests, since 65 teachers use the mother tongue at least “sometimes” in this case. By contrast, there were 7 teachers who answered “no”, which suggests either no discussion of methodology with their students or the use of the target language.

By looking in detail at the results of the questionnaires by those teachers who answered “no” to QQ6 (see Table 4.6), one may note that they had answered “yes” or “sometimes” to QQ4 and QQ5. Thus, if they used, at least sometimes, the mother tongue to give instructions and to explain grammar, it would seem unusual for them not to use the mother tongue to discuss methodology in their EFL classroom.

Table 4.6: Comparisons of the answers given by the teachers who answered negatively QQ6

Teachers	QQ4			QQ5			QQ6		
	Y	S	N	Y	S	N	Y	S	N
01		X			X				X
02		X			X				X
03		X			X				X
04		X			X				X
05		X		X					X
06		X			X				X
07		X			X				X

Do you use the mother tongue to deal with

QQ4 Instructions?

QQ5 Grammar?

QQ6 Methodology?

¹ If he is right, I think this could represent a gap in the methodological aspects of the teachers’ training course which does not prepare them to deal with real problems like this.

These contradictory findings indicate that it could be interesting to investigate more deeply how teachers discuss methodology, e.g., if they interact with their students about methods and class planning. Discussions of methodology in the classroom can be very important because it involves the students, and permits teachers to become familiar with the students' preferred learning strategies and to develop more efficient methods to teach. In order to discuss methodology the students would need to have a fairly high level of English proficiency which seems to be difficult to find in the early levels being investigated.

Questionnaire Question 7- QQ7: Do you use the mother tongue to give administrative information?

As can be seen in Table 4.5, more than 80 per cent of the respondents answered "yes" and "sometimes" to QQ7, showing that the majority of the teachers use the mother tongue to give administrative information. The results of the analysis (see Table 4.5) also show that there are nine teachers who answered "no" to QQ7, the largest number of 'no' responses in this section.

QQ7 seems to indicate that although dealing with administrative information could, based on Harbord (1991), be a real opportunity to use the target language in the English class, the majority of the teachers investigated seem to prefer to use the mother tongue to do this.

Questionnaire Question 8 - QQ8: Do you allow your students to use the mother tongue during group work?

This question shows the largest number of "yes" responses, 79.2 per cent (see Table 4.5), and fourteen "sometimes" responses.

The analysis reveals though, some problems in the way the question was formulated. While QQ8 asks whether teachers allow or not the use of the mother tongue during group work, i. e., what teachers instruct learners to do, it does not ask what teachers believe learners actually do during pair work.

In summary, the analysis of the answers to QQ8 has raised some questions which have been left unanswered concerning to the use of the mother tongue during group work, i.e., whether teachers have established rules for the use of the target language or whether teachers are aware about which language their students actually use during group work.

Questionnaire Question 9 - QQ9: Do you use the mother tongue to check text comprehension?

The results of this question (see Table 4.5) show that teachers use both the mother tongue and the target language to check text comprehension, yielding the highest percentage of "sometimes" responses.

QQ9 was not included in the first section related to translation because it was meant to elicit answers about how teachers deal with the main idea of a whole text. Yet this question could have presented a problem of ambiguity for the teachers, who could have understood "text comprehension", in two different ways, either as related to translation activities in which students have to translate the text to understand it, or to text comprehension activities in which students have to answer general questions without resorting to translation.

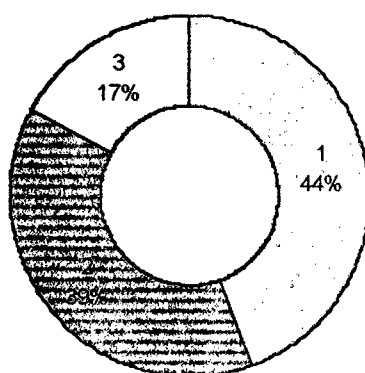
Questionnaire Question 10 - QQ10: Do you use the mother tongue at the beginning of your English class to motivate students?

The results of QQ10 (see Table 4.5) show that more than 90 per cent of the respondents used the mother tongue, at least sometimes, to motivate their students. Thus, less than 10 per cent answered “no” to this question. Although the number of “no” responses was less than the “yes” and “sometimes” responses, this number seems to be meaningful, taking into account the context of regular schools where the use of the target language seems to be so minimal.

Questionnaire Question 11 - QQ1: Do you use mainly English, Portuguese, or both (English and Portuguese) languages to conduct your classes?

The results of QQ11 show that the majority of the respondents, as was expected, used Portuguese (39%) or both languages (Portuguese and English) (44%), to conduct their FL classes (see figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: “Do you give your classes mainly in Portuguese, English or both?”



1= Portuguese and English
2= Portuguese
3= English

Table 4.7 shows the answers from QQ4 to QQ10 of the twelve teachers who said that they conducted their English classes mainly in English. Interestingly, as can be seen, the majority of them answered “yes” or “sometimes” to almost all the questions. Therefore their answers seem to point to a mismatch, since they have said they conducted their classes mainly in English, yet, looking at the answers given by them it is possible to infer that even though these teachers do use the mother tongue in their English class: to give instructions, explain grammar, give administrative information, and check text comprehension.

Table 4.7: Answers to QQ4 to QQ10 of the 12 teachers who reported to conduct the classes mainly in English.

Teachers	QQ4 YNS	QQ5 YNS	QQ6 YNS	QQ7 YNS	QQ8 YNS	QQ9 YNS	QQ10 YNS
01	x	X	x	X	x	X	x
02	x	X	x	X	x	x	x
03	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
04	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
05	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
06	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
07	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
08	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
09	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
10	x	X	x	x	x	X	x
11	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
12	x	X	x	x	x	x	x
Total	2 10	5 1 6	5 7	6 6	6 6	3 9	4 4 4

Do you use the mother tongue to deal with...

QQ4 Instructions?

QQ5 Grammar?

QQ6 Methodology?

QQ8 Students can use the MT during group work?

QQ9 Text comprehension?

QQ10 Motivation?

Furthermore, if we look at the answers given by these teachers, we can see that only QQ5 and QQ10 yielded negative answers. While QQ5 had only one negative.

answer QQ10 had four negative answers, which although representing less than 50 per cent of the respondents is the greatest number of “no” responses.

4.4.3. Section 3: Analysis of the answers to Questionnaire Question 12 related to Research Questions 4 and 5

Questionnaire Question 12 - QQ12: What do you think of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom?

QQ12 was the only open question and, among the total of seventy-two respondents, thirty-two answered this question.

The answers were analysed in a broad way in order to find the similarities and the differences among them. Then, a detailed analysis divided the answers into two groups: the first group was related to *images used by the teachers to describe the functions of the mother tongue*; the second group was related to some *contextual factors*, mainly the reasons why the teachers seem to be using the mother tongue.

First, I carried out a detailed text analysis in the process of reading the interview word by word in order to categorise the ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 1992). I yielded some findings regarding *images* that show how the respondents see the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. The most noticeable image that emerged was that of the mother tongue as a **tool**, since some words used by the respondents were: base (*basis*), mecanismo principal (*main mechanism*), uma ponte (*a bridge*), um instrumento (*a tool*), suporte (*support*), auxiliar (*auxiliary*), complemento (*complement*), used in phrases such as “main mechanism to deal with the content” (mecanismo principal ao conduzir os conteúdos da matéria), “a bridge to help learners to find common experiences” (a ponte que ajuda a criar laços de empatia e de experiências comuns), “a tool to compare the

structures” (como ferramenta de comparação de estruturas), “a support in learning another language” (apoio necessário na aprendizagem de qualquer língua estrangeira), “only auxiliary and never as the main purpose” (apenas como auxiliar nunca como fundamental). Here, from these images, it might be said that teachers believe there is a relationship between the mother tongue and the target language, and at the same time, that this relationship could help the teaching/learning process since all of them suggested that the mother tongue can help students to learn a foreign language.

Second, looking at the answers related to some *contextual factors*, it was possible to find teachers who suggested that the mother tongue was *necessary* because they dealt with **large classes**. Other teachers implied that at school there was a **lack of material**, such as TVs, dictionaries, videos, etc.; and some respondents suggested that the use of the mother tongue was not only subordinate to the school’s poor infrastructure, but also to **the lack of attention from the educational authorities**. In addition, some teachers suggested that the main reason for the use of the mother tongue could be **the learners’ lack of motivation and teachers’ lack of proficiency**. There were respondents who explicitly stressed the importance of attending a teachers’ development course to solve the problem in question, one of them said that it is necessary to find new resources and different methodologies in order to change the way classes are being taught; and another said that although teachers hope to improve their English, they do not have the financial support to do so.

The answers to QQ12 also point to another contextual aspect, the level of the students at which the respondents thought the mother tongue could be used in the classroom. There were seven teachers who stressed the importance of using the mother tongue in the first level, i.e. in the 5th and 6th grades. According to them, the first level students have more difficulty in understanding the target language, and besides, the use

of the mother tongue helps them to have a better relationship with the teachers. They also suggested that the use of the mother tongue could slowly be changed to that of the target language in the more advanced levels, such as in the 8th grade or Secondary Education. This would mean that after a period of familiarisation, teachers should adjust the use of the mother tongue in order to avoid its overuse, since learners have already some English language background.

Looking at these two groups of answers it is possible to observe that these teachers, judging by their responses (1) show how they see the role of the mother tongue, and (2) give reasons for using the mother tongue in class. A summary of the two main types of teachers' responses is shown in Table 4.8 below:

Table 4.8: *Summary of QQ12 teachers' responses*

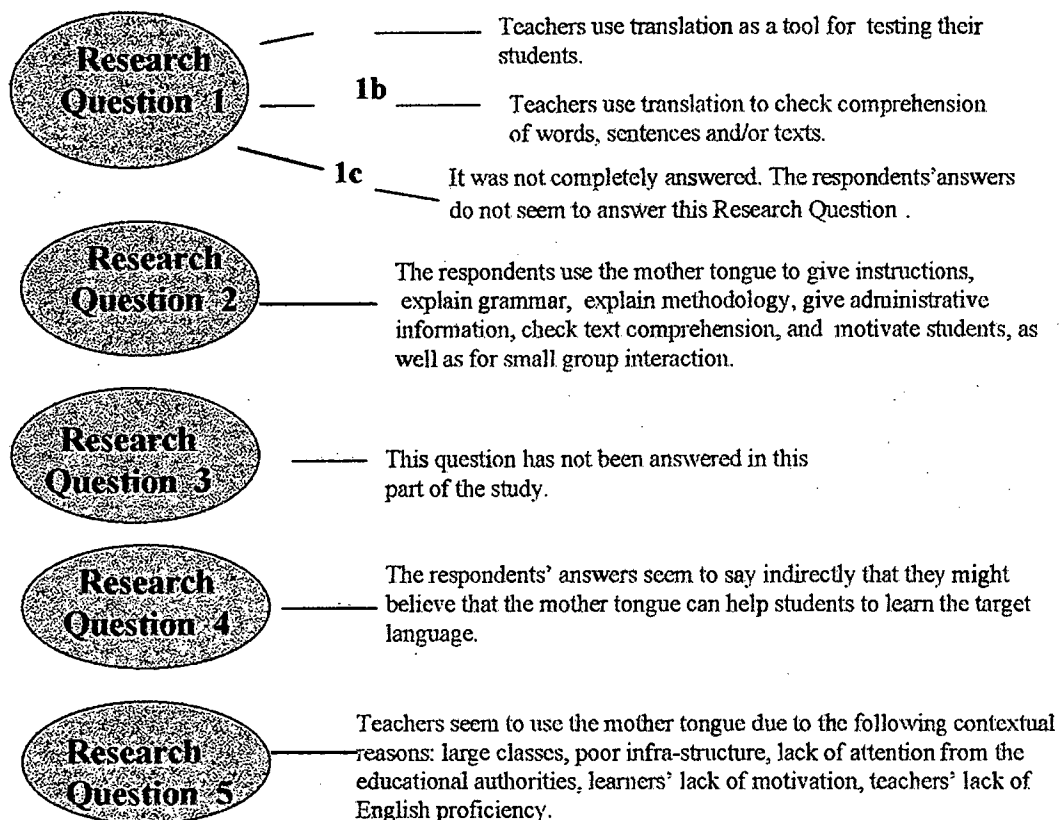
<p>Ways in which the teachers perceive the mother tongue: As a tool that represents mediation between the target language and the learners.</p> <p>Contextual Aspects that determine the use of the mother tongue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large classes; • Poor infra-structure; • Lack of attention from the educational authorities; • Learners lack of motivation; • Teachers lack of English proficiency <p><i>Students' low levels of English</i></p>
--

4.5. Summary of Chapter 4

4.5.1. Looking at the results of the Questionnaire in the light of the Research Questions

Figure 4.2 summarises the findings of this chapter in light of the Research Questions.

figure 4.2: Summary of the responses of Research Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4.



Finally, as a methodological conclusion in this part of the study, I perceived the limitation for the use of questionnaires in a research, since in analysing the results as a whole, some doubts arose from the teachers' responses. Therefore, in order to solve these doubts, and, at the same time, to have a better understanding about the relationship between the mother tongue and the target language in the state schools' EFL classes, I decided to interview ten of the teachers who had previously answered the questionnaire.

Chapter Five will provide a thorough description of the interview procedures, findings and interpretations.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INTERVIEWS

5.1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to describe the second technique I have used to carry out this study: the Interview. As suggested in Chapter Four, the Interview had a specific objective: to clarify the doubts that appeared after the questionnaire analysis in order to have a better understanding of the relationship between the mother tongue and the target language in the EFL classes of state schools.

In this Chapter, I will report on all the procedures used during the interviews as well as the results and interpretations of the interview data.

5.2. Characteristics of the interview

McDonough & McDonough (1997) and Wallace (1988) state that interviews can fall into three broad categories: *structured*, i.e., "similar to a questionnaire but used orally" (ibid., p. 146); *semi-structure*, i.e., based generally on an open question plus comments, examples or follow-up questions; *and unstructured*, i.e., a kind of conversation. The Interviews conducted for this research can be considered semi-structured, since I prepared an interview schedule to follow, based on twelve open questions, and I also used "*prompts*

i.e., comments, examples or follow-up questions intended to encourage the interviewees to give fuller, more detailed responses” (p. 146, author’s italics).

When I invited some of the teachers to take part on the interview, I talked about the time it would take, and about the general tenor of the interview. Once I had distributed the questionnaires I had difficulty getting them back; and when I wished to carry out the interviews, I had problems in fixing the appointments with some of the teachers, who gave me a lot of excuses to avoid being interviewed. So, although I had intended to interview twelve teachers, I could only interview ten, who answered all the questions. The selection of these teachers was based on the questionnaire analysis answers. I decided to interview three teachers who conducted their classes mainly in English, three who conducted their classes in both language i.e., English and Portuguese and four teachers who conducted their language in Portuguese. This choice was made in order to get an overview of the perceptions of these teachers.

The interviews were conducted in Portuguese, the participants’ L1, and audio recorded. In order to fix the appointment with the teachers, I phoned them. The interviewees chose the place and the time they would like to be interviewed. So, I had no problems related to audio recording the interviewees because the atmosphere was generally friendly and quiet.

5.3. The Interview design

As shown in Chapter Four some questions arose, during the Questionnaire Analysis. Therefore, at the end of the Questionnaire Analysis I reviewed the unanswered questions and took notes on them. Then, looking at these notes I prepared an interview outline

following the questionnaire order, i.e., I followed the questionnaire analysis and the doubts which had arisen while I designed the interview questions. Finally, I got the following twelve questions:

1. *Do you do activities of translation of words?*
2. *What does contextualisation mean?*
3. *What are your criteria for choosing texts that you use in the classroom?*
4. *How do you do reading comprehension activities?*
5. *What kind of instructions do you give to your students in English?*
6. *Do you use English or Portuguese to explain grammar?*
7. *Do you discuss the methodological aspects of your classes, such as the techniques and the procedures used to carry out the activities with your students?*
8. *How do you begin your class?*
9. *How do you begin a new teaching point?*
10. *Do you believe using Portuguese in your English class helps you learners learn English?*
11. *Why do teachers use Portuguese in the EFL classroom?*
12. *How would you evaluate your English proficiency?*

As soon as I had finished the interview question design, I perceived that it would be better to change their order, in order to facilitate the flow of the interview. Thus, for the interviewees, I used all the questions I had first made but in a different order. Therefore, I designed the second interview outline, which was the one used to carry out the interview. The sequence of questions of the actual interviews was: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 2, 3, 1, 4, 10, 11, 12.

It is important to stress that although I designed two interview outlines, the questions themselves were not changed. The original twelve questions were asked to the

interviewees, and I also added some follow-up questions to clarify possible doubts that arose during the development of the interviews.

5.4. Procedures of analysis

The first stage in the process of the interview data analysis was the transcription of the interviews, which lasted two weeks, during which each of the twelve questions was transcribed.

To assure confidentiality, each teacher received a random number. After transcribing all the interview questions (IQ), the responses to the same question were grouped together, thus, providing an overview of teachers' beliefs. Finally, the answers were analysed following the technique of analysis proposed by Rubin and Rubin, 1992. First, the interview was read word by word and paragraph by paragraph in order to categorise the ideas, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (*ibid.*), this is a detailed work which is indispensable to the process of categorisation.

5.5. Results and interpretation of the Interview Questions -IQs

As mentioned previously, ten teachers were interviewed, and the interview was based on twelve questions. The results of the analysis of these questions are presented in three Sections related to the Research Questions of this dissertation.

I will present the results and interpretations of the interviews following the first outline, i.e., the sequence of questions presented on page 39, so that with this schedule it is possible to follow the order of the Questionnaire Questions as well as the order of the Research Questions.

5.5.1 Section 1: The use of translation activities in the classroom – Interview

Questions 1-4

Interview Questions 1 to 4 are related to the doubts that arose in QQ 1 to 3, and in QQ 9, all of which are related to RQ 1 below:

- 1) Do teachers use translation activities in their classroom? If so,
 - 1 a) are teachers using translation in the classroom as a tool for testing students?
 - 1 b) are they using translation to check comprehension of words, sentences, and/or texts?
 - 1 c) are the translation activities being contextualised?

During the analysis of the questionnaire, I looked at the responses to RQ 1a and 1b as is shown at the end of Chapter Four. During the interview I looked for more details related to how teachers deal with the translation of words with Interview Question 1 “*Do you do activities of translation of words?*” In addition to this, I asked a specific question related to contextualisation, “*What does contextualisation mean?*”, and also two other questions related to how teachers deal with texts in the classroom, “*What are your criteria for choosing texts that you are going to use in the classroom?*” and “*How do you do reading comprehension activities?*” These questions helped clarify the interviewees’ beliefs to RQ 1c, which was left unanswered in Chapter 4.

Interview Question 1 – IQ 1: Do you do activities of translation of words?

All the interviewees said that they often work with the translation of words and stressed that this kind of activity is done orally according to the students’ needs. Teacher 1, for example, stated that “Eles perguntam muito o que eles vêem no vídeo game, nas camisetas, ouvem nos filmes.” (They [students] ask a lot about what they see in video

games, on T-shirts, and about what they hear in films). In this other example, Teacher 6 shows that he interacts with the students in order to clear up their doubts: “Eu pergunto: o que foi que apareceu no texto que vocês não conhecem? aí vou dizendo tudo oral...” (I ask the question: What words in the text don't you know? and then I keep clearing up their doubts orally).

Interestingly, Teacher 1 said that he generally translates idioms and irregular verbs, and pointed out that students do not know how to look up words in the dictionary, so it is important to teach them to do so. He suggested that it is important for students to learn that words may have more than one meaning and that the first listing may not be the one being sought. In this example, the teacher shows his concern for the learners' dictionary skills: “o que eu mais oriento eles é por exemplo, na utilização do dicionário não pegar a 1ª palavra que aparecer lá. Então tá lá ‘prep.’ o que é ‘prep’, então a gente explica.” (The most common advice I give to my students is, for example, when they look up a word, not to choose the first word that they find. So, if they find ‘prep’, I explain what ‘prep’ means). While Teacher 1 works with the dictionary to solve students' doubts, the majority of the interviewees, ask their students to look up the meanings of words in the dictionary only as a last resort. The teachers said that they prefer to use a variety of techniques in order to help their students guess the meaning of a word. If students still do not get it, then the teachers permit the use of the dictionary, or do the translation of the words themselves.

During the Questionnaire Analysis the responses indicated that this kind of activity (translation of words) is not used a great deal. Among the interviewees, this activity did not seem to be very popular either. They said that they generally do not work with the translation of words as a written activity, and suggested that the use of translation of words is generally related to the students' question, “What does it mean?”. Therefore, the

translation of words does not seem to be used as a pedagogical technique by ten teachers, but as a clarification technique that helps students dispel doubts that arise during a class.

Interview Question 2 - IQ 2: What does constextualisation mean?

The reasons why it is important to teach and work with language in context is that language is “context-sensitive”, which “means that, in the absence of context, it is very difficult to recover the intended meaning of a single word or phrases” (Thornbury, 1999, p. 69). In other words, when teaching new structures and vocabulary, it is essential to place them within situations, such as events, or stories, so that their functions and meanings can be clearly grasped by the learners. This view agrees with Valette (1991), as mentioned in Chapter Two, who stresses the importance of including contexts, either orally described ones or written texts to illustrate teaching points, i.e., topics, functions, structure, vocabulary.

Although all the interviewees hesitated to answer Question 2, their comments suggest that they understood the meaning and the importance of ‘contextualisation’ in the foreign language classroom. Teacher 1, for example, said: “Contextualização... É inserir uma idéia dentro da outra? Não, deixe me ver... é dentro de um texto por exemplo você inserir uma matéria que está dando, seria isso?” (Contextualisation... Is it to put one idea inside another? No, let me see... Is it, for example, to put a subject that you are teaching inside a text, would it be this?) Teacher 6, in this other example, also has difficulty in giving a definition: “Contextualização... ah! É difícil... é inserir as coisas dentro de uma história, dentro de uma vivência...” (Contextualisation...ah! It is difficult... It is to put things inside a story, inside an experience...). Furthermore, the responses of the teachers suggest that they do contextualise some of their activities, as seen in what Teacher 4 says

to complement her definition of the word “contextualisation”, “nos trabalhos como preencher ficha, aí você leva uma ficha de hotel, uma ficha de emprego. Para trabalhos com horas, nós pegamos horário de partida de avião daqui de Florianópolis,” (When we need to fill in a form we use a form from a hotel or a company. To work with time we use the timetable of the airport here in Florianópolis).

In conclusion, teachers demonstrated that they try to contextualise the subject they are teaching. House (1981) says that “all texts chosen for translation activities should be totally contextualised for the students, i.e., they must be relevant to the students’ particular range of experience and interest,....” (p.233).

Interview Question 3 - IQ 3: What are your criteria for choosing texts that you use in the classroom?

This question is closely related to IQ 2, since it also shows whether the teachers are aware of the importance of contextualisation or not. In other words, knowing how teachers choose the texts they use with their students can give us more evidence about how they deal with the process of contextualisation.

After this first consideration, let’s look at the interviewees’ answers. The majority of the interviewees revealed that when choosing texts, they look primarily for grammar points in them. Teacher 4, for example, states “ Eu procuro textos que tenham as estruturas gramaticais que a gente trabalhou.” (I look for texts which have the grammar points that we are studying). On the other hand, other teachers choose the texts by checking whether the text is suitable for their students’ level, as is seen in Teacher 10’s statement “de preferência textos que apresentem uma linguagem adequada aquele nível de aluno” (I prefer texts which are suitable for the students’ level). Other teachers’ worries related to

text choice are the motivational forces of the content of the text, i.e., whether the text can arouse the interest of their students. Teacher 2 gives a clear example of this, “Tem que ser alguma coisa que eles possam se interessar.” (it must be something that arouses the interest of the students). Interestingly, only a few of the interviewees said that they follow the book, probably because the majority of the students of the state schools do not have English textbooks, which seems to permit teachers to give their students a variety of different texts. One example of the teachers who follow a textbook may be seen in the following statement of teacher 2: “ Eu normalmente pego os textos do próprio livro” (I usually use texts from the students’ textbook).

In analysing the comments above, it seems possible to observe that the interviewees use four different criteria to choose their texts: (1) the grammar that their students are learning, (2) the level of their students, (3) their motivating aspect and/or interest, and (4) the material made available by the school.

Interview Question 4 - IQ 4: How do you do reading comprehension activities?

Although Interview Question 4 arose from the need to clarify whether the interviewees believed reading comprehension to be related to translation or not, it is also possible to relate it to RQ 1c, since it could provide more details about text choice, and the relationship between this choice and contextualisation. Therefore, first I will look at the interviewees’ answers to find out *how they develop the reading comprehension activities*. Second, I will observe whether the teachers relate reading comprehension to translation or not, and finally, I will analyse their answers in relation to the process of contextualisation.

The answers given by the interviewees to IQ 4 suggest that they use *different techniques when working with texts*. Some of them *give texts to their students to translate,*

Teacher 1 said that he uses this technique: “Eu seleciono um texto que eu acho que está mais ou menos no nível deles, a tradução deste texto é feita em grupo” (I choose a text according to the students’ level, and they work in groups to do the translation of this text). Other teachers *work with general comprehension without translation*. Teacher 8 uses the following technique when working with texts: “Trabalho com compreensão geral. Não gosto de tradução.” (I work with general comprehension, I don’t like working with translation of texts). Yet the majority of the interviewees said that they use both techniques: text translation and general text comprehension. During the translation activities some teachers said that they give their students sentences in English to be translated into Portuguese, and vice-versa. Also, there are teachers who deal with the use of cognates to foster the students’ translation skills, and consequently, their understanding of the text. Furthermore, when they work with the general comprehension of a text, they use small texts, and they sometimes do listening activities, such as listening and cloze exercises, after discussing what the text is about. Another technique used by the teachers is to ask questions in Portuguese which are then answered by their students. This technique mingles translation and general comprehension, where students *scan the text* to find the answers, while, at the same time, translating parts of the text in order to have a general understanding and to be able to answer the questions.

The interviewees considered it easier to work with students from the first levels because they accepted different activities. Most of the teachers suggested that the older students complain all the time, asking them to translate the texts. Teacher 5 stated that her students, as soon as they see a text in English, they complain, “Professora, tradução, nos vamos traduzir, primeiro nos vamos traduzir (students from 7th grade)” (Teacher, translation, we are going to translate the text, first we are going to translate).

By analysing the interviewees' comments on how they deal with text comprehension, we may infer that the interviewees do not work only with translation activities, but also with activities which allow students to have a general view of the text. Therefore, these teachers' perceptions seem to put reading comprehension in a more ample universe, capable of joining different skills and of being enriched by many different techniques.

Taking into consideration the relationship between IQ 4 and contextualisation, it could be concluded that the interviewed teachers contextualise the texts before reading and working with them. In addition, the teachers indicated that after reading comprehension activities, they also use the text to explore the grammar points.

5.5.1.1. Summary of Section 1: The use of translation activities in the classroom

The *classroom conclusions drawn from* Interview Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1; Summary of answers to Interview Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4

IQ 1: "Do you do activities of translation of words?"

- Teachers use but do not overuse activities of translation of words:

Teachers suggested that they:

- use them according to the students' needs (orally);
- translate idioms and irregular verbs;
- use translation as a technique for clarification;
- think that a variety of techniques help students guess the meaning;
- teach learners to use the dictionary;
- only translate a word as a last resort.

IQ 2: "What does contextualisation mean?"

Teachers suggested that they usually contextualise the activities and that contextualisation means to:

- put an idea inside the other;
- put things inside a specific experience;
- put something in a context;
- include daily events of the students' lives into texts and classroom activities;
- use students' knowledge;
- use the studied grammar points inside the texts.

IQ 3: What are your criteria for choosing texts that you use in the classroom?

Teachers suggested the following criteria for choosing texts:

- the grammar points;
- the students' level;
- the content of the text;
- the students' interests.

IQ4: "How do you do reading comprehension activities?"

Teachers suggested two kinds of reading comprehension activities:

- using translation of sentences from English to Portuguese and vice versa;
- using general comprehension activities: questions and answers, comprehension of small texts, and listening to fill in gaps (cloze exercises).

5.5.2. Section 2: Uses of the mother tongue and the target language in the EFL classroom - Interview Questions 5 to 9

The answers to Interview Questions (IQ) 5 to 9 provide a better understanding of how the state school teachers investigated tend to deal not only with the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, but also with the use of the target language. Therefore, these

findings add meaningful information to an investigation of Research Question 2 (RQ 2): "What other uses of the mother tongue are there in the classroom?", and Research Question 3 (RQ 3): "When do teachers use the foreign language, i.e., the English language?"

In this section the responses to interviewees questions 5 to 9 are provided, as well as, the follow-up questions that were asked to encourage the interviewees to give fuller and more detailed responses.

Interview Question 5- IQ 5: What kind of instructions do you give to your students in English?

When I analysed the questionnaire, it was possible to conclude that the majority of teachers used, at least sometimes, the mother tongue to give instructions. The results of the interview confirm this use of the mother tongue, since among the ten interviewees, only two teachers, teachers 9 and 10 said that they use mainly English to give instructions to their students. Furthermore, although the majority of the interviewees said that they give instructions mainly in Portuguese, all of them replied that they give some instructions in English. This subsection deals with these uses of English. I will present a list of the instructions that the interviewees said that they give in English in the classroom. These instructions will be sorted in two different groups. The first group contains the instructions for exercises and activities, the second includes some teachers' commands and some requests for permission.

⇒ **Group 1: Instructions for exercises and activities:**

This group is formed by some 'simple instructions', which can be found in textbooks such as: *Complete the sentences, Change to English, Translate, Make sentences, Make negative sentences, Answer in the negative form.*

⇒ **Group 2: Teachers' commands and requests for permission:**

I - Teachers' commands

These are some of the commands that the interviewees define as "o básico" (basic things), such as: *Stand up, Sit down, Go to the door, Open the door, Close the window, Pay attention.*

II - Requests for permission

These are the requests which some of the interviewees said they teach their students to ask, e.g. : *Can I go to the toilet? Can I drink water? Can I open the door?*

The interviewees emphasised that sometimes they try to use more English, but their students have some difficulty in understanding and memorising. Besides, teachers said that students seem to resist the use of English, and try to force their teachers to speak Portuguese. Teacher 6 suggested this in this statement, "nas salas em que eu comecei a falar em inglês os alunos diziam: para, para professora!" (when I began to speak English the students said: "Stop, teacher, stop").

Now, I will present some techniques that the interviewees developed to help their students understand what they were saying in English: *exchanging ideas with their students to clarify the meaning of words and sentences; using mime and gestures; talking in English and translating when they perceive their students do not understand.* They also said they give only simple instructions, seen in the following excerpts: Teacher 1- "so o basico"

(only simple things), Teacher 2 - “basicamente instruções de exercícios” (basically instructions for activities); Teacher 3 - “coisinhas do dia-a-dia” (daily things); teacher 4: “instruções geralmente de trabalho” (general instructions of work); Teachers 5 and 6 - “muito pouca” (just a little); Teacher 7: “instruções de conteúdo” (instructions related to content). As it is possible to observe, the answers to this question were homogeneous, except for the responses by teachers 9 and 10, who said that they give almost all of their instructions in English. The majority of the interviewees admitted that they used little English in the classroom, because whenever they spoke in English, they had to face the students’ resistance.

Interview Question 6 - IQ 6: Do you use English or Portuguese to explain grammar?

There were three different answers to this question. As expected, the majority of them (seven teachers) responded that they explain grammar in **Portuguese**, only one said in **English**, and two said they use both, **English and Portuguese**.

As almost all the interviewees said they explain grammar in Portuguese, I added a follow-up question: *Have you ever explained grammar in English?*, to get a fuller description. Half of the interviewees replied that they have never tried to explain grammar in English and they point out some of the reasons why they have not done so. These teachers considered the explanation of grammar in English difficult, and thought that doing so would confuse their students. They also suggested some other factors such as teachers’ complacency, lack of confidence and proficiency, and students’ lack of vocabulary. Consider, for example, the following statement by Teacher 6: “Por mim, que eu também tenho bastante dificuldade e por eles. Então eles já não... prá entender a gramática, já ficam meio assim porque e aula de inglês. Se eu ainda falar em inglês aí mesmo que eles não vão

entender nada.” (I, myself, and also my students have a lot of difficulties. They have problems with grammar, they lack confidence in English, and if I speak in English they are not going to understand at all).

Some of the interviewees also admitted that they have sometimes tried to use English to explain grammar, but have given up because the students frequently interrupted them, or did not participate, which is probably due to the large number of students per class. On the other hand, some teachers who said that they teach grammar in English told me that they prepare their students by first explaining what they are going to do, or they check to see if the students understand. Other teachers said that they compare the English and Portuguese grammars. Teacher 9, for example, said that he works with grammar fifty per cent in English and fifty per cent in Portuguese. I asked him if his students understand the explanation, and he made the following comment: “Entendem. Não sei eu to conseguindo conquistá-los.” (They understand. I don’t know, but I’m gaining their confidence).

Teacher 4, on the contrary, talks about her own limitations: “...sabe mas eu não me sentia preparada. Eu achava que se eu fosse explicar em inglês eu ia acabar complicando mais eles, do que fazer eles entenderem. E eu podia me complicar também.” (...you know, I felt I was not prepared. I thought that if I explained in English I would confuse my students. And I could become confused too).

Thus, Teacher 4’s answer confirms what Harbord (1991) says regarding this issue, namely that teachers “feel that L2 explanation is too complicated and may even feel themselves incapable of giving a clear and unambiguous explanation of the structure in question exclusively in English” (p. 353).

The examples in this Section show different perceptions of the use of English in the classroom. While Teacher 9 believed that it is possible to use English and overcome the

problems, Teachers 4 and 6 had never tried. Furthermore, these two teachers admitted that their own lack of confidence was responsible for their inability to explain English grammar.

Interview Question 7- IQ 7: Do you discuss the methodological aspects of your classes, such as the techniques and procedures used to carry out the activities with your students?

In looking at the interviewees' answers to this question it was possible to detect that there are teachers who do not discuss the methodological aspects of their classes; in either Portuguese or English. Also, the teachers gave some reasons for why they do not discuss methodology in the classroom, such as that they need to follow the program contents, and that they do not have enough time to discuss methodology with their students. Teachers who discuss methodology in Portuguese said that they explain what they are doing and why they are doing this. Only one teacher said that he discusses methodology in English, and stressed that everything is done together with his students; for example, he explains to his student why he has chosen a specific text.

**Interview Questions 8 and 9 - IQ 8: How do you begin your class?
IQ 9: How do you begin a new teaching point?**

Almost all the interviewees said that they greet their students in English as soon as they arrive in the classroom and after calling the roll. Some of them give commands such as *silence, stand up, sit down, close the door and open your book*. The teachers said that after that they generally review the last teaching point, and they correct the homework using both English and Portuguese.

Teacher 6, for example, said she negotiates with her students some participation rules, so that the students have occasions to use. For example, when a student arrives late to the classroom, he/she should ask for permission to enter the class.

As suggested above, although most of the interviewees begin their classes in English, by greeting their students, when they introduce a new teaching point almost all of them switch into Portuguese.

Regarding the use of English to motivate the learners, Teacher 4's statement is interesting: "Com certeza é possível começar (um conteúdo novo) em inglês. Com certeza e eles ficam mais atentos quando eu estou falando em inglês do que quando eu falo em português." (Of course it is possible to begin (a new teaching point) in English. Of course they pay more attention when I am speaking in English than when I am speaking in Portuguese). This statement seems to indicate that students may become motivated to learn English, since they pay attention and try to understand what the teacher is saying when she is speaking the target language.

5.5.2.1. Summary of Section 2: Uses of the mother tongue and the target language in the foreign language classroom.

A summary of the answers given by the interviewees to IQs 5 to 9 can be found in Table 2 below:

Table 5.2: Summary of the answers to Interview Questions 5 to 9

<p>1) IQ 5: What kind of instructions do you give to your students in English?</p> <p>⇒ <i>Main Instructions teachers give in English:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open the door; • go to the board; • open your book; • stand up; • sit down; • silence. <p>2) IQ 6: Do you use English or Portuguese to explain grammar?</p> <p>⇒ <i>How the interviewees explain grammar:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in English; • in Portuguese; • In both languages: English and Portuguese. <p>⇒ <i>Reasons for using Portuguese:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty of explaining in English; • teachers are not able to explain grammar in English; • they think they would confuse their students; • they can not explain clearly; • teachers' complacency; • lack of confidence and proficiency; • students' lack of vocabulary. <p>⇒ <i>What teachers do to facilitate students by first understanding of grammar explanation in English</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers prepare students explaining what is going to happen; • teachers ask if students understand; • teachers compare English and Portuguese grammars. <p>3) IQ 7: Do you discuss the methodological aspects of your classes, such as the techniques and the procedures used to carry out the activities with your students?</p> <p>⇒ <i>Some teachers who discuss methodology do so::</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in English - teachers and students work together; • in Portuguese - teacher explains what they are doing and why they are doing that; <p>⇒ <i>Some teacher do not discuss methodological issues</i></p> <p>4) IQs 8 and 9 - IQ 8: How do you begin your class? IQ 9: How do you begin a new teaching point?</p> <p>⇒ <i>Teachers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greet their students in English; • call the roll; • some of them give some commands such as <i>silence, stand up, sit down, close the door, open your book;</i> • they review the last content; • they correct the homework in English and Portuguese.

5.5.3. Section 3: Teachers' beliefs about the use of the mother tongue in the English class - Interview Questions 10 to 12

Questions 10 to 12 provide more details of the teachers' beliefs about the use of the mother tongue as well as their practice.

Interview Questions 10 - IQ 10: Do you believe using Portuguese in your English class helps your learners to learn English?

The interviewees' answers to IQ10 show that the majority of these teachers believe that using the mother tongue in the classroom does not help students learn English. They think that students could learn better if they listen to English, not Portuguese, during the English class. Nevertheless, although teachers believe that the mother tongue does not help students learn a foreign language, they do not know how to teach their English classes in English. Teacher 5, for example, talked about the problems related to the use of English in the classroom: "O ideal seria nos só trabalharmos em inglês na sala de aula. Só que ainda nós temos que ter mais preparo." (The ideal situation would be to teach our students only in English. But for that we need to be more prepared).

Although the majority of the interviewees think that the mother tongue does not help students learn English, there are some who advocate this use. Teacher 7 is one of those who thought that the mother tongue is necessary. Similarly, Teacher 10 makes a comment, highlighting the students' feelings in relation to the use of the mother tongue: "tem criança que chega a se sentir mal. Então tem momentos que a língua materna serve como um remédio. Por isso tem que ter muito respeito, saber lidar com ela, porque você pode estar prejudicando a aprendizagem da criança." (There are children that do not even feel well. Then, in these moments, the mother tongue can be a remedy to help them. So, it is important to respect them, to know how to deal with them, if not you can damage their learning).

Interview Question 11 - IQ 11: Why do teachers use Portuguese in the EFL Classroom?

The teachers interviewed suggested different reasons for using the mother tongue in their English classrooms. The answers given to IQ11 reinforce the contextual reasons presented in Chapter Four *large classes, poor infra-structure, lack of attention from the educational authorities, learners lack of English proficiency, learners' lack of motivation*. In addition to these reasons, some others were suggested by the interviewees, such as *time*, "Tu tens que te fazer entender em pouco tempo" (You have only a little time to make your students understand you, Teacher 3), *lack of new methodologies* "acho que é falta de novas metodologias" (I think that the problem is the lack of new methodologies, Teacher 5), *teachers' lack of confidence* "Por medo, medo, insegurança, por não saber falar" (Teachers use Portuguese because they are afraid of using English. They use Portuguese for fear and insecurity or because they can not speak English, Teacher 6). This lack of teachers' confidence seems to be the basic reason why the teachers interviewed use the mother tongue: "Se eu pudesse falar tudo, eu não levaria nada nas minhas mãos. Eu sentaria no meio dos alunos, ai que sonho! Falaria com eles" (If I could speak everything, I would not take anything with me. I would sit down among my students, what a dream! And I would speak with them, Teacher 6).

Although, as stated before, the teachers gave different reasons for their responses to IQ11, it was possible to observe that 'teachers' lack of proficiency and confidence' was the most important reason for using the mother tongue in the classroom, according to these teachers' perceptions. This could also explain the reasons given by the teachers for their incapacity to deal with grammar explanations (see IQ 10), where lack of proficiency and confidence is the underlying cause.

Interview Question 12 - IQ12: How would you evaluate your English proficiency?

IQ12 was asked in order to investigate in an indirect way, whether or not the interviewees believe that their level of English proficiency is related to the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.

The answers to IQ 12 show that the majority of the interviewees seem to evaluate positively their reading and listening abilities in English. Yet the respondents' answers show that the teachers do not speak English fluently, as the statement of Teacher 5 reveals "A minha hoje? Sinto dificuldade na conversação." (My problem today? I have difficulties to talk in English). Furthermore the teachers seem to perceive some relation between this lack of fluency and the use of the mother tongue in the English classes, as the following comment made by Teacher 5 shows: "A gente tem muita insegurança. O medo de errar faz a gente não falar. Ai na sala de aula tu acabas usando mais o português." (We are insecure. We are afraid of making mistakes and this fear makes us speak Portuguese).

5.5.3.1. Summary of Section 3: Teachers' beliefs about the use of the mother tongue in the English class

A summary of Interview Questions 10 to 12 is shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Summary of the answers of Interview Question 10, 11 and 12

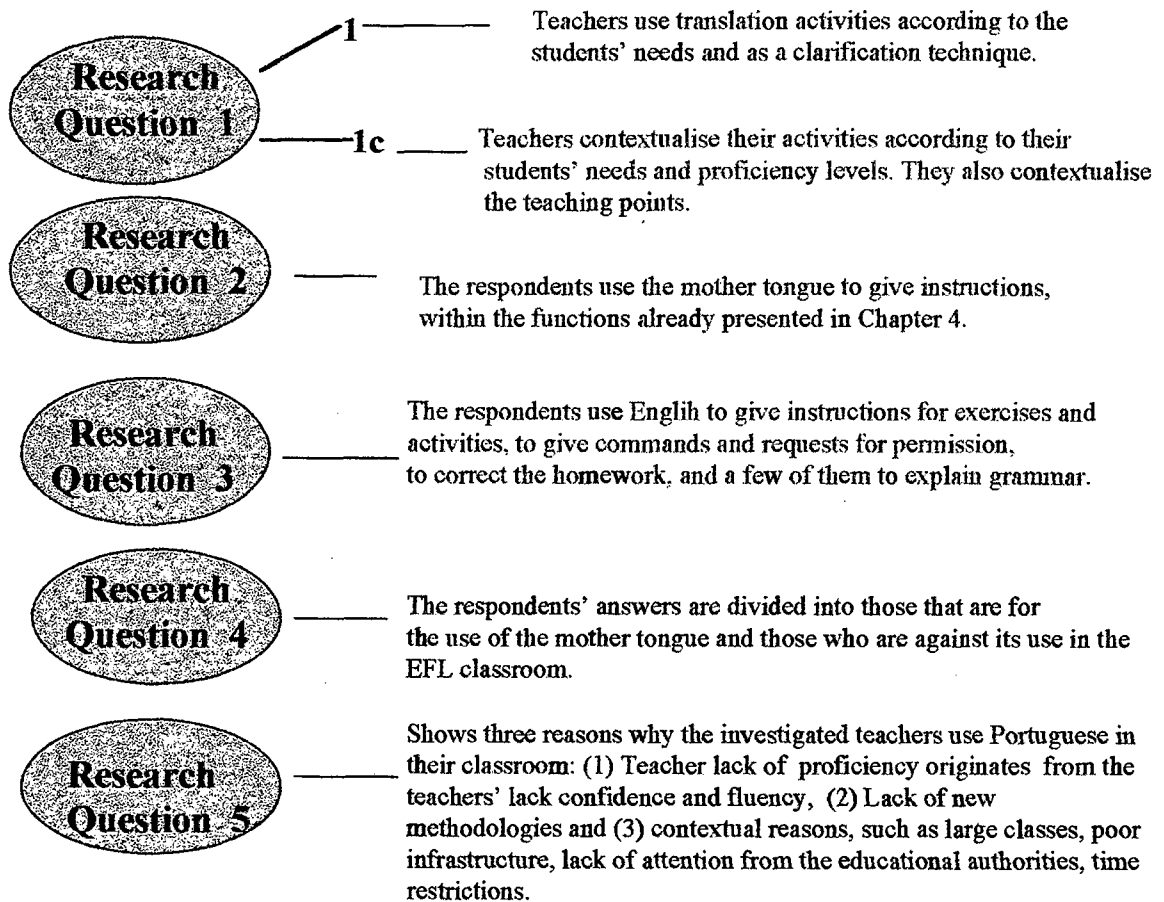
<p>IQ 10: Do you believe using Portuguese in your English class helps your learner learn English?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the teachers answer “no” <p>IQ 11: Why do teachers use Portuguese in the EFL classroom?</p> <p>⇒ Teachers lack proficiency which generates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of confidence; • lack of fluency; <p>⇒ Lack of new methodologies.</p> <p>⇒ Contextual problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large classes; • poor infra-structure; • lack of attention of educational authorities; • time restriction. <p>IQ 12: how would you evaluate your English proficiency?</p> <p>Reading, writing and listening skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • were evaluated positively; <p>Speaking skill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers do not speak English fluently; • teachers lack confidence in themselves.

5.6. Summary of Chapter 5

5.6.1. Looking at the results of the interview in the light of the research questions

Figure 5.1. summarises the findings of this chapter in light of the Research Questions.

Figure 5.1: The relationship between the Interview and the Research Questions



Chapter Six will present the conclusions of the study, a summary of the previous chapters, some pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research .

CHAPTER SIX

FINAL REMARKS

6.1. Summary

This study has investigated the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom by analysing some teachers' perceptions or beliefs. To collect the data of teachers' beliefs two elicitation techniques were used: questionnaires and interviews applied and carried out with some state school teachers of English in Santa Catarina.

The aim of this study, as mentioned before, was to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the use of the mother tongue guided by the Research Questions. Therefore, according to the analysis of the data, it is possible to conclude that:

Regarding Research Question 1:

- the investigated teachers use translation activities in the EFL classroom;
- ⇒ they use translation activities for testing students;
- ⇒ they use the mother tongue for checking comprehension of words, sentences and/or texts. This study also discovered, regarding *contextualisation* that:
 - the teachers use translation activities in the classroom in trying to meet to the students' needs or interests and as a technique for clarification;

Regarding Research Question 2:

- the investigated teachers' perceptions of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom do not differ from those uses previously presented in the review of the literature, that is
 - to give instructions;
 - to explain grammar;
 - to discuss methodology;
 - to give administrative information.

Regarding Research Question 3:

- in spite of the common usage of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom, some of the teachers also use the English language:
 - to give instructions for exercises and activities;
 - to give commands and requests for permission;
 - to correct the homework;
 - to explain grammar.

Regarding Research Question 4:

- Some teachers suggest that the mother tongue does not help foreign language learners.
- Some teachers suggested that the mother tongue may help foreign language learners.

Regarding research Question 5:

- they suggest that teachers use the mother tongue in the classroom because:

- they lack proficiency;
- they are not sure of their own English language abilities during their English classes.

➤ They also suggest some contextual reasons for using the mother tongue such as:

➤ large classes;

- poor infrastructure;
- lack of attention from the educational authorities.

The findings of this study confirm the controversial aspect of the issue of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom. While most of the teachers suggest that they do use the mother tongue in their classroom; nevertheless, they say that they do not believe that this helps students learn English. On the other hand, some of the teachers suggest that some uses of the mother tongue, as suggested by Atkinson (1987), Spratt (1985), and Schweers (1999), do not seem to be harmful to EFL teaching.

To conclude, this study suggests that in most cases teachers use the mother tongue not because they want to do so, but because due to their lack of proficiency in the English language they are forced to do so.

6.2. Pedagogical Implications

This study can offer some contributions to foreign language pedagogy since it has provided an understanding of the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom in state schools.

⇒ The findings of this study agree with Atkinson (1987), Spratt (1985), and Schweers (1999), and suggest that some uses of the mother tongue may be beneficial as a teaching strategy, mainly when:

- teachers need to know if students understand a given instruction;
- teachers need to explain a new teaching point;
- teachers need to check the students' comprehension of a vocabulary item and text;
- teachers feel that students do not understand what they are saying.

⇒ The findings point out to the difficulty faced by the teachers in keeping their proficiency in the FL. Based on my experience and on the interviews carried out in this study, the state schools teachers individually need to search for ways to develop their proficiency in the FL. This process might represent a financial expense that many teachers are not able to afford. The Secretaria Estadual de Educação should provide opportunities for the teachers to participate in teacher development programs that focus on developing the skills in the foreign language.

6.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

Although questionnaires and interviews are often used as investigative techniques, Wallace (1998) warns about their limitations by presenting some problems related to these techniques. Among them, two are worth mentioning here: (1) *subjectivity*, which refers to the fact that when we ask someone a question we are not sure whether he has answered the truth or not, so it is very important to "be realistic about evaluating data" (ibid., p. 127), (2)

nature of the sample, which refers to the fact that if you are dealing with a sample, it is difficult to generalise your findings.

Furthermore, due to the elicitation techniques used, all the findings presented here are based on teachers' **perceptions** or **beliefs**, not on teachers' actual classroom behaviour. Although I intended to observe some classes to compare teachers' beliefs and their practices, due to the teachers' delay in returning the questionnaires and also the difficulty in having appointments with them for the interviews, classroom observations were not possible. A final limitation was the fact that in spite of the large number of teachers working in the state school network of Santa Catarina, this study, due to time constraints, only investigates 72.

Despite its limitations, this study can be considered a starting point for further research studies related to the use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms in the state school network. Some possible studies may include: (1) comparing the use of the mother tongue in state and private schools; (2) studying the different uses of translation activities in the EFL classroom; (3) observing when and why teachers and learners code-switch; (4) analysing the differences and similarities between teachers' and learners' perceptions about the use of the mother tongue.

6.4. Afterwords

Finally, I would like to say that this study offered me the opportunity to discuss the use of the mother tongue with the state school teachers, and it also provided me the possibility to reflect upon the pros and cons of using the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.

Regarding the participants, at the time of this study, some of them were attending PECPISC, a program of continuing professional development, a partnership between Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina and Secretaria Estadual de Educação (SEE). This pioneer project has engaged state teachers in a longitudinal teacher development program where they have the opportunity to develop their linguistic and methodological knowledge. This program can be considered a successful example of how the SEE can contribute to the EFL teaching. During the interviews of those teachers who were attending the course, they talked about the program and the changes that were happening in their teaching practices. The interviewees stressed that after they began attending the program, they also began to make more use of the target language in their classes. Therefore, carrying out programs of continuing professional development for EFL teachers, particularly to those who work in state schools, could help teachers to make more informed choices of how to use their English in classes.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother Tongue in the Classroom: a neglected resource? *ELT Journal* 41/4, 241-247
- Costa, W. C. (1988). Tradução e Ensino de Línguas. In H. Bohn & P. Vandressen (eds.) *Tópicos de Linguística Aplicada - O ensino de línguas estrangeiras*. Florianópolis: Editora da UFSC. 282-291.
- Duff, A. (1989). *Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harbord, J. (1992). The Use of the Mother Tongue in the Classroom. *ELT Journal*. 46/4, 350-355.
- House, J. (1981). *A Model for translation quality assessment*. Germany: gnv.
- Leffa, W. (1988). Metodologia do Ensino de Línguas. In H. Bohn & P. Vandressen (eds.) *Tópicos de Linguística Aplicada - O ensino de línguas estrangeiras*. Florianópolis: Editora da UFSC.
- Malatér, L. S. de O. (1998). Teachers' beliefs on foreign language teaching and learning: a classroom study. Master thesis: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina - UFSC.
- McDonough, J. & McDonough S. (1997). Research methods for English language teachers.
- Neves, S. R. M. (1995). *Foreign language acquisition through interaction - an ethnographic study* - Master Thesis. Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina - UFSC.
- Rivers, W. M. & Temperley, M. S. (1978). *A practical guide to the teaching of English as a second or foreign language*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Rubin H & Rubin I. (1995). Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.

APPENDIXES

A . 01 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Prezado(a) Professor(a),

Sou professora do Estado e estou desenvolvendo a minha pesquisa de mestrado enfocando o uso da língua materna nas Escolas da Rede Estadual de Santa Catarina. O levantamento da nossa realidade contribuirá para a elaboração e o desenvolvimento de projetos que busquem soluções para nossas angústias, que acredito serem comuns: o desejo que o nosso aluno, finalmente, consiga se expressar na língua estrangeira.

Solicito a devolução deste questionário ate o dia 20 de junho. Entregar na sua CRE, na diretoria de ensino.

Nome da Escola:.....

Nome do Professor:.....

Leciona no 1º grau () 2º grau () no 1º e 2º graus ()

Professor: efetivo () ACT ()

Tem curso superior: sim () não ()

1. Você faz atividades de tradução com seus alunos?

() sim () não () algumas vezes

2. Quando você realiza as atividades de tradução

a) a tradução e uma questão do teste:

sim não algumas vezes

b) você faz um teste especial para avaliar a capacidade de tradução dos seus alunos?

sim não algumas vezes

3. As suas atividades com tradução envolve:

tradução de palavras;

tradução de frases;

tradução de textos.

4. Você usa a língua materna para dar instruções na sala de aula?

sim não algumas vezes

5. Você usa a língua materna para explicar gramática?

sim não algumas vezes

6. Você usa a língua materna para explica metodologia?

sim não algumas vezes

7. Você usa a língua materna para dar recados administrativos?

sim não algumas vezes

8. Você permite que seus alunos usem a língua materna durante trabalhos em grupo?

sim não algumas vezes

9. Você usa a língua materna para checar a compreensão de texto?

sim não algumas vezes

10. Você usa a língua materna no início da aulas para motivar seus alunos?

sim não algumas vezes

11. As suas aulas são conduzidas principalmente em:

Português Inglês Português/Inglês

12. Como você vê o uso da língua materna no ensino de língua estrangeira?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX B

B. 02 TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO OPEN QUESTION

- I think it's a background that the students have which will help them to learn another language.
- Necessária como suporte linguístico.
- Com a 5ª e 6ª séries procuro falar mais em português, principalmente com aqueles que reclamam, dizendo que não entendem nada. Já com a 7ª e principalmente com a 8ª, como eles já tiveram inglês, procuro falar na medida do possível em inglês.
- O uso da LM é relativo a vários fatores que compõem o processo de ensino-aprendizagem, portanto tem que se levar em conta as fases do processo em que o aluno se insere para testar sua necessidade.
- Penso que o ideal seria usarmos a LE o máximo possível, no entanto, quando lidamos com turmas grandes e com quase nenhum conhecimento da LE. Torna-se necessário o uso da LM em sala de aula.
- Extremamente importante. Obs. As minhas aulas são conduzidas principalmente em português porque os alunos, infelizmente, não possuem motivação para "qualquer" LE, já que muitos deles pensam que "até inglês não roda de ano", levando assim ao descontentamento, não produzindo como deveriam, não só um descontentamento da LE, mas de "quase todas ou todas" as disciplinas.
- Complemento didático para tornar a compreensão mais fácil e o aprendizado mais objetivo.
- Como um mecanismo principal ao conduzir os conteúdos da matéria. Sem a LM haveria bastante dificuldade de compreensão por parte dos alunos.
- Partindo da minha própria experiência no aprendizado da LI, sei que a experiência de "imersão" pode ser muito importante. No entanto, no contexto escolar, o uso exclusivo da LI parece criar mais barreiras do que oportunidades. A LM, no nosso caso, é a ponte que ajuda a criar os laços de empatia que auxiliam no processo de ensino-aprendizagem.
- Necessário aos alunos, pois necessitam de uma base concreta na sua formação.
- Na minha opinião, o ideal para que haja o ensino de LE é desligar-se da LM embora seja muito difícil fazê-lo para quem leciona para o 1º grau. Com a atual crise da educação e com o próprio grau de conhecimento dos alunos a respeito da LM. Além disso, a falta de estrutura e o descaso do governo para com os professores, sem dúvida, prejudicam o ensino da LE no Brasil.
- Se o aluno não dominar a LM, sua gramática, no nível em que atua, é impossível ele aprender uma LE.
- O uso da língua materna deve ser substituído gradativamente, visando sua total eliminação ao término de um determinado período. Considero este método ideal, para não

desestimular os alunos que apresentam dificuldades e permitir a aquisição de segurança e confiança para lidar com o desconhecido. Apesar de considerar este método ideal; faço parte de um grande grupo de professores que não possuem condições financeiras de pagar um bom curso de conversação, que nos proporcione um conhecimento satisfatório do idioma estrangeiro. Por mais que se analise fórmula de resolução, estas sempre esbarram na questão salarial, muito deficiente, para estimular os profissionais a se aperfeiçoarem. A Secretaria poderia fornecer bolsas em cursinhos do nível WIZARD, CCAA e outros de conhecida competência.

- Necessário aos alunos, pois necessitam de uma base concreta para sua formação.
 - Torna-se necessário o uso da LM nas aulas de inglês pelas dificuldades que os alunos têm no seu próprio idioma e pelo número excessivo de alunos em sala de aula.
 - Eu acho imprescindível o uso das LM no ensino fundamental pois é através dela que o aluno aprenderá a LE.
-
- O uso da LM deveria estar restrito a algumas poucas intervenções na sala de aula - só no momento que o contexto criado em sala de aula não permita a compreensão dos termos, do significado. Mas, usar a LM como ferramenta de comparação de estruturas, construções de expressões, permite ao aluno começar a criar hipóteses do que seja uma LE ou não. PS A maior parte das aulas que apresentam o uso da LM são aulas do 1º grau. Quanto as aulas do Ensino Médio, poderia se dar mais ênfase na conversação.
 - Algumas vezes acho necessária:
 - Nossos alunos colocam em suas mentes que não sabem e não querem aprender inglês. Colocam muitas barreiras. Levará algum tempo para haver a transformação total. Tendo em vista também que faltam condições de trabalho. Dicionários, xerox, sala de áudio visual. Som TV, video.
 - Eu vejo como base indispensável para o início da disciplina de LE. Também, depois de já se estar trabalhando a disciplina, precisa ser usada a LM como meio de melhor compreensão em casos de dificuldades.
 - Eu acho essencial fazer uso da LM durante as aulas de LE, dando ênfase às diferenças e igualdades entre as duas. Isso também mostrará aos alunos a importância de se aprender uma segunda língua fazendo com que seu universo se amplie e eles compreendam o seu papel de cidadão do mundo.
 - Nós sabemos que é errado usarmos a LM no ensino de qualquer LE. Para suprir essa deficiência o correto seria o uso da LE nas 1ª séries iniciais, então os alunos de 5ª séries em diante teriam um conhecimento melhor, inclusive em outro fator que envolve diretamente a aprendizagem do aluno. Sabemos que nossas angústias são mútuas e muitas por isso qualquer projeto que venha beneficiar o ensino da LE nas escolas públicas serão bem vindas.
 - A LM é o apoio necessário na aprendizagem de qualquer LE, pois temos muitas dificuldades em ensiná-la ou aprendê-la. Não vejo problemas em ministrar aulas de inglês com auxílio da LM. O nosso maior problema é conseguir o interesse e a

motivação em nossos alunos. Precisamos buscar novos recursos para mudarmos nossas aulas. Empregar uma nova metodologia.

- Levando em consideração que os alunos de escolas públicas em sua maioria estão defasados na aquisição de LE, a necessidade do uso da LM para elucidar problemas de ensino da LE torna-se praticamente indispensável.
- Apenas como auxiliar e nunca como fundamental. Procuo conduzir para que o aluno pense em inglês, fale em inglês, escreva em inglês. O ensino é contínuo; pois isto facilita a construção do progresso de aprendizagem do aluno.
- Importante, pois no 1º grau a partir de curiosidades da LE e comparações da mesma com a LM faz com o aluno se interesse e goste de aprender uma nova língua, diferente da sua.
- Vejo-a como um método de grande valia. Nos auxilia principalmente com relação a alunos de 5ª e 6ª séries, principalmente os que demonstram maior dificuldade, além de nos aproximar mais (professor/aluno) Se nós, professores de inglês, tivéssemos algum material que tratasse especificamente do assunto de LM, positivamente teríamos bom êxito em ministrar nossas aulas.
- Não se consegue um bom trabalho no processo ensino-aprendizagem se não houver uma relação dos projetos aplicados num contexto interdisciplinar utilizando essencialmente nossa língua materna.
- Não se ensina uma língua estrangeira usando apenas ela como meio de comunicação. É necessário que o aluno saiba que estamos lhe dizendo. Entender o vocabulário, a gramática, as expressões, é claro que deve-se usar a conversação e treinar a pronúncia.
- Vejo como uma necessidade em alguns casos, por exemplo quando não se dispõe de outros recursos. Deve-se tentar usar gestos, mímicas. Dentro do nosso contexto e principalmente pela pobreza de interesse, contato cultural de nossos estudantes é difícil. Ainda assim insisto em usar a LI para motivá-los e tenho tido um resultado positivo.
- No ensino da 1ª e da 2ª língua deve-se fazer sempre o pingue-pongue entre LM e LI. Já estudei o método do professor Luiz Paulo Moita _ Read Read Read e oficina de Linguística aplicada e esse contato me tirou a ansiedade. Penso que não podemos fugir do fato de que a LM é a nossa língua . pesquise uma forma de interação entre as duas. Ps: Eu também não sei tudo. Sei ler (traduzir) gramática ouvir e falar estou no intermediate, advanced - after all these years
- Deveria haver mais empenhado. Ter materiais didáticos. Principalmente, levado a sério. E não como uma matéria qualquer.