

#### 4 PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY ПЕДАГОГІКА ЖӘНЕ БІЛІМ БЕРУ ӘДІСТЕМЕСІ ПЕДАГОГІКА И МЕТОДИКА ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

---

IRSTI 14.25.09  
UDC 373.016.81'243

<https://doi.org/10.46914/2959-3999-2025-1-1-31-35>

**NARYMBETOVA K.A.,\*<sup>1</sup>**

c.phil.s., associate professor.

\*e-mail: [nkarina@kimep.kz](mailto:nkarina@kimep.kz)

ORCID ID: 0009-0009-5714-9117

<sup>1</sup>KIMEP University

Almaty, Kazakhstan

#### NATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING OTHER LANGUAGES: PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR OPTIMAL USE

##### Abstract

This article examines the ongoing debate on language use in target language instruction, addressing its impact on language acquisition and teaching effectiveness. It explores three key areas: research findings on the benefits and limitations of using the target language as the primary medium of instruction, challenges teachers face in maintaining consistent target language use, and practical strategies for maximizing exposure while accommodating diverse classroom needs. While immersive language learning is widely supported, real-world teaching conditions often demand a more flexible approach. Student proficiency levels, cognitive load, and institutional policies influence decisions about when and how to incorporate the first language. This article synthesizes current research, pedagogical perspectives, and classroom practices to provide a balanced discussion on effective language use in instruction. By integrating theoretical insights with practical recommendations, the article equips educators with strategies to optimize target language use while fostering comprehension, engagement, and meaningful communication in the classroom.

**Key words:** target language instruction, language immersion, classroom strategies, immersive and engaging teaching.

##### Introduction

The use of the target language as the primary medium of instruction in language teaching has been widely debated among educators and researchers. While immersion in the target language is considered essential for developing proficiency, determining which language(s) to use for teaching a target language, how much and when to use it remains a persistent challenge in classrooms. At first glance, the answer to this question seems straightforward—use the target language to teach the target language. However, both observational and anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers frequently rely on students' first languages to support instruction.

Crawford [3] illustrates this issue:

“We learned vocabulary in terms of our first language from lists in which teachers paired words in the foreign language with their English counterparts. We studied the grammar of the new language again in terms of our own. Our first language was the window through which we viewed and contrasted our new second language. We rarely became capable of communicating in that language because of

the classes we took. At best, we scored well on tests of grammar, read with halting comprehension, and translated with difficulty.” [3, p. 154]

This reflection highlights a common dilemma in language classrooms: while reliance on the first language can aid comprehension, it may also limit students’ ability to develop true communicative competence. As a result, teachers are expected to navigate the balance between research-based best practices and the practical realities of diverse learning environments, student needs, and institutional expectations.

This article explores three key aspects of using the target language for instruction: key research findings on the effectiveness of teaching in the target language, the challenges teachers face in implementing this approach, and practical strategies for increasing target language use in classroom teaching and learning. By examining these factors, the article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how to maximize language exposure while ensuring meaningful and effective instruction.

## **Materials and methods**

In discussion, the following key terms and their definitions are used: a) target language is the language to be acquired through instruction; b) observational and anecdotal evidence refers to personal experiences attending lessons of other colleagues as well as listening to stories about language teaching told by other colleagues and c) ‘other languages’ refers to students’ native or mother tongue languages. The term target language reflects a language, which is the focus of instruction, and which students are expected to acquire. However, the notion of ‘target language’ as a result or objective still does not communicate what details are desired so that ‘a language’ should result. What does a target language result actually mean? Learning a target language, for example, could refer to learning that is proceeding at a rate that is enough to achieve a desired result. In this case, the phrase target refers to the journey toward a result rather than the result itself.

## **Results and discussion**

These distinctions can refer to language learning for the purpose of comprehensive understanding of a target language, learning a set of specialized vocabulary or uses (e.g., academic purposes) for a target language, encountering some bits of language while in the company of peers or traveling for example and simply building some recognition of a script or sound pattern connected with a target language [1].

In any case, what is the language result that is desired by the learner? Results for target language acquisition and learning can be organized around four kinds of language competencies or knowledge about the language and how to use the language. First, language learning is a process of picking up particularly registers, styles and genres and linguistic varieties while shedding or altering previously existing ones” [1, p. 9]. The notion of learning a target language from this perspective is actually never completely realized because “there is no point in life in which anyone can claim to know all the resources of a language” [1, p. 9]. Therefore, a set of four distinct competencies can be described around the idea of building experience with the resources of a target language.

The first aspect has been referred to as “maximum competence”, which indicates, “oral as well as literacy skills distributed over a variety of genres, registers and styles, both productively (speaking and writing skills) and receptively (understanding oral and written messages), and in formal as well as informal social arenas” [1, p. 16]. The second aspect known as “partial competence” refers for example to “reading relatively complex texts, but not [writing] similar texts; [understanding] most of the spoken varieties but not make [oneself] understood in speaking them” [1, p. 16]. The third aspect known as “minimal competence” refers to the production and understanding of “a limited number of messages from certain languages, confined to a very restricted range of genres and social domains: shopping routines, basic conversational routines and stock expressions” [1, p. 17]. The fourth aspect of language acquisition, which is known as “recognizing competence”, refers to “recognizing sounds or scripts” [1, p. 17]. These four areas make up the ‘language biography’ of a person who may have several target languages in view across various life experiences. To speak of a single target language

therefore, requires a more complex evaluation of what knowledge is desired and what purposes a person has in mind for the target language in relation to day-to-day life experiences.

Key research findings related to using a target language for teaching.

Recent discussions recommend that instructors and their students use target language at least 90% of the time including lectures, tasks and classroom management [2]. The main rationale for this recommendation is that “if learners do not receive exposure to the target language, they cannot acquire it” [6]. Self-reports by teachers indicate that most desire to use the target language at least 70% of the time [2]. An even greater use is connected with the Natural Approach to target language acquisition, which recommends that teachers use the target language exclusively. An exclusive focus on the target language reflects the “ACTFL’s recommendation that communication in the target language comprises at least 90% of instructional time, in line with an emphasis on Standards-based learning that places proficiency above grammatical precision” [4].

However, observations of teachers indicate that teachers resort to code switching, pop-up grammar (instances when instructors explain grammar using the students’ native language rather than the target language) and ‘periodic native language interventions’ to build rapport with students. These findings were supported by Ceo-DiFrancesco, who found that “many of the respondents her study reported goals of target language use aligning with the ACTFL 2010 position statement: 40.9% of the instructors indicated that their goal was to use the target language during 90–100% of any given class session [2]. 23.2% reported a goal of 80–90%, 18.6% reported a goal of 70–80% and 10.5% indicated a goal of 60–70%” [2, p. 3–4]. As an example, a teacher self-reported that the target language for instruction was used 90% of the time in class.

However, recordings of the teacher in the classroom indicated that the target language was used “less than one minute, interspersed during a 50-minute class period. Although some degree of discrepancy between the teacher’s perception and actual measures can be attributed to classroom code switching, these findings call into question the reliability of self-reports about classroom practices” [8, p. 312]. In this section, we have identified a gap between what the time teachers estimate they use the target language and the actual time they use it. In the following section we consider some challenges that hinder teachers’ uses of target languages in the classroom.

Challenges for teachers’ uses of target languages in the classroom.

Teachers use students’ native languages in the classroom in order to use time in particular ways, remind students of who is in charge or in authority in the classroom and reduce uncertainty for students about target language meanings [8]. Concerning time, “instructors use [native language] to control the speed of classroom interactions activities, eliminate waiting or lag time and limit turn taking by students” [8, p. 316]. Concerning the need to assert authority in the classroom, teachers use the native language to maintain control of student behavior and limit time needed to complete sequences of interaction. Concerning the need to reduce uncertainty, teachers use the students’ L1 to make sure that students understand what is being communicated. Interestingly, teachers’ uses of L1 to control interactions, reduce waiting time, and maintain control of students’ behaviors can have the unintended consequence of limiting students’ opportunities to communicate in the target language.

A range of factors have been reported that hinder teachers’ uses of their target languages during lessons and activities. Some of the overall situational factors are: larger class sizes, concerns about job security, too little administrative backing, older technology, class period interruptions, concerns about parental or community involvement and class schedules [2]. In addition to the overall factors, students also can frustrate instructors’ attempts to include more target language in lessons and activities. “One instructor stated, ‘The biggest obstacle is initial student resistance.’ Another instructor describes students who literally ‘shut down’ or ‘tune out’ any target language provided by the teacher. Teachers feel forced to speak in English, since their students refuse to even try to understand cognates [2, p. 5]. A third set of factors relate to teacher preparation and education for teaching the target language. These factors include: time for completing the target language curriculum, target language proficiencies, classroom management and varied student abilities with the target language in addition to other factors.

These sets of factors inform another challenge for teachers in the classroom – the tendency to underestimate how much of the target language is actually being used in classroom lessons and activities. Teachers often develop idealized cultural models or theories about their teaching practices including the use of target languages during instruction. A cultural model serves as set of ideas about what can be known and how knowledge can be applied and expressed [7]. The model is then used

as a resource for understanding and guiding behaviors. Estimates by teachers about their uses of target language in the classroom serve as resources, which teachers use to express values about the importance of target language teaching even though measures of their actual target language teaching show relatively low use of target languages during instruction [8].

Teachers often report that they tend to switch to L1 when teaching the target language for beginners and increase the amount of the target language when teaching advanced learners. They justify this switch to L1 as necessary to help students understand complex grammatical topics or linguistic concepts and raise their awareness of similarities and differences between the native language and target language. Students at elementary level demonstrate poor grammatical knowledge and lack vocabulary [5]. As the result they resist speaking in the target language until they are ready to.

Ways to include more of the target language in classroom teaching and learning.

Previously, we discussed that teachers use students' L1 in order to reduce uncertainty, assert authority and speed up class activities. Wilkerson (2008) explains that some teachers actually damage their authority by using L1 too often with students during out of class tutorials or help sessions. On the other hand, other teachers use L1 specifically at the beginning and end of the lesson in order to give an overview of what will occur as well as to summarize and reflect upon what occurred.

Despite all challenges that language teachers face when teaching the target language there are ways to assist students to acquire language by providing more input, planning lessons, designing class activities where they can pair "the target language with visual support and gestures; slow down, simplify, and repeat key terms; using cognates when possible; checking often for understanding; and engaging students with real world-like situations that allow them to function at their particular proficiency level" (Crouse, 2012, p. 24). In addition, teachers are encouraged to manage classroom so it facilitates classroom interaction among students more.

## Conclusion

The question of which language(s) to use when teaching a target language remains a complex yet essential consideration for language educators. This article has explored key research findings supporting the effectiveness of using the target language as the primary medium of instruction, while also acknowledging the challenges teachers face in maintaining high levels of target language use in diverse classroom settings. Additionally, practical strategies have been outlined to help educators increase students' exposure to and engagement with the target language. Ultimately, while full immersion in the target language is widely regarded as beneficial for language acquisition, a flexible and context-sensitive approach is necessary. Teachers must balance research-based best practices with the realities of student needs, instructional goals, and institutional constraints. By adopting evidence-based strategies and fostering an interactive and meaningful learning environment, educators can optimize language learning outcomes and support students in developing greater linguistic proficiency and confidence.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Blommaert J., Backus A. Repertoires revisited: 'Knowing language' in superdiversity // Working Papers in Urban Languages and Literacies. Tilburg, NL: Tilburg University. 2011. URL: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/ldc/publications/workingpapers/67.pdf>
- 2 Ceo-Di Francesco D. Instructor target language use in today's world language classrooms / Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 2013. URL: [www.csctfl.org/documents/2013Report/Chapter%201.pdf](http://www.csctfl.org/documents/2013Report/Chapter%201.pdf)
- 3 Crawford A. Communicative approaches to second language acquisition: the bridge to second language literacy // English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2003. P. 152–181.
- 4 Crouse D. Going for 90% plus: How to stay in the target language // The Language Educator. 2012. URL: [https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/TLE\\_pdf/TLE\\_Oct12\\_Article.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/TLE_pdf/TLE_Oct12_Article.pdf)
- 5 Dickson P. Using the target language: A View from the classroom. Berkshire, UK: National Foundation for Education Research, 1996. URL: <http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/best%20of%20bilash/using%20the%20target%20language.pdf>
- 6 Ellis R. Principles of instructed language learning // System. 2005, no. 33, pp. 209–224.

7 Gee J.P., Green J.L. Discourse analysis, learning and social practice: A Methodological study // Review of Research in Education. 1998, no. 23, pp. 119–169. URL: <http://www.justinecassell.com/discourse/pdfs/gee-green98.pdf>.

8 Wilkerson C. Instructors' use of English the modern language classroom // Foreign Language Annals. 2008, no. 41, pp. 310–319.

**НАРЫМБЕТОВА К.А.,\*<sup>1</sup>**

ф.ғ.к., қауымдастырылған профессор.

\*e-mail: [nkarina@kimep.kz](mailto:nkarina@kimep.kz)

ORCID ID: 0009-0009-5714-9117

<sup>1</sup>KIMEP University

Алматы қ., Қазақстан

## **БАСҚА ТІЛДЕРДІ МЕНГЕРУ ҮДЕРІСІНДЕГІ АНА ТІЛІ: ОҢТАЙЛЫ ПАЙДАЛАНУДЫҢ ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ СТРАТЕГИЯЛАРЫ**

### **Андатпа**

Бұл мақалада шет тілін оқытуда тілді таңдау және оның оқу мен оқытудың тиімділігіне әсері туралы жалғасып жатқан пікірталастар қарастырылады. Үш негізгі аспекті талданады: оқытудың негізгі құралы ретінде оқу тілін пайдаланудың артықшылықтары мен шектеулерін растайтын зерттеулер; мұғалімдер оны сабақта қолдануды қолдауда кездесетін қиындықтар; сонымен қатар оқушылардың әртүрлі қажеттіліктерін қанағаттандыра отырып, тілді барынша терең меңгеруге арналған практикалық стратегиялар. Батыру әдісі кеңінен қолдау тапқанымен, нақты әлемдегі оқыту жағдайлары икемді тәсілді қажет етеді. Тілді меңгеру, танымдық жүктеме және институционалдық талаптар оқу процесіне ана тілін қашан және қалай қосу керектігі туралы шешімдерге әсер етеді. Бұл мақалада тілдерді оқытуда тиімді пайдалану мәселелерін теңгерімді талқылауды ұсыну үшін қазіргі зерттеулер, педагогикалық тәсілдер мен практикалық тәжірибе жинақталған. Теориялық идеяларды практикалық ұсыныстармен үйлестіре отырып, мақала мұғалімдерге оқу тілін оңтайлы пайдалану стратегияларын әзірлеуге көмектеседі, жақсы түсінуге, белсенділікке және сабақта мазмұнды қарым-қатынас дағдыларын дамытуға ықпал етеді.

**Тірек сөздер:** мақсатты тілді оқыту, тілге ену, сыныптағы стратегиялар, иммерсивті және тартымды оқыту, сабақтар.

**НАРЫМБЕТОВА К.А.,\*<sup>1</sup>**

к.ф.н., ассоциированный профессор.

\*e-mail: [nkarina@kimep.kz](mailto:nkarina@kimep.kz)

ORCID ID: 0009-0009-5714-9117

<sup>1</sup>KIMEP University

г. Алматы, Казахстан

## **РОДНОЙ ЯЗЫК В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ДРУГИМ ЯЗЫКАМ: ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ СТРАТЕГИИ ОПТИМАЛЬНОГО ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ**

### **Аннотация**

В статье рассматривается продолжающаяся дискуссия о выборе языка при обучении иностранному языку и его влияние на усвоение материала и эффективность преподавания. Анализируются три ключевые аспекты: исследования, подтверждающие преимущества и ограничения использования изучаемого языка в качестве основного средства обучения; трудности, с которыми сталкиваются преподаватели при поддержании его использования в классе; а также практические стратегии максимального увеличения языкового погружения с учетом разнообразных потребностей учащихся. Хотя метод погружения широко поддерживается, реальные условия преподавания требуют более гибкого подхода. Уровень владения языком, когнитивная нагрузка и институциональные требования влияют на решения о том, когда и как включать родной язык в процесс обучения. В данной статье проводится синтез современных исследований, педагогических подходов и практического опыта, чтобы предложить сбалансированное обсуждение эффективного использования языков в обучении. Объединяя теоретические идеи с практическими рекомендациями, статья помогает преподавателям разрабатывать стратегии оптимального использования изучаемого языка, способствуя лучшему пониманию, вовлеченности и формированию навыков осмысленного общения на занятиях.

**Ключевые слова:** обучение целевому языку, языковое погружение, стратегии работы, иммерсивное обучение, занятия.