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The question of whether the mother tongue (MT) should be allowed in foreign language (FL) teaching has a long history in methodology debates. It has often been argued that the MT should definitely be avoided as it has a detrimental effect on learning a foreign language. Wolfgang Butzkamm and John Caldwell, however, claim not only that the monolingual approach has a weak basis in theory (even though they consider it a comprehensible reaction to the outcomes of the grammar-translation method), but also that it is better to work with the MT as a 'natural tendency' in FL teaching. To support their inclination towards a more relaxed approach to MT use, they scrutinise the reality of what they call the 'MT taboo', formulate a theory of MT use in the FL classroom and exemplify their insights through practical teaching techniques. It is the combination of theory and practice that makes the book much more than a 'how to use the MT in FL teaching' guide. The book discusses the importance of 'immersion' for MT acquisition, which means that a child is exposed to a huge amount of language, first learning chunks of language for communicative purposes and much later learning to break them down into parts. Since it is impractical to reproduce this natural process of acquiring a language in the FL classroom because of restrictions on the time available and, therefore, the exposure to the target language, FL teaching has to provide a focus on both meaning and structure. A prudent use of MT here helps make life easier for teachers and learners: 'sandwiching', mirroring and contrasting or literal translation, as the authors show, can be embedded in pattern drills in grammar teaching, dialogue work and drama. Moreover, it can increase the input of authentic material in the form of, for example, bilingual readers or DVDs with subtitles. A controlled use of the MT in the FL classroom also allows access to the understanding of language concepts that each learner has, even if those concepts are different in the MT and the FL. For example, when a teacher wants to show how continuous tenses are formed to learners whose own language has no continuous tenses, translation is a better way to express finer shades of meaning than an explanation or paraphrase in the target language. When the FL can be integrated into existing knowledge (ie the MT), the FL is 'deforeignised' and confidence is built up in the learner. In other words, the MT can be useful in promoting understanding of both form and meaning (which use of the FL alone often fails to do). Real understanding and control are key words in this book, and it is argued that fashionable methods of communicative language teaching which strictly exclude the MT often cause a learning situation in which students do not really understand what they are saying (but merely parrot phrases for no communicative reason) and, as a result, skills learning is impeded. The authors put their case convincingly, supporting their arguments with insights into the mechanisms used by children growing up bilingually: mixing their languages is a tactic that helps them learn. A separate chapter discusses 'translation as a fifth skill' with the help of some intellectually demanding (and therefore enjoyable) classroom activities, which, not least, help develop MT competence. The authors do admit that there are many situations where monolingualism is preferable, especially for classroom management, and claim that a controlled use of the MT should actually increase the time available for using the FL.

The book is aimed particularly at student teachers, having study questions and tasks at the end of each chapter as well as many practical ideas, but I am sure that experienced teachers will also benefit from it. A benchmark in its field, the book is a must for all those who want to contribute to the debate over the pros and cons of using the MT in FL teaching.

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