

To Our Readers

We welcome your feedback on *English Teaching Forum*. We want to know what parts of the magazine you like best and what you like least. And we're particularly interested in how you use *Forum* in the classroom or for teacher training. Email your comments to us at etforum@state.gov and put "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. We look forward to hearing from you!



To the Editor:

Tang (2002) begins a paper on the use of the first language in the English class as follows:

"A proponent of the monolingual approach, Krashen has argued that people learning foreign languages follow basically the same route as they acquire their mother tongue, hence the use of the mother tongue in the learning process should be minimized (1981)."

I was astounded to read that I am a proponent of the "monolingual approach." Claiming that we acquire second languages using a process similar to first language acquisition does not mean that the first language is forbidden in the classroom. In fact, I have suggested that the first language can be used in ways that accelerate second language acquisition, as a means of making second language input more comprehensible. I have argued this in detail in two books dealing with bilingual education (Krashen, 1996, 1999) and in a recent paper I discuss ways of using the first language in the EFL situation (Krashen, 2004).

Tang reported that in EFL in Beijing, the first language was used mostly to explain difficult vocabulary and complex ideas, and students felt it should be used about 10% of the time. These results are consistent with my point of view.

Stephen Krashen

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References

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- Krashen, S. 1999. *Condemned without a trial: Bogus arguments against bilingual education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Krashen, S. 2004. Applying the comprehension hypothesis: Some suggestions. *Selected Papers from the Thirteenth International Symposium on English Teaching*. English Teachers Association, Taipei. 50–59. Taipei: Crane Publishing Company.
- Tang, J. 2002. Using L1 in the English Classroom. *English Teaching Forum* 40 (1): 36–43.

To the Editor:

I have been reading and using your wonderful and extremely useful magazine, *English Teaching Forum*, for the last ten years or so. Most articles are of use to my purposes in the classroom, where I train pre-service teaching students in Foreign Language Teaching Methodology.

Together with my students and a peer-teacher, we have created an intranet website for the subject, to which we have added a discussion list. Most articles from the Forum magazine have been included so that all students have free access to them in order to complete the numerous tasks they have to fulfill during the three semesters they study foreign language teaching methodology.

The students take ideas from the articles published in the Forum magazine for preparing the mini-lessons they have to present in their micro-teaching practices in the classroom. They also carry out discussions in seminars or workshops on given topics they have to prepare beforehand, by reading selected articles from the magazine. But apart from all this, they have to face a big challenge: the completion of three portfolios, one per semester, in which the use of the practical ideas given by the teachers all over the world, their reflection on those ideas and their proposals for using them in local contexts and settings have proved to be the best way to move from a somehow teacher-centered approach to a more reflective and student-centered courses from which the teachers-to-be benefit even more and gain confidence in their future teaching skills.

Our students, majoring in English and French to become Translators, Interpreters and Teachers of English and French at the university level, openly express their preference for translating and interpreting. Most of them would like to work on the first two options they have as graduates. None would like to be a teacher. The main challenge we face is to motivate them towards a profession that gives so many opportunities to grow as a professional, to overcome challenges and to have the unique possibility of contributing to foster communication and understanding through the teaching and learning of foreign languages, transcending national borders and interests. Discussing the ideas provided by the teachers whose articles appear in the Forum magazine has been a key element in motivating our students to be more interested in their pre-service teaching practice, where they have shown to be creative and enthusiastic in their lesson preparation and actual teaching. Some of them have become members of our staff at the University, at the Medical school, and in some other universities in the country. They have begun to appreciate the value of the profession.

Thanks for helping teachers all over the world to become better professionals.

We wish you all success in 2005! May your magazine continue to be one of the most valuable resources a teacher may have at hand to improve the teaching-learning process.

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