Tracing beliefs about classroom L1/TL use

MICHAEL RABBIDGE
Background

- PhD project
- South Korea
- TETE/TEE policy
- Beliefs about L1/TL use = classroom
- 5 elementary school NNESTs
- 2 Semi-structured interviews/classroom observations each
Research question

• What influences the formation of NNESTs assumptions, attitudes and beliefs about L1/TL use in the classroom?
Stages of development

Initial assumptions → Tentative attitudes → Firm beliefs
Initial assumptions

- Axioms which enable pre-judgements about the surrounding world
- Develop during experiences as students learning a second language
Influences acting during formation of initial assumptions

Primary influences

• Traditional Korean language teacher’s language use
• Alternative language learning experiences
• Enjoyment of classes
• Pre-service teacher training courses
Tentative attitudes

- Initial assumptions
- Tentative attitudes
- Firm beliefs
Tentative attitudes

- Evolved from assumptions
- Shaped by early experiences with teaching English
- Can look different to initial assumptions, but not often
Influences acting during formation of tentative attitudes

Secondary influences

• Teacher training programs
• School socialization processes (Mentors)
• Language teacher identity
• Students
Firm beliefs

- Initial assumptions
- Tentative attitudes
- Firm beliefs
From assumptions to beliefs

• Strong correlation between initial assumptions and firm beliefs
• Primary influences important to understand
• Secondary influences have minor influences
• More refining than revolutionizing
Emma

**As a student**

- Korean teachers are strict
- NEST classes are fun
- Students like my English use
- English doesn’t work when disciplining/difficult language

**Initial assumptions:** using English makes the class more enjoyable than using Korean.

**As new teacher**

- TT programs generally positive experiences about using English
- Initial assumptions generally reinforced by early teaching experiences, i.e. English = fun & Korean for disciplining/difficult language. A's became tentative attitudes.

**As a more experienced teacher**

- Firms beliefs: the more English the better, students more comfortable when I use English, however Korean has its place.
Emma

R: Any other advantages you can think of?

T: It’s a kind of personal idea but when I use English I... students feel more comfortable so when I speak in Korean they just look at me as a real teacher or an adult. How can I say... kind of dominated?

R: An authority figure?

T: Yeah yeah but when I’m using English they feel like really comfortable woman in front of them

R: You mean not like a teacher?

T: Not actually that but feel like ah what I want to say is it lowers their tense

R: Their nervousness

T: Yeah right

R: or tension

T: Yes because when I say in English I try to be more (laughs) encouraging so they feel...

R: They feel better

T: Yeah more comfortable

R: And where do you think this idea comes from?

T: From my past experience so when I learned English and when I went to the academy and there was a teacher who only used English a foreign teacher maybe it’s because he was a foreigner I’m not sure but yeah using English itself makes the atmosphere better
Sarah

As a student
- Korean teachers strict
- Learning English is boring
- Students like it when I use Korean, more comfortable
- Students give up when they don’t understand something in English

As a new teacher
- Uncomfortable when TT programs only used English

As a more experienced teacher

Initial assumptions: Using Korean to teach English in school is normal

Initial assumptions generally reinforced by early teaching experiences, i.e. Korean is necessary for teaching English. Exposure is good but 100% impossible as students don’t understand and become bored. A’s became tentative attitudes.

Firms beliefs: 50/50 split of languages preferred, Korean is useful motivating tool in the class.
Do you think any of your experiences from when you were a student maybe influence you when you are using Korean?

Like when I was a student or as a teacher? As you know when I was a student I didn’t... you know my teacher didn’t use English but it was the first time in WTT it was only using English it was difficult especially the pronunciation class she used a lot of difficult English at that time like grammar English even I don’t know them now, like verbs nouns, like that things’ oh my god, what’s that? it was so difficult so I thought when I teach grammar I have to use Korean.

Any other experiences or ideas like that about using Korean?

I can’t think of anything sorry. When I play games even in ITT the teachers saying different, like when you explain a game and we have to do something, we were always confused and say’ he said like this’ ‘no he said like that’ then we asked again so that’s why maybe when I play a game with students ... as long as they use the target language during the games
Two different experiences
How are these beliefs about L1/TL use involved in the social construction of the classroom?

- Pedagogic discourse
- Recontextualisation
Pedagogic discourse

“a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into a special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition” (Bernstein, 1990, p. 183)
During recontextualization

Example conversations about what you did on the weekend

Recontextualize

Creating role plays, listening activities, mock conversations etc.

Who decides what these are?

original social and power relations

new, virtual social and power relations of the classroom
Recontextualization

Allows the ‘ideologies, the beliefs, values and dominant practices of the teacher’ (Chappell, 2014, p. 34) to replace the original social and power relations, particularly those about teacher roles and student roles and methods for empowering teachers or students.
Beliefs that limit or ban L1

- Tightly controlled classes
- Less voice for students
- No co-construction of learning environment
Beliefs that allow for L1

- Classes tightly controlled
- More voice for students
- More co-construction of learning environment
Conformity and Resistance

- Beliefs align with policy
- No co-construction of learning
- Students not encouraged to have voice
- English a mechanism of maintaining and sustaining inequality as it is already structured in South Korea

- Beliefs don’t align with policy
- More co-construction of learning
- Inclusive models of language learning recognize the importance of context
- Encourage students to have voice
Questions
Governments that follow “trends of global capitalization and commodification of language” (Heller, 2014) and subject teachers to theories of language learning that act restrict the voice or creative thoughts of its citizens in the classroom run the risk of creating citizens that will not be able to actively participate as global citizens.

Modern research and theories of language learning that embrace more inclusive models of language learning that recognize the importance of context (Mahboob & Lin, 2016) need to be accepted by governments in order to best serve citizens. Failure to do so can only lead to questions of true intent or competence in regards to the selection of appropriate policy.