Review of Emma Riordan, "Language for Teaching Purposes: Bilingual Classroom Discourse and the Non-Native Speaker Classroom Teacher" (2018) published by Palgrave Macmillan, London

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Language for Teaching Purposes makes a number of key arguments: The first and most significant is that the discourse of the language classroom is unique and distinct from general language. As a result, Non-Native Speaker Language Teachers (NNSLTs) have different language needs to their non-teaching fellow students.

In order to identify the needs of German language teachers in Irish secondary schools arising from the specific features of German language classroom discourse, a corpus of approximately 62,000 words of spoken classroom discourse was analysed together with survey and interview data gathered from language teachers and language teaching and learning experts, as well as data gathered by means of classroom observations. The results provide valuable insights into the types of tasks that language teachers typically carry out and their associated language requirements.

Three broad types of classroom tasks are highlighted: regulatory tasks, involving classroom organisation and management, informative tasks, encompassing explaining and describing, and the elicitation of responses and provision of feedback.

Specifically, regulatory tasks reflect attempts by a language teacher to structure and signpost a lesson in order to ensure that learners remain focussed. They include 'cuing' and nominating

where cuing is a speech act intended to evoke from the learner an indication that they are willing to respond in class so that they can then be nominated by the teacher to do so. Other key regulatory tasks are giving instructions, maintaining discipline and creating a positive and relaxed classroom dynamic. Riordan stresses that inability or lack of confidence in their ability to complete any of the above tasks through the target language may prevent the NNSLT using the target language as a normal means of communication in the classroom.

Similarly, complexities can be associated with the completion of informative tasks such as those associated with explaining grammar or vocabulary items in class. Over half of the teachers surveyed as part of this research reported that 'Explaining grammar in the target language doesn't work for me'. Further analysis of the data suggested that some teachers may not have the skills necessary to translate their declarative grammatical knowledge in a manner comprehensible to their students. While there is a growing body of research supporting the view that there are situations where the use of the learner's L1 in the classroom can be pedagogically advantageous including in the explanation of complex grammatical items, the decision on the part of the teacher to revert to the L1 should not be made on the basis of a perceived inability to explain the concept through the target language. Explanation of vocabulary through the target language can also entail the use of a range of strategies including the activation of prior knowledge, breaking down of compounds, paraphrasing, definition in the target language and potentially ultimately the use of the L1.

Riordan posits that there are frequent situations in the classroom where a teacher poses either display or referential questions. Display questions require the reproduction of information such as a lexical term or grammatical form while referential questions, to which the teacher may not know the answer, are more open-ended. While both have important roles to play in the classroom, Riordan highlights the fact that referential questions tend to be associated with exploratory, inductive learning and display questions with the reproduction of information. Referential questions, however, generally place greater linguistic demands on the teacher. They occurred less frequently in the data gathered for this research potentially indicating a lack of authentic communication in the language classroom. Similarly, analysis of the provision of corrective feedback suggested that some teachers may lack the variety and specificity of language required to provide such feedback effectively.

Thus, Riordan identifies particular tasks that a language teacher typically completes but which are not common outside of the classroom. Similarly, the language associated with the completion of these tasks is not frequently used in general language. Therefore, the language teacher is unlikely to have come across it before entering the language classroom in the role of teacher and, as such, may not be adequately prepared. The findings of this study suggest that this lack of adequate preparation can have a negative impact on the NNSLT's self-confidence and self-efficacy despite having high levels of general language proficiency. This may result in them reverting unnecessarily to the L1 and missing opportunities to provide valuable target language input in the classroom. On this basis, Riordan presents a persuasive and evidenced argument in favour of the development of Language for Teaching Purposes for NNSLTs as a form of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP).

Riordan supports her call for LSP for NNSLTs with the argument that NNSLTs are a distinct cohort operating in a unique environment where the means of communication is also the target of the lesson. Such an unashamed focus on the teacher in this context is welcome given that the teacher remains 'a defining force in L2 development' (p. 114) particularly in non-immersion settings despite the centrality of the learner in learner-centred pedagogy. Notwithstanding the fact that much of the research suggests that NNSLTs have a number of advantages over Native Speaker Language Teachers (NSLTs), including the fact that they may serve as a realistic and imitable model of a successful learner, teach learning strategies more effectively, provide learners with more information about the workings of the language, anticipate language difficulties, be more empathetic to learners' needs, and share the learners' mother tongue (Medgyes 1994 in Riordan 2018, p. 124), Medgyes (1992, 1999 in Riordan 2018, p. 123) concludes that this group suffers from an inferiority complex in relation to the target language. Such findings underline the need for the provision of tailored language support to the NNSLT.

The language needs analysis of NNSLTs presented in *Language for Teaching Purposes* provides direction regarding how best to design curricula for NNSLTs in order to make the most of their natural advantages and ameliorate any disadvantages. As such, it fills a significant gap in this field particularly regarding NNSLTs of languages other than English. It is presented in a

balanced and accessible manner, and is essential reading for those involved in designing and developing programmes and curricula for future and in-service NNSLTs.

References:

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