

Some beliefs about language teaching and a video example

Belief 1

- L2 learning means mastering grammatical rules and vocabulary
- Grammatical rules must be taught through the learner's L1
- Vocabulary is best learnt on the basis of equivalence with items in L1
- The teacher's / learner's L1 is the most appropriate medium of classroom communication
- Spontaneous L2 use is not part of what happens in the classroom
- In due course the learner should have the wherewithal to use the L2 for purposes of communication

Belief 2

- L2 learning is a matter of acquiring verbal habits
- Learners acquire verbal habits (L2 structures and their transformations) by drill and practice
- Efficient habit formation does not require introspection and analysis; thus there is no need for the explicit treatment of linguistic form
- Efficient habit formation is impeded by use of the learner's L1: new meanings must be conveyed visually
- After repeating lots of drills many times over, the learner should be able to use the L2 for communicative purposes
- Spontaneous L2 use is not usually part of what happens in the classroom

Belief 3

- L2 learning is a matter of mastering functions and notions
- Functions and notions are best presented in dialogues and practised as role plays
- Listening and speaking are more important than reading and writing
- It is appropriate for learners to use someone else's words when they speak the L2 in the classroom
- Explicit treatment of linguistic form may or may not play a useful role (cf. "weak" and "strong" versions of the communicative approach)

- If linguistic form is described, analysed or explained, it should be done in the learner's L1

Belief 4

- Teachers can tell learners many things about language, but they cannot tell them language itself
- L2 learning arises from the learner's sustained attempts to use the L2 for her own communicative purposes
- L2 learning thus depends crucially on L2 use
- L2 learning is optimal when the learner is fully involved, has access to a wide range of discourse roles, initiating as well as responding, and is encouraged to think about what she is doing
- In other words, L2 learning is optimal when learners are autonomous

A video example: Hanne Thomsen

- Karlslunde Skole: Danish comprehensive school; learners aged 10–17; mixed-ability classes
- Edited highlights from a 90-minute lesson that follows a fixed pattern:
 - Show my homework
 - Presenting a play
 - Group work
 - Comments on today's work
 - Sing a song
 - A story

Questions for discussion

- In what respects is your own classroom practice the same as Hanne Thomsen's?
- In what respects is your own classroom practice different?
- How would you define the pedagogical principles that guide Hanne Thomsen's teaching?

Reference

Thomsen, H. and G. Gabrielsen, 1991: *New Classroom Practices in Foreign Language Teaching: Co-operative Teaching-Learning*. Video and mimeo. Copenhagen: Danmarks Lærerhøjskole.