

To Sheila [redacted] / PET/

Dear Sheila,

I enclose a article around the area of translation and language learning. This is an area I am currently exploring with a view to producing a book for the forthcoming Pilgrims-Longman Resource book series. This <sup>is</sup> collaboration with Christine Frank.

Maybe there is much more use of mother tongue in EFL secondary school classrooms <sup>round Europe</sup> than one might suspect from what is written within the current direct method orthodoxy. Perhaps teachers can be drawn into a discussion of how they use mother tongue and translation. It's a big area, potentially, for PET to go into.

~~XXXXX~~ Happy New Year,

Mario

Ps: Sheila, if you use the article <sup>maybe</sup> I should check the <sup>work</sup> ~~proof~~ to make sure the <sup>work</sup> is correct.

Liz, could the article be typed according to PET editorial guidelines, please. If these not on file in 8V.P. (they should be) please get Sheila Berger to send you a set.



Translation as part of learning a language

The last <sup>thirty</sup> 2 years in language teaching have been dominated by the idea that the learner goes direct from 'reality' to naming reality in the foreign language. The student is shown a ~~cat~~ <sup>the</sup> and is taught the word cat without reference to the corresponding word in the mother tongue.

Though the direct method still has the status of the guiding orthodoxy there are ~~still~~ <sup>colleagues</sup> all over Europe quietly using translation to help learners get to the point quicker.

Take an exercise proposed by Joachim Appel as part of a unit of work for a tenth <sup>grade</sup> class <sup>reading</sup> a novel. To help students with the comprehension of a difficult descriptive passage in the book Joachim gives them 20-30 hard words translated into mother tongue and in the same order as they occur in the passage. <sup>They get the mother tongue words</sup> The students start <sup>only</sup> the reading by matching the mother tongue words with the corresponding words in the text. After this preliminary work they are in a better position to to read and understand the text. ( J. Appel teaches in a gymnasium in Germany.)

Introducing vocabulary

In his work on introducing new vocabulary, Paul Meara of Birbeck College, Univ of London takes it for granted that the learner will use the mother tongue word as the key to the target language word. Can I use the Meara method to teach you a few words of Turkish? Here are four columns:

<u>Target language word</u>	<u>Your association</u>	<u>Meaning of target language word</u>	<u>Bridging association</u>
KAYUN			
BEN			
GÖL			
ORTASINDA			

Have a good look at Kayun and find an association for it, which you jot down in the second column. ( My association was canyon). KAYUN in Turkish means sheep. Jot this down in the third column and try to find a way of linking your first association with the meaning.

In my case I think of a KAYUN that has fallen *into* a canyon and is bleating <sup>9</sup> on a ledge half way ~~down~~ <sup>1</sup>. The more sensory your bridging association is the better. It's good to get a ludicrous one, too- these tend to fix the words in the memory.

Can you do the same for the other three <sup>Turkish</sup> words? You will find their ~~equivalents~~ <sup>equivalents</sup> in English at the end of this article.

Meara suggests that students should learn a lot of basic vocabulary at the start of a language course and that his associative method allows this to happen fast, pleasurably and efficiently. Translation of the target words is a key part of his process.

### Revising words

A powerful way of reviewing vocabulary is to ask the students to take a handful of words and to write mother-tongue sentences using them. If I were going over the Turkish words I might write:

"Yesterday I read an article about improving            KAYUN wool yield."

Try to do this with BEN, GOL and ORTASINDA. When you are <sup>at</sup> a low level in the target language this technique allows you to 'use' the word in a much more sophisticated sentence than you            could produce in the target language. <sup>This fixes the</sup> ~~the~~ words            in the mind. I learnt this idea from Sheelagh Deller, a Pilgrims colleague and author of Teaching from the Learner, Longman, 1990.

Sheelagh's exercise clearly <sup>breaks with</sup> ~~offends against~~ direct method orthodoxy. <sub>1 1</sub>

### Translating text

Give the students a short mother-tongue text. On the board you show them numbered blanks <sup>(that stand)</sup> for the words of the target language translation of the passage they have in their hands. Your board will look like this:

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10		

Your role is simply to give the students feedback: "no, the word in space 4 is not X"

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The students' task is to decide on the target language words to go in the blanks, <sup>in the light of</sup> the mother tongue text. This is possibly the best guided translation exercise I have ~~yet seen~~. The idea comes from David Hardisty, who works in Portugal, and he presents it <sup>in</sup> his book CALL OUP, 1989. You really don't need one micro-computer per three students and a "total deletion" type program to make the exercise work. The blackboard is a fine home for it. (It's well worth looking at computer methodology books like Hardisty's and Windeatt's to find good exercises you can use in the ordinary classroom!)

#### Real life bi-lingual situations

Bessie Dendinos, who has written a lot of material for use in Greek secondary schools, points out that in real life one is often asked to use the fact that one knows two languages to carry out practical tasks.

So a Greek student might be in her uncle's office when a letter in English arrives. The uncle asks her to read it and pick out the main points. He does not want a word-for-word translation. He wants her to grasp the meaning <sup>accurately</sup> in English and summarise it in Greek.

A foreign visitor might be watching the news in Greek in a Greek house. He might ask for a two sentence resumé of a news item he thinks he half understood from the context and the pictures.

Dendinos proposes a series of practical, bi-lingual exercises like the ones described to prepare students to use their English in normal life. Maybe there are others that occur to you based on the way you know students use their English in your particular local situation? If there are, why not send them ~~to~~ <sup>PET</sup> to Sheila Borges, editor of ~~the magazine~~, for possible publication?

#### From the primary school

Primary school teachers in immigrant areas in UK have no fear of mixing mother tongue and target language in their teaching to 5-6 year olds. They are not in the thrall of direct method orthodoxy. They work in a child-centred, practical commonsensical sort of way.

A major technique they use with children who come to school with virtually no English (from Bengali, Contonese etc homes) is to

tell them stories mostly in mother-tongue<sup>r</sup> and a bit in English. Imagine your mother tongue is English and the target language is Greek:

" Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll archizo: once upon a time there was a hen, a kota, who used to visit the Library quite often. She'd go into the vivliothiki and choose two or three vivlia from the <sup>l</sup>selves. She'd take the vivlia over to the man at the desk, the vivliothikario . The vivliothikarios would stamp the vivlia, and then hand them to the kota, saying " Here you are, Kiria Kota, please bring the vivlia back by the end of next evthomada, by the end of next week " And so the kota would leave the vivliothiki with the vivlia under her wing .

But there was a provlima. The kota used to come back the next imera, or a couple of imeres ( days) later but she never brought any of the vivlia back. The vivliothikarios complained, but it got him nowhere. So one fine imera he decided to follow her. She went down the street from the vivliothiki to the railway stathmo with the vivlia under her pteri. In the stathmo she went to platform two and got on a suburban treno. He did the same.

Half an hour later the treno stopped in a village stathmo. The kota katevike from the treno and the vivliothikarios also katevike. He followed her to a big house, a megalos spiti, on the edge of the village. The kota, still carrying the vivlia, went round behind the spiti. There was a pond behind the spiti, the megalos spiti. In the middle of pond were some water-lilies with a big green vatrachos sitting on one of them. The kota called out to the frog : " listen, I've brought you some more vivlia from the vivliothiki, catch! " The kota threw one of the vivlia she was carrying under her pteri to the big green vatrachos. The vatrachos caught it and flipped over the pages. Then he petaxe it <sup>over his shoulder</sup> into the water. " I've read it." The vivlio sank to the bottom of the pond with all the other vivlia. The vivliothikarios was now clear why the kota never brought the vivlia she danise back to the vivliothiki! "

In the primary school situation in UK such <sup>bi-lingual</sup> stories are told and retold with more and more of the story in the target language until finally the kids can cope with the whole text in the target language.

As you read/listened to my story your knowledge of English gave the Greek words shape and meaning and your feeling for English gave the new words some kind of feeling too. This

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technique draws sap from the mother tongue and injects it into the foreign sounds. [Why not tell your beginners a mixed language story like this one about the kota and vatrachos? Don't write out the text- just jot down the words you will want to put into English. If you write out a whole text you will probably find that your contact with the class is a lot less direct, as you will be reading off the page rather than telling. You will not have the same eye-contact <sup>write</sup> and feedback from the children.

The aim of this article is not to suggest that we go back forty years to the days of grammar translation. Its aim, though, is to suggest that people all round Europe are quietly using translation exercises as part of <sup>their</sup> normal teaching process and that this is an area <sup>of</sup> work well worth looking at. Perhaps ~~it~~ is time to question *direct method dogma.*

Note: BEN = I

GOL = a desert

ORTASINDA in the middle of...