

# Transcript: **Target Language**

## When less is definitely more: integrating planned and spontaneous target language use with content teaching

Length of Talk: 40 minutes approx. (in two parts)

Presenter: Rachel Hawkes

### **PART 1**

#### **Slide 1 (30s):**

Welcome to this session. We're going to look at using the target language in our foreign language teaching, focusing on progression from the earliest stages for beginner learners, lesson one. We're going to think about how much target language we use, more importantly which words and structures we use, and when it makes sense to use English. The resources that are featured in this session are freely available on the [NCELP resource portal](#).

#### **Slide 2 (1m30s):**

Let's start with this statement from the [pedagogy review](#). I should say, do 'pause' me to give yourselves time to read the text on the slides at a comfortable pace. Rather than me read verbatim from any of the slides, I'm going to summarise and draw out the main points. So, according to this, the four main recommendations for spoken use of the L2 in the language classroom are that:

- 1) one, it is essential practice and reinforcement of language, including SSC and other aspects of pronunciation and intonation.
- 2) two, it must be planned to be optimal and integrated systematically into the teaching of vocabulary and grammar.
- 3) three, it will be effectively supported by use of English/L1 where needed
- 4) and four, the use of target language by teacher and students should build on previously taught language

And the expectations for learning, if target language is used in that way, are that the spoken language will:

- 1) embed language in long-term memory
- 2) practise recall
- 3) engage learners in real and creative communication

So there is a lot in here and we will clarify and add detail and examples to all of this during the session.

### **Slide 3 (41s):**

Let's give ourselves a bit of structure at this point and take a quick look at the aims for this session. We're going to look at the learning potential for target language use in the classroom, focusing in particular on the role of planning in that. Following on from that, we'll look at how classroom target language use and be integrated with the language on our SOW, the curriculum content that we set out to teach every lesson. We're also going to unpack the role of English, and throughout the session we'll be building up a checklist to support our planning of target language use.

### **Slide 4 (4m):**

This session was designed and delivered originally as a workshop session, involving opportunities to think and share ideas and practice. Whilst it's likely that people are accessing this on their own, I still think it makes sense to ask the same questions and that we all take time to think through the answers for ourselves, so pause the presentation for a moment, to give yourself four to five minutes to think and potentially note down answers to these questions.  
[pause]

OK, so hopefully you were able to brainstorm the language you use with classes and the language you teach students to use with you, so that you're looking at some specific language examples.

Looking at those examples, how do you introduce that language to students? Both the language you use and the language the students. Do you have one or two dedicated classroom language lessons at the start of Y7, when you 'teach' a set of classroom language? Do you give it out to students on a sheet? Perhaps put posters round the room? Do they have a 'classroom language structure' for each week? Do you plan your TL use for

your own instructions? Do you write that down anywhere? Is it incremental over time?

Do they treat classroom language in the same way as any other language - i.e. teach it, revisit it, test it etc... Are there any systems in place to encourage students to use the classroom language they've been taught?

E.g. incentives, comprehension checks, reinforcement from the teacher?

Thinking about the final two bullets, teachers often report that they start off with high hopes and expectations in Y7 and then things tail off, with students often using less classroom language themselves at the end of the year than they did at the beginning. If this is not true for you, i.e. your students increase their use of TL, how do you account for that? It's likely that a strong focus on it from the teacher, and a consistent approach will feature in the responses, here. If, on the other hand, you think that your and your students' use of TL decline as time goes on, the reasons are likely to include:

i. firstly, it just gets overlooked as time passes - the language drops off teacher and student radars and is forgotten. As it's easier for students to use English, and teaching time is always tight, it is natural for use of target language in the classroom to decrease.

ii. Secondly, too much was perhaps introduced too quickly and it wasn't embedded firmly enough with practice and revisiting.

ii. Thirdly, the language was too complex and varied, students couldn't unpack the chunks (i.e. whole phrases) to create their own meanings, and the messages communicated by the chunks themselves were a bit limited. Students weren't able to adapt the language phrases confidently to say what they needed/wanted to say, so they got into the habit of just using English.

### **Slide 5 (1m):**

Let's look at further wording from the Pedagogy Review about the role of planning classroom target language. Just pause for a moment to read the statement. [pause]

So, this suggests that the use of target language will be carefully chosen and that it will be cumulative, i.e., it will increase over time. It will be planned to take account of what students know at any one time, and planned to recycle this previously-taught language in the classroom, giving students additional opportunities to 'use' it (both receptively and productively).

The statement also emphasises the importance of students understanding the L2 classroom language.

**Slide 6 (50s):**

So, how do we plan in our classroom target language?

The way the NCELP SOW do this is to highlight in purple (in the vocabulary column) the words and phrases that feature in classroom interactions and teacher instructions in the lesson materials. These words and phrases are included in the week's vocabulary learning, and are explicitly integrated into the teaching activities.

This is a snap shot from the French Y7 SOW, showing the vocabulary for the week, with classroom language highlighted in purple.

There is a link to the [French Y7 SOW](#) on the bottom of this slide.

**Slide 7 (1m46s):**

This example from Term one, Lesson one in Spanish is a useful one for showing how content language and classroom language use can be integrated.

So, the thinking is that this is the first lesson with a new Y7 class, that the teacher doesn't know the students, and the students will likely not all know each other, either. Here, the teacher uses "¿Dónde está" plus the name of the student to identify the students in the class, he or she takes a register or gets to know the class names.

This is an opportunity to use the L2 clearly and successfully for a communicative purpose. The teacher asks and models 'Dónde' (with a gesture and/or supported by the picture on the slide, as preferred) and 'está' with the name of one of the students and invites the response of raising a hand. The teacher can then say 'hola' and wave.

Then, having done the register, the teacher can continue with the next part of the lesson, having primed them thoroughly with 'está'. The learning objective of this lesson is ESTAR for location, and goes on to learn this with cities in Spain and England. In this way the use of L2 is fully planned and integrated into the language learning objective of the lesson, and primes students for it.

There's a link to the [NCELP Y7 Spanish SOW](#) at the bottom of this slide.

### **Slides 8-11 (30s):**

Here is a very similar example from the first lesson of the Year 7 German SOW, which teaches 'Wo?', 'ist', 'hier' and 'da'. And again, there's a link to the [NCELP Y7 German SOW](#) bottom right on the title slide for this lesson sequence, slide 8.

### **Slide 12 (52s):**

So, I mentioned that throughout the session we'll be building up a checklist to support our planning of target language use. Here we have two summary points from the session so far. First principle is that we can identify opportunities to use the content language that's on our SOW in the classroom for real communication, as in the example of using 'Dónde está' to locate the students in our class. And a second principle is that we can include classroom language as part of the identified vocabulary for learning, on our SOW, week by week. As we continue through the session, we will keep returning and adding to this checklist.

### **Slide 13 (1m33s):**

So, another opportunity to 'pause' me and do some thinking. On this slide you have list of all the language identified as potentially useful for classroom language, from Term 1 of the NCELP SOW for French, German and Spanish. It would be useful to focus on the language you teach most of, in Year 7, and try to generate some examples of things you and/or students might be able to say, using this language. It could be helpful to try to categorise this into instructions, questions, and other talk/chat or comments.

Most of the language you can see here is individual words. There's a deliberate intent not to overload with too much new language, nor to leap ahead of students' grammatical understanding of how different structures work by introducing lots of chunks. So the chunks or phrases that you can see here from Year 7 Term 1 have been limited and selected carefully. We'll talk more about chunks a bit later in the session.

If it's more convenient, you could print out the classroom language handout, Handout 1, which is a pdf version of this slide.

### Slide 14 (1m):

So I hope that it was useful to spend a bit of time thinking through for one language the sorts of language that you could be using and expecting students to use with you, by the end of term 1. You might have felt that there was a fair amount of overlap with the classroom language you're already using with students, and perhaps there was also some differences, some gaps. One of the reasons that might account for some differences was that typically classroom language use has involved the teaching of quite a few chunks or set phrases, "Est-ce que je peux enlever ma veste?" for example. It's worth having a closer look at chunks, perhaps, and why we might want to consider some limitations to their use.

### Slide 15 (36s):

This statement from the [Pedagogy Review](#) points to the importance of teaching students how to manipulate the language contained in any chunks or fixed phrases as soon as possible. This lends more support to the idea of teaching classroom language in conjunction with content language. It's probably helpful to spend a couple of minutes defining and identifying some chunks.

### Slide 16 (2m):

If the definition of 'chunk' is a "phrase that students need to learn as a whole and would not yet be able to deconstruct into component parts, from which they could then create new sentences of their own", how many chunks can we identify in this short text?

It's worth saying as well that chunks are typically made up of language that is not translatable word-for-word and therefore contains some cross-linguistic difficulty.

Examples of chunks in this text include: "Quel age as-tu", "Comment tu t'appelles", "Je m'appelle", "J'ai douze ans" "As-tu des freres ou des soeurs?", even "je suis fils unique" is often learnt as a chunk, because it's learnt before students are taught other parts of the verb "être" or adjectival placement.

Perhaps the easiest rule of thumb when identifying a chunk is to ask whether the student learning it would be able to successfully manipulate it to talk about other persons, form different questions, etc..

When students typically learn “J’ai douze ans” they don’t have the knowledge to say “He is 15” or “They are 30”.

### **Slide 17 (2m16s):**

At this point, pause the presentation and read Handout 2: What is the relationship between the knowledge of chunks and creative language use? This is an OASIS Summary of a [Myles et al. study](#).

To summarise, then, “Chunks” or set phrases make speech sound fluent, because they can be produced faster than speech that students create word by word themselves.

Some, not all, learners can begin to break chunks down and start to use them creatively, though not necessarily accurately, to make their own intended meanings.

Learners differ dramatically in their ability to do this for themselves.

“Chunks” can therefore be both motivating and demotivating. It may be motivating initially to feel that you can say quite a lot, and say it quite fluently, but if you are not able to manipulate these chunks to create different meanings, you may quickly feel the limitation of this approach.

A suggestion might be then that a few “chunks” could be beneficial to beginner learners, and that the phrases that function as communication strategies are likely to be the most beneficial, because they initiate or extend interactions for learning.

Whatever the case, it does seem important that teachers actively help learners to understand the component parts of these phrases and then further help them to use them creatively. With this in mind, chunks with clear and simple component parts are going to be the most helpful.

### **Slide 18 (1m10s):**

So, to put further detail to the notion of “chunks” that are communication strategies for the classroom, we can say that these phrases will typically be



questions that seek clarification, so “Cómo se dice?” or “Wie schreibt man das?”, or those that indicate an issue with communication “No estoy seguro/segura”. They might also be those that keep interactions going, such as ‘Ich denke... Und du?’

These phrases will contain both high-frequency language and be composed of simple parts – interrogative, verb, pronoun that even beginner learners will soon be able to re-use in their own utterances.

### **Slide 19 (36s):**

Here is the example of one such chunk that is taught early on in the NCELP SOW, alongside the introduction to the alphabet and the Foreign Language Spelling Bee.

The chunk “Comment ça s'écrit ?” or its German and Spanish equivalents can usefully be introduced early in Year 7, both to facilitate spelling practice per se and to enable future target language queries about the correct spelling of words, as they arise in lessons.

### **Slide 20 (45s):**

Here are the first 15 words from the Spelling Bee, Stage 1, Spanish. Students have learnt these words already, but this is the first time they will have practised spelling them out loud using the Spanish alphabet.

It is worth flagging here that the first 15 words from the Spelling Bee, taken from the NCELP SOW, also facilitate typical classroom language, i.e., greetings in the classroom, and asking where things or people are.

French and German have similar sets of language for the Spelling Bee.

## **PART 2**

### **Slide 21 (1m40s):**

So we come back to this idea of integrating content and classroom language, as much as we can, which means building it up steadily, as teaching progresses, rather than front-loading our teaching with a big bunch of phrases at the start.



And in that we can be guided by an intent to balance “communicative need” and “usefulness” with linguistic complexity.

Here are three examples from the French SOW, showing where the grammar structures that feature in three typical sets of classroom language ‘chunks’ are actually taught.

Teachers might usefully plan to teach the SOW language and classroom language at the same time. Alternatively, teachers might plan to teach one or other of these classroom language phrases ahead of the SOW, but either way, the rationale for doing so should be clear in our minds.

If, for example, we judge that the usefulness and frequency of the phrase ‘je ne sais pas’ is such that students will have the chance to learn it thoroughly as a chunk and use it in the classroom ahead of the summer term teaching of SAVOIR, then we may decide to teach and use it early on with students. However, we will then want to ensure that the two are explicitly re-connected, when the use of SAVOIR is taught.

### **Slide 22 (1m10s):**

Integrating the L2 classroom use with the SOW learning has the advantage that it creases students’ use (comprehension and production) of the new target feature and also that it spaces out the L2 classroom language learning in a more manageable way, rather than having a couple of lessons at the start of the year to learn lots of phrases, some of which are either then forgotten and not used, or only used as chunks and not broken down so that they can be used more creatively/independently.

In this “pouvoir” example, at the start of Y7 Term 3 on the NCELP SOW students learn ‘pouvoir / peux’. They already know how to form raised intonation questions. They can then be encouraged to formulate their own requests using any of the verbs they already know.

And on the slide here you can see a list of the main verbs they have already been taught during terms 1 & 2.

### **Slide 23 (40s):**

So to summarise this section on teaching “chunks” or set phrases, we can say that our decisions about which language to teach in this way could usefully be informed by identifying “chunks” that: seek clarification, have simple components part, use high-frequency language, and can be integrated as closely as possible with language that is taught as part of the SOW.

**Slide 24 (13s):**

Those principles add to our classroom language principles checklist, as you can see on this slide.

**Slide 25 (28s):**

This next part of the session focuses on our use of English. The [pedagogy review](#) statement refers to “the use of English where needed” and in the next few minutes we consider what that means. You might like to pause the presentation here and consider your own thoughts on when and why you use English in your teaching.

**Slide 26 (4m32s):**

Here I’m going to summarise the use that NCELP resources make of English. I will run through these bullets but then show examples from the resources themselves. So, as it states on the slides:

NCELP resources use English to present unequivocal meanings of new vocabulary, where pictures might be ambiguous. A lot of high-frequency language is non-concrete and not easily depicted in an image. Just think of finding a picture for the verb ‘to use’, for example. For further reading about vocabulary teaching, you might be interested to read a [summary of a review article by Schmitt](#).

You’ll also see the use of English in NCELP’s grammar explanations, but it’s worth noting that these are written with very succinct, minimal grammatical terms, building where possible on terms from KS2 English grammar teaching, and give maximal examples of the grammar feature (target language with English translation).

In initial lesson English is used for task scenarios in NCELP resources, to give a plausible context for the language in use in the task, maybe to add an element of interest or humour. It should also be said that as language

knowledge increases through Year 7, these task scenarios use more and more target language.

And finally, English is obviously used whenever translation occurs, whether oral or written. Translation into English at sentence level obviously assesses learners' understanding of L2 grammar and vocabulary, whilst requiring students to speak or write target language translations from English assesses their grammar and vocabulary (and in speaking, phonics') knowledge productively.

And just worth mentioning that the most important thing about responding to learner questions is that we do it, not whether our answers (or their questions for that matter) are in English or the target language. It's whatever is optimum for learning, in that moment.

To summarise the principles that are emerging here, we could say the following:

Number one - 1st rule - Do no harm! – Students MUST understand or the time is wasted, whatever language we are operating in!

Number two - Accept and acknowledge student differences in terms the ability to tolerate moments of not understanding immediately and easily what's been said

Number three - In the time-poor classroom we need to find the optimum use of L2 – actually it's less about English vs the L2 and more about teacher talk vs student talk and then even more about purposeful talk vs irrelevant or superfluous talk. The main thing is that talk should ensure and support understanding.

And Number four - Finally in our decision-making, let's be guided by fitness for purpose..... and always keep an open mind!

### **Slide 27 (1m6s):**

So, here are a few examples of English in use in the NCELP resources.

Example one: Use of English to provide equivalent English and L2 meanings

It's worth noting that the English gives a lot of information, here. It reinforces that English has two present tenses whilst German has one. It also gives two semantic uses of the verb "fahren", drive and ride.

Often NCELP resources deliberately just introduce one of the meanings of a word, and later on add a second or third meaning, including tasks that differentiate the multiple senses of the word.

Here, though, two of the main meanings of “fahren” are introduced together, as both senses are involved in that particular teaching sequence.

### **Slide 28 (1m18s):**

Here is a second example of using English to provide word meanings. In this case, students either work by themselves or in pairs, reading out the words and studying their English meaning (1 minute). Then the English meanings are removed and they try to recall them, looking at the German (1 minute). Then the German meanings are removed and they try to recall them, looking at the English (1 minute). It is not expected that they will be able to do them all confidently after this task. In a mixed ability class, some students will come close to being able recall them all, whilst others may just manage one or two. It is important to have open-ended routines for first encounters of new words, as it offsets the frustration that may be caused by a mismatched pace of presentation.

### **Slide 29 (44s):**

Example three: This is an example of the use of English in a grammar explanation. You'll notice how few words are on the slide, and how most of the words are exemplification, rather than explanation. This slide represents a very small amount of overall lesson time. The majority of time is for practising the new language knowledge.

### **Slide 30 (36s):**

Example four: Using English in task rubrics

So this is Year 7, first half-term, week 3 of learning. At this stage, students do not yet have a lot of target language knowledge. The rubric is therefore given in English. The next two slides show progression and increased use of TL for task instructions.

### **Slide 31 (35s):**

Example five: This German task is half a term later on in students' learning. They have learnt the verbs “machen” and “schreiben”, the question words “wer” (who) and “was” (what), the pronouns “ich” and “du” and the

conjunction “oder”. All of those are recycled here in the task instruction. But you'll notice there's still a very brief task scenario given in English.

**Slide 32 (30s):**

**Example six:** So, in this example from November of Y7, you can see that the task scenario and the instructions are given in Spanish. Students have learnt ‘estar’ and ‘ciudades’. The remainder of the instructions use cognates.

**Slide 33 (31s):**

To conclude our section on the use of English, we can see that we've added a further two bullets to our classroom language checklist, that the rule of thumb to decide when to use English is when otherwise meaning would be unclear, and that we would expect the use of English to decrease over time as students' knowledge of the new language increases.

**Slide 34 (1m45s):**

The final statement I'm going to highlight from the pedagogy review is about spontaneous interactions in the target language, moments that arise tangential to our planning, which can nevertheless be usefully harnessed, both to re-activate previously taught language as well as introduce previously unknown language. I guess that when judging whether to commit lesson time to such spontaneous moments, or close them down as quickly as possible to get back to your lesson plan, a good rule of thumb is to ask: Is it going to be useful going forward? Is it going to be re-visited (relatively soon)?

If students are going to meet language incidentally in these memorable interactions, it will be most beneficial if it is language that will come up again (and fairly soon). If this is the case, then it is likely that the interaction will be of use to more than one learner, that it may in fact prime for planned learning in the future, and that meeting the new language ahead of time in this context is likely to support L2 learning.

These are ‘on the spot’ decisions that have to be made by the teacher, and the more experience we have with a range of classes across the age and ability range, the more likely we are to spot and exploit these moments successfully.

**Slide 35 (1m30s):**

So, if you've made it through the session this far, we've arrived at the point where we draw together a summary of principles for teacher use of the target language. I will give a fair bit of detail around these bullets, which will

hopefully be of use.

[These notes are not read out but copied underneath the presentation slide 35].

### **1. Carefully planned**

i.e. planned out to take account of the language students have already learnt, to avoid tricky language (e.g. idioms) and unfamiliar structures, to made judicious use of comprehensible cognates,

### **2. Clear**

i.e. enunciated clearly, facing the class, not too quickly, allowing pauses for processing, supporting with appropriate gestures (e.g. to an example on the board, to an object or person in the classroom)

### **3. Cumulative**

i.e. to build up gradually and incrementally over time, not trying to do too much too quickly, focusing repeatedly on one structure, but adding lexical variety where possible, recycling/ modelling previously learnt structures

### **4. Consistent**

Vital. If you use a particular instruction in the new language (successfully) with a class one day, and then revert to English (easy to do), this is a missed opportunity for valuable input. Similarly, if we use the new language, then translate ourselves into English (sandwiching) as a routine, it takes twice as long to say anything and students get used to attending only to the English (it's easier) – and the new language becomes redundant. We have to make our use of the new language task essential. It goes without saying that if our students do not yet have enough language to understand what we need to tell them, even once we have considered how we might simplify our language, then we use clear, succinct English.

Bottom line – our language and our message (whether L1 or L2) needs to be understood.

### **5. Checks understanding**

This also applies, whether or not we use L1 or L2! It's all too easy to forget to check that students understand. We all use expressions to check understanding – but sometimes they are used almost rhetorically. It is really important that we establish a culture of student response to our checks, so that we can be confident they at least really think they understand.

Adolescent learners don't always naturally flag their lack of understanding

straightaway. One legendary (true!) story - In one class of lower ability learners one Y11 student, who had had the same teacher throughout Y10 too, and was used to his teacher saying to the class 'Entendéis?' suddenly asked her at Easter of Y11 – Miss, what is this about 10 days? What is going to happen in 10 days? You've been saying that since the start of Y10! It can be very useful for us to use our eyes as well as our ears to check understanding – scanning to check that students get straight on with a task, that their initial moments of activity correspond with our expectations, can help us be more confident that they've understood.

## **6. Creative**

To get meanings across we also need ingenuity. Getting into the habit of using examples to get meanings across is invaluable, especially if they involve the immediate setting of the classroom. Referring to things that are too far removed from the classroom can lose beginner students. I watched a teacher come up with a very good way to tell her learners in lesson one that she wanted to know their preferred names, not just their register names, by using a member of the class who she imagined would prefer Kate rather than Kathryn. In this, as in other aspects of teacher talk, we can grow our ability.

## **7. Communicative**

Not every instance of new language use will necessarily be communicative. In recall practice, for example, oral corrective feedback plays an important role (error correction has its own CPD in Y2, so we will not include a discussion of that, here). At other times, focusing only on the errors that produce genuine communication breakdown (i.e. you really don't understand what the learner has said) may be the most beneficial for learning. Teachers can signal a difficulty, and then follow up to resolve the communication. There is substantial evidence that negotiated interaction to resolve communication breakdown leads to language uptake (and later, learning). Communicative can also refer to the ideal response when opportunities for spontaneous language use arise – we will come back to this a bit later.

As mentioned already, all of these 'Cs' add up to 'comprehensible' use of new language – the first priority is that students understand.

### **Slide 36 (39s):**

So here we have the complete classroom language checklist that this session has been building towards. At this point, it might be worth pausing the audio again to consider if there are any aspects of your own or your department's target language use that could be developed further. It might also be a



good moment to commit to a particular action point arising from your thinking about use of target language. It might be to review your department's practice with regard to introduction of classroom language and decide if to amend in light of this CPD, it might be to identify the exact language taught in your SOW for a specific year group and term and plan how to recycle it in instructions and other classroom interactions. It might be to review your department's use of target language policy.

**Slide 37 (12s):**

Whatever you decide might be the next steps, I hope that you found the session gave some food for thought and that we did achieve its aims.

**Slide 37 (11s):**

And if you are interesting in finding out more about NCELP, just visit the [website](#) and also the [resource portal](#). Bye for now.