

## Crossing linguistic borders: mother-tongue and English in the classroom and beyond

English today is an essential tool for use in international, and sometimes intra-national, communication. It is no longer primarily taught and learned in order to interact with native speakers or for purposes of migration to English-speaking countries, but rather for international communication: to interact with others for whom English is also not their mother tongue, or to get or convey information online. More and more people in the world are at least bilingual, speaking their own language most of the time, but able to function effectively in English as needed. As this situation develops, the relationship between the role of the mother tongue and that of English as an international language is changing: distinctions and prohibitions that we took for granted a generation ago are melting or reinventing themselves. In this talk I will discuss some such assumptions, question them and, suggest alternative approaches. Some examples: the distinctions between the 'native' and 'non-native' speaker, and 'native' and 'non-native' usage; the exclusion of mother tongue from the classroom and reluctance to use translation as a teaching tool.