

# V. Cook's Multicompetence and Its Consequences for SLA Research and L2 Pedagogy<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reviews theoretical background and course of development of the *multicompetence* (MC) framework first used by V. Cook (1991) and then considers its consequences for second language acquisition (SLA) research and second language (L2) pedagogy with special focus on a Japanese EFL context. The MC framework has been a new and challenging perspective for the field of applied linguistics, SLA, cognitive sciences, bilingualism and L2 pedagogy. The main philosophy behind the MC perspective is that the L2 user with more than one language is a *unique* person from either native speaker of the first language (L1) or the L2. Since its inception, the MC framework has been one of the most influential concepts of the present century in language-related disciplines, which would be well compared with the now standard term of *communicative competence* introduced by D. Hymes (1971) or *interlanguage* by Selinker (1972). The first half of the paper answers basic questions of what V. Cook's MC is and what evidence there is to support his ideas. The latter half of the paper discusses important consequences of the MC framework for SLA research and L2 pedagogy especially in a Japanese EFL context where students in fact have few chances to use the L2 on a regular basis in their daily lives. The paper concludes with the present authors' observation that Cook's MC framework has contributed much to the shift of perspectives on fundamental rights of the persons who are learning an L2, the way we describe and explain their compound state of a mind with more than one language and the goals of L2 teaching and learning. In the end some related issues to be solved in future SLA research are also presented.

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## 1. Introduction

In the early 1990s, the concept of *multicompetence* (MC) opened up another arena for linguistics and it has, since its inception, attracted research attention particularly in L2 related fields such as applied linguistics, second language acquisition (SLA), cognitive sciences and bilingualism. What is of importance in the concept of MC is that it has provided us with new theoretical perspectives on *the L2 user*<sup>4</sup> and their knowledge of *languages* and cognition. MC has been, or perhaps will be, one of the most influential concepts of the present century, which can even be compared with the now commonly used term *communicative competence* coined by D. Hymes (1971) or *interlanguage* by Selinker (1972).

The MC idea was first introduced by Vivian Cook<sup>5</sup> to address linguistic knowledge of an ordinary person with “the compound state of a mind with more than one language” (Cook, 1991, p. 112). With an increasing body of research evidence, this unique concept has challenged the definitions of some important SLA related technical terms such as ‘the native speaker’, ‘the L2 learner’, ‘interlanguage’, ‘language transfer’, and the like. Unfortunately, however, though MC is of importance at the level of both theory and practice in SLA and L2 pedagogy, little is known about MC among SLA researchers and practitioners here in Japan. The aim of this paper is twofold: to review theoretical background and the course of development of the MC idea and to consider its consequences for SLA research and L2 pedagogy especially in an EFL (English as a foreign language) context such as Japan where learning a second language is mostly for later potential use.

## 2. What is MC?

### 2.1 Rationale for MC

The rationale for Cook’s MC idea lies in the fact that there “are few places in the world where only one language is used” (Cook, 2002b, p. 2). In fact, ‘more than thirty’ is the estimated figure resulting from a provisional calculation of the average number of languages used in a country (Machida, 2008, p. 3). For example, there are many countries in Asia where several languages are used (e.g., more than two hundred languages in Indonesia, one hundred in the Philippines). Even Japan, “often cited as the most monolingual country, has 900,000 speakers of Okinawan and 670,000 speakers of Korean ...; all Japanese children learn English” (Cook, 2002b, p. 2) in junior and senior high schools. Therefore, to be sure, “the majority of people in the world are multi-competent users of two or more languages” (Cook, 2002b, p. 2). In Europe too finding

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4 Cook uses ‘the L2 user’ instead of ‘the L2 learner’ to refer to the L2 learner in his MC perspective. See Section 3 in this paper for details. In this paper we follow his choice of the term.

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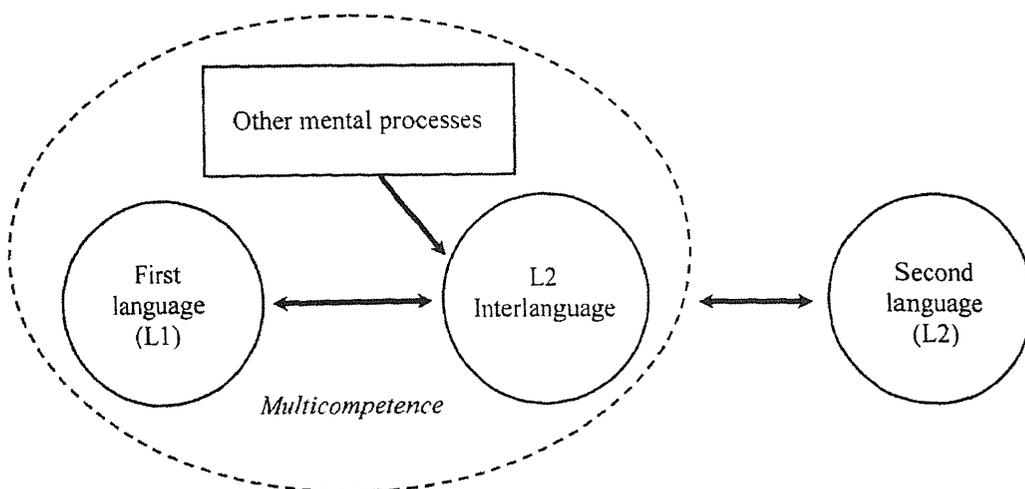
multilingual countries is not so difficult; for instance, 'Basque' in the border region of France and Spain, 'Breton' in the far western edge of France, 'Franco-Provence' on the border of Switzerland, 'Occitan' in the southern France, to name a few majority languages used other than French (Machida, 2008, p. 28).

Accordingly it is quite normal for people in the world to understand and use more than one language if there are many countries where multiple languages are used. Then in pursuit of describing linguistic knowledge the basic assumption should be that the ultimate goal of linguistics is to describe not *competence* of monolinguals, if anyone is, but *MC* of multilinguals and the goal of language acquisition is to describe and explain how *MC* is acquired and put to use.

Cook first introduced the term *MC* to describe a multilinguals' compound state of minds with more than one grammar in the so-called poverty-of-the-stimulus argument of language acquisition (Cook, 1991). He argues that the normal human environment includes input in more than one language and that monolinguals are rather suffering from a form of language deprivation. Therefore, the poverty-of-the-stimulus argument should be, "not how the mind manages to acquire a single grammar, but how it manages to acquire one *or more* grammars" (emphasis in original, Cook, 1991, p. 114).

*MC* emerged in such a way "out of fairly technical questions within UG (Universal Grammar) theory" (Cook, 1992, p. 558), i.e., "the knowledge of more than one language in the same mind" (Cook, 1996, p. 65). However, to make it clear that the *MC* is not restricted to syntax, he usually defines it nowadays as "knowledge of two languages in one mind" (Cook, 2008a, p. 17).

In the same vein, he further argues inadequacy of the term 'interlanguage' to describe the knowledge of the L2 user. While 'interlanguage' has been the standard term for the L2 user's language, "no word existed that encompassed their multicompetent knowledge of *both* the second language *and* their first: on the one hand the L1, on the other interlanguage, but nothing that included both" (emphasis in original, Cook, 2003b, p. 2). In other words, the mind of the L2 user is different from that of the monolingual native speaker of either his/her L1 or L2 (Cook, 2008a), so a new term other than 'interlanguage' was necessary to cover a compound state of knowledge of the L2 user (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** The Multicompetence Framework (Cook, 2008a, p. 18)

In other words, in this MC perspective, people who know L1 and L2 interlanguage differ from those who know only one, either L1 or the target L2. What is important in this Cook's framework of MC is that the two languages of MC form "a total language system rather than independent systems" (Cook, 1992, p. 566). Thus the L1 and L2 systems are "symbiotic" (Cook, 1995b, p. 57) in nature within a single mind of the same L2 user.

Thus the concept of MC has "the consequence of separating someone who knows two languages from the monolingual native speaker as a person in their own right" (Cook, 2007, p. 206). Therefore, the term 'L2 user' becomes preferred over 'L2 learner' as "it conferred separate identity rather than dependent status: L2 learner implies the person is always learning, never getting there" (Cook, 2007, p. 206).

This theoretical perspective of MC for describing knowledge of languages in our mind definitely provides us with new insights into SLA research methodologies and explanations. However, given its potentiality of the MC perspective in SLA research, what evidence is there to support Cook's idea of MC? Do people who know two languages differ from those who know only one? If the answer to this question is 'yes', then in what respect do they differ? In the next section we will review some pieces of 'incidental' and 'direct' evidence which support Cook's idea of MC.

## 2.2 Evidence for MC: incidental evidence

In the article titled 'Evidence for multicompetence' Cook (1992) reviewed a range of existing SLA studies to show evidence for his MC idea. His main concern there was to find out 'incidental'

evidence that supports the idea that people who know two languages differ from those who know only one. Cook took some research studies as examples which were concerned with phonology, the meanings of words and syntax. For example, Fledge (1987) found that French users of English had a longer VOT (Voice Onset Time) for the voiceless /t/ sound in French than do monolingual speakers of French<sup>6</sup>. As for syntax, Seliger (1989) examined the use of relative clauses by English using children learning Hebrew as an L2. He found that the English system of relative clauses was gradually invaded by the L2 Hebrew relative system, all relative pronouns being simplified to 'that' and the pronominal copy being kept instead of empty trace as in 'I going to tell you a different thing that everyone likes it'. Among others, the results of these studies incidentally lend support to Cook's observation that people who know two languages differ from those who know only one.

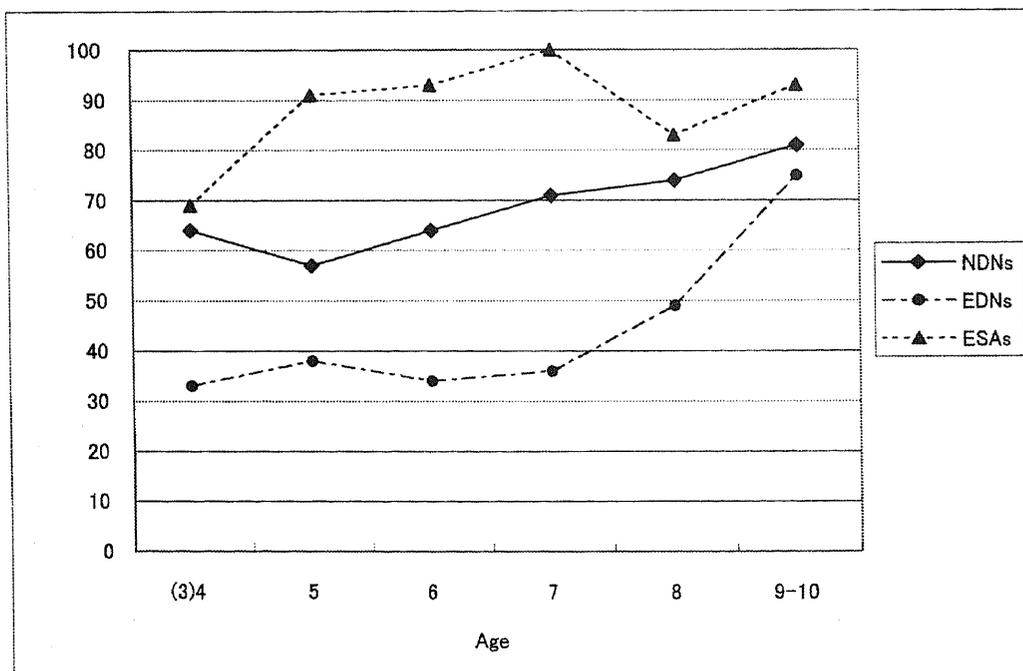
Apart from Cook's review (1992), there is more evidence to show that bilinguals or multilinguals are different from monolinguals in other domains. Yelland *et al.* (1993), for example, examined the benefits of bilingualism over monolingualism of Grade 1 school children with a relatively limited experience (one hour a week) of Italian as their L2. They found, after six months of teaching, that Italian bilinguals showed significantly higher level of awareness in terms of vocabulary skills than the monolinguals. Kecskes and Papp's (2000) longitudinal study examined whether L2 learning effects on the L1 were even manifested in foreign language users who are in the native language context and are learning the L2 in a classroom setting. This is the case with the context of Japan where since the Meiji era English has been, formally or informally, learned and taught as a foreign language. Kecskes and Papp found that experimental groups of Hungarian high school students of English, French and Russian as a foreign language exceeded control classes in their writing skills, on points such as sentence structure complexity and strength of logical developments (Kecskes & Papp, 2000). Another interesting study in an exclusively foreign language learning context was also reported by van Hell and Dijkstra (2002). They tested how Dutch-English cognates and noncognates in the mental lexicon of English-Dutch-French trilinguals were processed in their native language, English. They found that Dutch-English cognates were processed faster than noncognates by trilinguals, and concluded that multilingualism exerts a cognate facilitation effect, and therefore that lexical information of the languages influences processing of the L1.

Carroll and Casagrande (1958) reported an experiment using Navaho and English which explored the extent a particular concept can be influenced by a grammatical phenomenon.

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6 As for VOT, Harada (2007) recently examined the production of VOT by English-speaking children in a Japanese immersion program. He found that the immersion children produced voiceless stops (/p, t, k/) with significantly longer VOT values than the monolingual Japanese children and their Japanese-English bilingual teachers, who are all native speakers of Japanese either born in Japan and arrived in the US in their twenties or born in the US and raised in a Japanese speaking family, but they produced them with significantly shorter VOT values than their English VOT. This result also suggests that the L2 user's knowledge differ from their native language (English) and their L2 (Japanese).

They recognized the importance of showing “some correspondence between the presence or absence of a certain linguistic phenomenon and the presence or absence of a certain kind of ‘nonlinguistic response’” (Carroll & Casagrande, 1958, p. 21). While in Navaho it is obligatory to use particular verb endings according to the shape or other essential attribute of the object about which people are speaking, it is not so in English. For example, if the object is a long flexible one such as a ‘rope’, the verb ending should be ‘-l<sup>é</sup>h’; if the object is a long rigid object such as a ‘stick’, the verb ending should be ‘-i<sup>í</sup>h’. They hypothesized that this linguistic feature of Navaho would affect cognitive functioning for discriminating objects based on concepts such as color, size, shape or form in Navaho-dominant Navaho children, as compared with English-dominant Navaho children of the same age. Participants were two groups of Navaho children, Navaho-dominant Navaho children (NDNs) and English-dominant Navaho children (EDNs), with a control group of English-speaking monolingual Americans (ESAs). The participants were given picture triad tasks where they were presented first with the standard object such as a ‘yellow rope’ and then with a pair of objects such as a ‘blue rope’ (a color alternative) and a ‘yellow stick’ (a shape or form alternative). They were then asked to choose which object went well with the standard. The results showed that as compared with EDNs, NDNs’ choices were more likely based on similarity in shape and verb-stem classification than on size or color as had been expected, and that there were consistent trends for both groups toward the increasing perceptual saliency of shape or form with increasing age as Figure 2 shows.



**Figure 2** Percent of ‘shape-form’ choices by age level (Adapted and adopted from Carroll & Casagrande (1958))

On the other hand, when their Navaho results were compared with those obtained for the English control group (i.e., ESAs), Carroll and Casagrande found a rather complicated picture. That is, as Figure 2 shows, while ESAs showed the same developmental process as both groups of Navaho children, the choice tendency of ESAs was more similar to that for NDNs than for EDNs. Logically speaking, we could expect that the responses of EDNs, who have knowledge of two languages (Navaho and English), would come between NDNs and ESAs. However, this was not the case. Though Carroll and Casagrande (1958) did not explain the reason on the linguistic basis why ESAs showed significantly higher preference in choosing objects on the basis of shape or form than NDNs, it hardly diminishes “the potential influence of linguistic patterning on cognitive functioning and on the conceptual development of the child” (Carroll & Casagrande, 1958, p. 31). Moreover, their results clearly showed uniqueness of language users who know more than one language.

Recently, Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) attempted a synthesis of empirical findings concerning crosslinguistic influence, or ‘bidirectional’ influence, as a result of the interaction between the L1 and L2. They reviewed a wide range of research findings by categorizing them into their own framework of crosslinguistic influence such as “language-mediated conceptual change (or transfer)” (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008, p. 154). Table 1 summarizes various types of conceptual change which may be brought on by bilingual mind.

**Table 1** Typology of conceptual change in SLA (Adapted from Jarvis & Pavlenko (2008))

Processes	Possible Verbal Manifestations in L1
Internalization of new concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lexical borrowing</li> <li>• code-switching</li> <li>• loan translation</li> </ul>
Restructuring under the influence of L2 (or any other additional language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lexical borrowing</li> <li>• semantic extension</li> <li>• framing transfer</li> </ul>
Convergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bidirectional transfer (in one conceptual category)</li> <li>• loan blends</li> </ul>
Shift from L1 to L2 (or any other additional language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• semantic extension and shift</li> <li>• semantic narrowing</li> <li>• framing transfer</li> </ul>
Conceptual attrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inappropriate labeling</li> <li>• code-switching</li> <li>• lexical borrowing</li> <li>• framing transfer</li> </ul>

As for 'internalization of new concepts', Jarvis and Pavlenko took a series of Pavlenko's studies as examples (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). Pavlenko conducted studies, such as Pavlenko (2000), to see if differences in lexicalization between the L1 and L2 produce any change in L2 users' mind. She found that Russian bilingual users of English internalized a new concept such as 'privacy' or 'personal space', which is not labeled verbally in Russian, their L1, and verbally realized the concept in both languages in film recalling tasks. This result suggests that the internalization of the new concept led L2 users to divide up space in a new way (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008).

In this section, we have reviewed some pieces of existing 'incidental' evidence for the MC idea showing that the influence of L2 learning can be manifested on different areas in a variety of ways. For example, L2's influence can be on particular linguistic features of the L1 or users' concepts. Also L2 learning can change how we perceive the world or process cognitive-demanding tasks of various kinds. Though incidental as these manifestations are, they clearly show the potency of the uniqueness of language users who know more than one language and who are different from language users of either language as monolinguals. In the next section, more 'direct' evidence for MC is reviewed.

### 2.3 Evidence for MC: direct evidence

After Cook (1991, 1992) formally put forward the MC idea, some empirical studies have been conducted to validate his idea. Cook *et al.* (2003), for example, tested the hypothesis that L2 users' choice of words as sentence subjects would be influenced in the processing of their L1. Monolinguals and English bilinguals from three L1 backgrounds (Spanish, Greek and Japanese) participated in their study. The participants were given one verb (V) and two nouns (N) in each target and were asked to indicate which of the two nouns was the subject of the sentence. The nouns presented in the task were different in terms of word order (NVN, VNN, NNV), animacy (Animate-N V Inanimate-N, Inanimate-N V Animate-N) and number (Singular-N V Plural-V, Plural-N V Singular-N). The responses of monolinguals were compared with those of bilinguals as for each L1 group. They found as they had expected that the bilinguals did not draw on familiar cues in their L1, and that Japanese bilinguals used animacy and plural cues more than monolinguals did, which shows that the Japanese became more Japanese rather than more English as a result of learning English as their L2. Thus they concluded that "L2 users do not process the sentences of their first language in the same way as monolingual native speakers do" (Cook *et al.*, 2003, p. 212).

Athanasopoulos *et al.* (2004) conducted an experiment to see whether or not L2 lexical patterns affect L2 users' cognitive patterns in color perception and categorization tasks. They compared color categorizations of Japanese monolinguals and those of Japanese-English bilinguals because English and Japanese differ in how they lexically distinguish 'blue' (Japanese

'ao' and 'mizuiro' vs. English 'blue') and 'green' (Japanese 'midori' and 'kimidori' vs. English 'green'). The participants were asked to judge the difference between pairs of colors on a 5-point scale. A significant difference was found between monolingual and bilingual groups for both color types. That is, Japanese-English bilinguals made less distinction between 'ao' and 'mizuiro' and between 'midori' and 'kimidori', which led them to the conclusion that by adding another language to their L1 in the same mind bilinguals think differently from monolinguals.

Cook *et al.* (2006) examined whether L2 users' categorization of objects in terms of 'shape' or 'material' was influenced by learning English as an L2. Replicating Imai and Gentner's (1997) study, they presented the participants with a target item (e.g., a cork pyramid) with a nonsense word (e.g., 'blicket') and then asked them to choose between two other items (plastic pyramid, the same shape; piece of cork, the same material) which they think is the same as the target designated by the nonsense word. Imai and Gentner (1997) found that after acquiring their L1s English speaking children showed more shape preference while Japanese speaking children showed more material preference. Therefore, Cook *et al.* (2006) predicted that the number of shape-based choices would increase according to the amount of English experience and that the preference for shape- and material-based choices of Japanese-English bilinguals would differ from monolinguals of both languages. The participants were Japanese-English bilinguals who had lived in English-speaking countries between half a year and three years (short-stay group), and who had lived in English-speaking countries for three years or more (long-stay group). They found that the long-stay group showed more shape preference than the short-stay group and that the preference of the long-stay group had greater similarity to that of English speaking monolinguals. These results show the effects of learning an L2 on categorizing objects in Japanese L2 users of English, which is in line with the idea that the minds of L2 users with more than one language is different from that of monolinguals.

Murahata and Murahata (2007) conducted an experiment based on the MC framework to examine a possible influence of learning an L2 on the L2 users' categorization of objects based on a study by Ji *et al.* (2004). Ji *et al.* presented English and Chinese monolinguals with triads thematically and categorically related ('Cow' [the standard], 'Milk' [thematically related to the standard], Panda [categorically related to the standard]) and asked them to decide which goes best with the standard. Their results revealed that English monolinguals chose 'Panda' (which are categorically related as animals) more often, while Chinese monolinguals more often chose 'Milk', which are thematically (or contextually) related as the subject-object relation, i.e., 'Cows produce milk.' In Murahata and Murahata (2007), participants were Japanese users of English with different English proficiency levels and English monolinguals living in Japan and living in the UK. They were asked to judge the strength of relations between categorically-related objects and thematically-related objects. The results showed that English monolinguals judged categorically-related objects to be more strongly related than Japanese users of English. Japanese L2 users

also judged thematically-related objects to be more strongly related than English monolinguals. However, contrary to the expectation, it was found that as the English-proficiency level became higher, the Japanese L2 users tended to relate thematically related objects more strongly and English monolinguals in Japan, who were exposed to the Japanese language and Japanese culture, related them less strongly than English monolinguals in the UK. This result implies a possible change in some aspects of cognitive processing in that Japanese L2 users of English become more Japanese and English L2 users of Japanese become more English.

### 3. Consequences for SLA research and L2 pedagogy

#### 3.1 Consequences for SLA research

If the MC framework is well supported with empirical evidence, either incidentally or directly, as we have seen in the previous section, it naturally follows that its idea entails some important consequences for SLA research and L2 pedagogy. In this section, we will consider how the MC might change perspectives in both SLA research and L2 pedagogy especially in an EFL (English as a foreign language) context such as in Japan where learning an L2 is almost exclusively for potential use later on.

##### 3.1.1 Goals for linguistics and SLA research

If, as Cook often mentions, it is quite natural for all of us potentially to be able to acquire more than one language, the ways in which our minds are organized must permit this type of language acquisition from the beginning. Then Chomsky's goals for linguistics (of observing, describing and explaining the knowledge) and use of language need to be rephrased by making the word 'language' plural as follows (Cook, 2002b, p. 23):

- What constitutes knowledge of *languages*?
- How is knowledge of *languages* acquired?
- How is knowledge of *languages* put to use?

That is, what Chomsky's 'competence' is to 'language', Cook's 'multicompetence' is to 'languages'. Thus the goals of linguistics are now to describe and explain knowledge, acquisition and use of *languages*. The research that emerges from the multicompetence framework "has concerned itself with the relationships between the two language systems in one mind," particularly backward transfer from L2 to L1 and "with the relationships between the language systems and the rest of the L2 user's mind" (Cook, 2007, p. 206) such as cognition or concepts. Cook (2007) argues that if the normal potential of the human mind is to know more than one language, linguistics should not be based on minds with only one grammar. Accordingly this

argument develops into a suggestion that “claims for innateness cannot rest solely on the case of monolinguals” (Cook, 2007, p. 217). Even it is highly possible in the research within the MC framework to find some linguistic features which might indeed only become apparent in people who know more than one language (Cook, 1995b).

What about the goals of SLA research? If the foundation of SLA research is MC, i.e., the wholistic system of language knowledge possessed by those who use more than one language, the goals of SLA research might not be to describe and explain impoverished knowledge, imperfect acquisition and inappropriate use of the target language in comparison with those of natives’, but to describe and explain knowledge, acquisition and use of *languages* on their own. In other words, what is crucial in SLA research is to discover L2 users’ own grammars, however different these may be from natives’ (Cook, 1995b). Therefore, “SLA research is no longer about finding excuses why L2 users are failed native speakers but can explore what makes L2 users what they are” (Cook, 2002b, p. 19).

This new SLA research perspective on the basis of the MC framework opens up an interesting area of SLA research. That is, if as Figure 1 shows L1 and the L2 user’s interlanguage are in the same mind, it is highly possible for both languages to influence each other. Furthermore, while the transfer from the L1 onto the L2 has been one of the important research topics in SLA, the transfer of the opposite direction or sometimes called ‘reverse’ or ‘backward’ transfer (i.e., transfer from the L2 onto the L1) has been paid little attention in SLA research. This potentiality of ‘bidirectional’ or ‘crosslinguistic’ influence will be one of the important research areas in future SLA research.

### 3.1.2 Comparative fallacy of L2 users against native speakers

The MC framework opens many doors which have been closed for years. Cook makes a clear distinction between ‘the L2 user’ and ‘the L2 learner’, preferring the former as any person who uses another language for real-life purposes than their first language (Cook, 2002b), and the latter as any person who learns, usually in the classroom setting, another language for later use (Cook, 2002b). One of his motivations to use ‘the L2 user’ instead of ‘the L2 learner’ is “the feeling that it is demeaning to call someone who has functioned in an L2 environment for years a ‘learner’ rather than a ‘user’” (Cook, 2002b, p. 4).

Behind the term ‘the L2 learner’ lies a comparative fallacy lying in comparison of the L2 learner and the native speaker of the L2. As many empirical studies have shown, the L2 learner is a unique human being and is different from the monolingual, i.e., native of the L2. Unuseful as it is to compare apples with good pears, it is illegitimate to compare the L2 user with the native of the L2 by using either of these as a measure of the other (Cook, 2008a). Therefore, we should “recognise the difference of the L2 user as a unique human being rather than as a defective monolingual, just as blacks are not defective whites, women are not defective men, and

academics are not defective natives” (Cook, 1995b, p. 54). Thus, we should see the L2 user as a success in his or her own right in going beyond the initial L1, to whatever degree (Cook, 1995b).

Then how can we measure the L2 user’s progress or achievement in the L2? Is it ever possible to do so without native speaker comparison? On this point, Cook does accept that native speaker comparison is a useful research technique; however, what is unacceptable from the L2 user perspective is to draw conclusions from the comparison that treats the L2 user as a deficient native speaker (Cook, 2002c). Cook argues that “a comparison of the L2 user with native speaker may be legitimate provided any difference that is discovered is not treated as a matter of deficiency” (Cook, 2003b, pp. 5-6). Behind Cook’s comparative fallacy lies Labov’s (1969) argument that “members of one group should not be criticised for not meeting the standards of another group to which they can never belong” (Cook, 2002b, p. 9).

The following quotation (Cook, 2008a) is appropriate for the conclusion of this section:

[MC] opens many doors and establishes SLA not only independently on the language of native speakers but also the core case of language acquisition, of which monolingual acquisition is a pale and limited version. SLA research is being destroyed by the *black hole*, but is coming out the other side through a *wormhole* reconstituted into something else - the central area concerned with human acquisition of *languages*. (emphasis added, p. 26)

### 3.2 Consequences for L2 pedagogy

#### 3.2.1 Appropriate role model of the L2 user

In the MC framework, who is the appropriate role model of a language’s use, the native speaker of the L2? If we regard a native speaker as the standard model or the ultimate goal of L2 learning and teaching, then it naturally follows that the best teacher is a native speaker who can represent the target the L2 users are trying to emulate (Cook, 2007b). Is a native speaker an ideal model for the L2 user? If we see the potentiality of L2 users who could ever attain native-like proficiency in the L2, the answer is quite simple, *it is not*. As has been repeatedly mentioned, only a few percent of L2 users (e.g., according to Selinker (1972) less than 5% of L2 users) would become native-like speakers of the L2. Realistically speaking, it is virtually impossible for any L2 user to become a native speaker of the L2.

Thus a native speaker goal is unattainable for the vast majority of students and is not appropriate for all circumstances (Cook, 2008b). This is particularly true for an EFL context like in Japan where using an L2 outside of the classroom is fairly limited and learning an L2 is just for later potential use. Therefore, the role model of the Japanese user of English, for example, should not be the native speaker of English, but the Japanese who can use English successfully for their own purposes. Once the native speaker norm is abandoned, there is no need to aim at unnecessary uses of language in our English programs. What should be taught is the language

appropriate to and necessary for the users' future uses. We should take it as *success* when the Japanese users of English can use it for their purposes, not as *failure* for still having deviant linguistic features from the native standard of English (Cook, 2007b).

Lightbown and Spada (1999) also made this point clear observing that achieving a native-like mastery of the L2 is not a goal for all L2 learning, in all contexts (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 67). What we should establish here in Japan is realistic goals for English learning and teaching programs which are maximally appropriate to all the Japanese users of English.

### 3.2.2 Use of the L1 in the classroom

The MC framework also challenges the argument for avoiding L1 use in the L2 classroom. There are several arguments against the L1 use in the classroom. Firstly, there is a strong analogy between L1 acquisition and L2 acquisition that we should follow the way children acquire their L1. Secondly, along with the tradition of communicative language learning and teaching, we should maximize the use of L2 in the classroom while minimalizing or principally avoiding the use of the L1. These arguments, among others, form the backbone of the foreign language teaching policy designated by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). They released *Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities*<sup>7</sup> in March, 2003<sup>8</sup>. According to the action plan, to improve English classes and to cultivate communication abilities, the majority of an English class should be conducted in English and it is important for teachers to establish many situations where students can communicate with each other in English and routinely to conduct classes principally in English (MEXT, 2003b).

However, as we have seen in the evidence for MC, these arguments fail to incorporate the legitimacy of MC and the uniqueness of the L2 user who knows more than one language. The L2 user is definitely different from children acquiring their L1 and either speaker of the two languages. Rather than two independent systems being 'interwoven', the two languages in the same mind, as Figure 1 depicts, form a total language system in the L2 user's mind in many linguistic domains. Therefore, in the classroom we should not try "to put languages in separate compartments in the mind" (Cook, 2001, p. 407). L2 classroom should be the place where the L2 user can fully function with their total language system.

When the L2 user shares the same L1 as in the case of the EFL context in Japan, the L1 can

7 The main guideline of the plan goes as follows: "With the progress of globalization, it is important, while focusing on speaking and listening communication abilities in the initial learning stages, to acquire comprehensive communication abilities in "listening," "speaking," "reading," and "writing," from the perspective of "English as a means for communication," in order to foster "Japanese with English Abilities." Through instruction, basic and practical communication abilities will be acquired so that the entire public can conduct daily conversation and exchange information in English. At the same time, personnel who need English for their work, such as for professional or research reasons, will acquire the English necessary for their fields by building on their basic English abilities. It is important for all Japanese people to aim at achieving a level of English commensurate with average world standards based on objective indicators such as STEP, TOEFL, and TOEIC."

8 <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/03072801.htm>

be deliberately and systematically used in the classroom. In the L1, teachers can convey and check meaning of words or sentences, explain grammar, organize tasks, maintain disciplines, gain contact with individual students, and so on (Cook, 2001). Not surprisingly, all of these uses of the L1 have been practiced in Japanese English classrooms “to provide a short-cut for giving instructions and explanations where the cost of the L2 is too great, to build up interlinked L1 and L2 knowledge in the students’ minds, to carry out learning tasks through collaborative dialogue with fellow students, and to develop L2 activities such as code-switching for later real-life use” (Cook, 2001, p. 418). The MEXT conducted a nation-wide survey to find out how much the lower and upper secondary teacher uses English in the classroom in March, 2006<sup>9</sup>. The results (Table 2) show that about half of an English class is conducted by using the L2, which is true for both lower and upper secondary English classes. While this tendency seems to be a little distant from the goal of the MEXT Action Plan, this is rather compatible with the MC idea.

**Table 2** A Nation-wide Survey of English use in the English Classroom (MEXT, 2006)

Lower Secondary Schools (N: 10,118 schools, 29,438 teachers)				
%	None or Rarely	Half or Less than Half	More than Half	Mostly
1 Grade	0.4	64.3	31.5	3.8
2 Grade	0.6	64.7	31.1	3.6
3 Grade	0.9	65.5	29.7	3.9
Upper Secondary Schools (N: 3,795 schools, 25,364 teachers)				
OC I	0	21.6	31.5	46.9
OC II	0	16.9	32.4	50.7
English I	6.5	60.5	23.1	9.9
English II	8.3	67.1	18.5	6.2
Reading	11.4	66.6	16.1	6
Writing	15.6	67.3	12.6	4.5
Others	3.1	31.2	31.5	34.3

OC: Oral Communication

Within the framework of MC, teachers should not feel guilty about using the L1 in the classroom. This does not mean, needless to say, that an English class can or should be conducted totally in the L2 user’s L1. The principal aim of the positive introduction of the L1 into the classroom is, according to Cook (2001), to produce L2 users who are able to operate with a holistic language system of languages as genuine L2 users, not as imitation natives.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/toukei/001/06032211/001.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/toukei/001/06032211/001.htm)

### 3.2.3 External and internal goals of L2 learning and teaching

Cook (2002c) pointed out the current state of L2 teaching where too much emphasis is put on 'external' goals of taking part in actual L2 use situations outside the classroom, rather than 'internal' ones of better cultural attitudes or greater cognitive flexibility which relate to the academic and educational goals of the classroom itself. He took the English teaching situation in Japan as an example where communication is practically only one goal although few students expect to use English for real communication in their daily lives (Cook, 2002c). In fact, the overall goals of English education in Japan are indicated in *The Course of Study for Foreign Languages* as follows (MEXT, 2003a)<sup>10</sup>:

(lower secondary schools)

To develop students' basic practical communication abilities such as listening and speaking, deepening the understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages.

(upper secondary schools)

To develop students' practical communication abilities such as understanding information and the speaker's or writer's intentions, and expressing their own ideas, deepening the understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages.

Though promoting positive attitudes towards foreign languages or cultures, an internal goal in Cook's view, is incorporated as one of the goals of Japanese English education. In this sense the aspect of cognitive benefits of learning an L2 is totally neglected within these stated overall goals. Cook argues that one of the major insights from the MC perspective is the idea that teaching needs to take more account of "the internal goals involving changes in the students' minds" (Cook, 2002c, p. 339).

So much emphasis has been put on the goal of language teaching as communication in the years since the early eighties, the time of inception of the communicative language teaching tradition (Stern, 1983). However, if the goal of L2 learning and teaching is indeed 'external' in that the L2 is used with other people who do not speak the L2 user's L1, this is beyond the reach of many EFL students like (those in Japan) who have few occasions for regularly speaking with people in the L2 outside the classroom. Language teaching can enhance students' lives in many ways though they rarely have a chance to meet a native speaker (Cook, 2007b). Teachers and administrators of the language teaching program should be more aware of this and try to make the classroom the world where L2 users' lives and minds are to be changed in all sorts of ways

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<sup>10</sup> See *The Course of Study for Foreign Languages* at <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/shotou/030301.htm>

(Cook, 2007b).

As we saw in the previous section, there is now a large body of research evidence to show that the L2 user is, both *linguistically* and *cognitively*, by no means the same as either monolingual native speaker of the L1 or the L2. The L2 user functions on a basis of, what Cook calls, “bilingual cognition” (Cook, 2008a, p. 20). For that reason, L2 teaching and learning in an EFL context should place more emphasis on promoting this orientation of L2 teaching and learning occurring in the classroom.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

This paper first tries to answer the basic questions, ‘What is V. Cook’s MC?’ and ‘What evidence is there to support his idea?’. Then in the latter half of the paper we discuss some of the important consequences of MC for SLA research and L2 pedagogy with special focus on an EFL context such as in Japan. The present authors observe that Cook’s MC framework has contributed much to the shift of perspectives at least in three ways. Firstly, it has changed the way we look at the persons who are learning an L2. They are not defective learners whose task of acquiring another language is never finished, but are unique human beings in their own rights. Secondly, the MC framework has shifted the way we describe and explain their knowledge, both linguistic and cognitive, because of the compound state of a mind with more than one language. Lastly, this Cook’s new idea has revived the long-standing discussion as to the goals of L2 teaching and learning. Should language teaching be headed toward practical goals (i.e., external goals to use Cook’s term) or cognitive-academic goals (i.e., internal goals)? The answer to the question could not be an binary opposition whether or not either direction is the best. However, it is the very fact that the latter goals (cognitive-academic goals) have often been neglected even in language programs in the EFL context.

Cook’s MC framework has been and will be one of the most influential concepts of the present century, and can be even compared with other commonly used terms such as *interlanguage* by L. Selinker (1972) or *communicative competence* by D. Hymes (1971). However, SLA research, which has supported Cook’s idea either incidentally or directly, is not free from further investigation. For example, when we say ‘cognition’ or ‘concepts’, there seem to be many kinds and levels of cognition and cognitive activities such as knowledge itself, meta-knowledge, memory, perception, analogy, attention or information processing processes (Imai, 2000). Therefore, if we examine a potential influence of the L2 on the L2 user’s mind, we should first ask ourselves what aspect of cognitive activities the L2 exerts an influence. Secondly, it is not so easy to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between a particular linguistic feature and cognition. Supposing that there was found a correlation between the increasing proficiency level of Japanese users of English and their shape preference in categorizing objects, could

we determine that this is because English linguistically distinguishes 'countable' nouns and 'uncountable' ones while Japanese does not? There are indeed linguistic differences between languages; however, it is not always easy to specify the direct relationship between such features and some differences, if any, in cognition or behavior of those who use a given language.

Thirdly, there have been very few longitudinal or developmental studies which explored how the relationship between L2 users' linguistic features and their cognition changes over time. For instance, we can describe the MC of L2 users of different age groups such as kindergardeners, elementary school students or junior high school students who are learning the L2 and relate their MC to their cognitive activities of various kinds.

Yet with these issues for further investigation the MC framework has been challenging common assumptions about language acquisition and linguistic knowledge of the L1 which has been treated as stable (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). The following quotation suffices for the conclusion of this paper (Cook, 2008b):

In a world where probably more people speak two languages than one, the acquisition and use of second languages are vital to the everyday lives of millions; monolinguals are becoming almost an endangered species. Helping people acquire second languages more effectively is an important task for the twenty-first century. (p. 1)

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