



THE USE OF L1 IN TEACHING EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract:

The focus of this research paper is on examining how the first language (L1) is utilized when teaching English to students who are learning it as a foreign language (EFL). It investigates why L1 should be included in EFL classrooms, investigates the possible advantages and obstacles of using it, and talks about the impact on language teachers. The article ends by highlighting the significance of maintaining a well-rounded approach to utilizing the first language in English as a Foreign Language teaching, considering learners' requirements and encouraging productive language acquisition.

Key words: first language, target language, EFL classroom, language barrier, incorporating L1

Introduction:

Language educators have been engaged in an ongoing debate about the incorporation of students' first language (L1) in EFL instruction. While certain individuals promote emphasizing the target language (TL), others recognize the benefits of including learners' L1 in EFL classrooms. This article seeks to investigate the importance of the first language in teaching English as a foreign language, covering its reasons, advantages, difficulties, and influence on language teachers.

In the past, research on using L1 in foreign language classrooms started by looking at how much L1 was used, but later expanded to consider other factors like different aspects. The amount of L1 usage in education has been thoroughly examined by the academic viewpoint. While some effort has been made to explore



the reasons for using L1, it has only been to a certain extent. Nevertheless, applied linguists are currently investigating comparisons among different levels of education.

Weschler (1997) recommends using L1 for warm-up activities or idea generation sessions. Translating difficult abstract concepts or expressions into L2 may be easier with the use of L1. Proficiency levels may lead to a tendency to rely heavily on L1, so utilizing translation can be a time-saving strategy.

Why We Need to Incorporate L1 in EFL Instruction:

1. Talking about EFL instruction, one of the matters under debate is whether to use learners' first language or not. However, it is important to mention that allowing the use of L1 might not always trigger negative consequences since there are some advantages that might be obtained in the process of learning language. Other language teachers have also considered the undiscovered benefits of integration of learners L1 in class, with aspects of understanding, speaking, and cultural restricting. By comprehending the advantages highlighted below, the educators understand choice, and practice the use of first language in a proper way in EFL classroom. Facilitating Comprehension: Besides, introducing the use of L1 could also help to support the learners to understand better new concepts and new instructions given to them. Swain (1985) stated to her surprise pointing out that perhaps learners should use L1 to get the support required to keep the level of cognitive load that is needed when acquiring a new L2 forms, at an acceptable level.
2. Enhancing Meaningful Communication: When the learners are allowed to use L1 when responding to questions posed to them, they tend to give their thoughts and ideas more effectively. In this manner, since they would be able to express what they want to in their L1, the learners would not be limited by language difficulties and would be refreshed. This helps in



making the classroom environment friendly as its embrace everyone with their limitations and mistakes.

3. Promoting Cultural Understanding: It will also foster conversation on cultural topic areas and make the learners to have a sense to give their perception on cultural impressions thus enhancing the transfer of cross-cultural learning. In this manner, auditor and culture and target language discrepancies may be rated closed and promotion of cultural value or acceptance and respect by learners may be promoted.

Moreover, using L1 gives a sense of security and acknowledges the learners' identity, allowing them to minimize the stress they may feel in EFL classrooms. With careful use of L1 learners' desire to try and take risks with language learning may be increased.

Challenges Associated with L1 Use in EFL Instruction:

In teaching English as a foreign language, it can be very advantageous to include the learners' native language. One benefit is that it helps with understanding new ideas and directions. Scholars, like Swain (1985), contend that utilizing the native language is crucial in lessening academic burden and helping students better understand intricate linguistic and grammatical structures. By utilizing their first language, learners can improve their grasp and absorption of the second language.

Moreover, utilizing the first language helps improve meaningful interactions within the classroom. Students are able to convey their opinions and thoughts with greater precision and ease by using their first language. This is especially beneficial for students who have a low level of skill in the language they are learning, as it enables them to express their desired message without being held back by language obstacles. As a result, including the first language creates a positive classroom environment, encouraging valuable interactions between students.

Another important factor for incorporating L1 in EFL lessons is the contribution it makes to enhancing cultural awareness. Educators can help facilitate discussions on



cultural subjects and encourage learners to share their cultural perspectives with each other by using learners' native language. Facilitating a connection between students' cultural heritage and the language being studied encourages mutual respect for different backgrounds and enhances cross-cultural comprehension within the classroom. In addition, utilizing their first language recognizes students' individuality and offers a feeling of safety, decreasing potential anxiety in an English as a Foreign Language environment. When L1 is utilized with caution, it can enhance learners' motivation and encourage them to take risks in language acquisition.

However, there are certain difficulties linked with utilizing L1 during EFL teaching. Relying too much on one's first language can hinder or prolong the progress of acquiring proficiency in the target language. Cook (2001) believes that overusing the first language can lead to reliance, reducing learners' contact with the new language and hindering their language learning development. Furthermore, the alternation between the target language and learners' first language in the same conversation, known as code-switching, can present challenges. Although code-switching can aid in understanding, it can also hinder learners from improving their fluency and accuracy in the target language. This is why it is crucial for teachers to set clear boundaries and rules about when it is appropriate to use the first language in order to avoid excessive use and mixing languages.

In order to successfully integrate L1 into EFL teaching, various strategies can be utilized. Language instructors should utilize their native language in a strategic and restricted manner, using it intentionally to aid understanding and enhance meaningful interaction. Educators can optimize the advantages of L1 use and decrease its possible drawbacks by setting specific rules and limits. Moreover, as students advance in their mastery of the second language, the reliance on their native language in the teaching environment can be reduced over time, leading to



improved language acquisition and a greater inclination to use the target language more frequently, enhancing both fluency and accuracy.

Conclusion:

Utilizing the native language in English as a Foreign Language teaching can be advantageous if applied strategically. While using students' native language can help with understanding, improve communication, and foster cultural awareness, teachers need to be cautious of relying too heavily on it and switching between languages too often. Educators can foster language acquisition and cultural exchange by maintaining a balanced approach between using L1 and TL in the learning environment.

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