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SOME DIFFICULTIES OF USING THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE ENGLISH CLASS

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Annotation: The use of the mother tongue (L1) in the English classroom remains a debated issue in language pedagogy. While L1 can provide support for comprehension and reduce anxiety, excessive dependence on it may hinder language acquisition, limit students' exposure to English, and negatively affect communicative competence. This thesis explores the main difficulties associated with using the mother tongue in English classes and analyzes their impact on learners' linguistic, cognitive, and communicative development.

Аннотация: Использование родного языка (L1) на уроках английского языка остаётся спорным вопросом в языковой педагогике. Хотя L1 может способствовать пониманию и снижению тревожности, чрезмерная опора на него может препятствовать усвоению языка, ограничивать интерес учащихся к английскому языку и негативно влиять на коммуникативную компетентность. В данной диссертации рассматриваются основные проблемы, связанные с использованием родного языка на уроках английского языка, и анализируется их влияние на языковое, когнитивное и коммуникативное развитие учащихся.

Keywords: Mother tongue, L1 use, English classroom, language learning difficulties, communicative competence, bilingual instruction.

Ключевые слова: Родной язык, использование L1, уроки английского языка, трудности в изучении языка, коммуникативная компетентность, двуязычное образование.

Introduction: Using the mother tongue in English classes is a common practice, especially in contexts where students share the same linguistic background. Teachers often rely on L1 to clarify grammar, explain difficult vocabulary, or manage the classroom. However, overuse of L1 may reduce opportunities for meaningful English exposure, which is crucial for second language development. This thesis discusses the key difficulties that arise when L1 is used excessively.

Using the mother tongue (L1) in English lessons can be helpful in certain situations, but it also creates several difficulties that can slow down language learning. Some of the main challenges include:





1. Reduced Exposure to English

Too much use of L1 limits students' contact with English. Since exposure is essential for improving listening, speaking, and thinking in English, frequent use of the mother tongue interferes with natural language acquisition.

2. Decreased Communicative Practice

When students rely on their first language, they tend to avoid speaking English. This reduces opportunities for practicing vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar structures, and communication strategies.

3. Over-dependence on Translation

Students may start expecting the teacher to translate every new word or instruction. This habit prevents them from learning to guess meaning from context, which is an important skill in language learning.

4. Mixed Ability and Multilingual Classes

In classes where students speak different mother tongues, using any one L1 can create inequality or confusion.

5. Interference and Negative Transfer

Grammar rules, pronunciation, and sentence structures from the mother tongue can interfere with English. For example, word order or sound differences may cause mistakes.

6. Lower Motivation to Use English

If students know they can always switch to L1, they may not try hard to express themselves in English. This reduces confidence and slows fluency development.

Reduced Exposure to English Input: One of the main challenges is the significant reduction in learners' exposure to English. Second language acquisition research stresses the importance of rich, comprehensible input. When teachers frequently use L1, students lose valuable listening practice and fail to internalize natural language patterns.

Dependence on Translation: Learners may develop a habit of translating every word or sentence from English to L1. This affects their ability to think in English and slows down their fluency development. Translation-based thinking also limits creativity and spontaneous communication.

Interference and Transfer Errors

Excessive reliance on L1 increases the risk of negative transfer, where students apply mother-tongue structures to English. This may result in grammatical errors, incorrect word order, and pronunciation difficulties.

Reduced Communicative Competence

The main goal of English learning is communicative competence. However, when classroom interaction frequently switches to L1, students miss opportunities to practice real-life communication, negotiation of meaning, and interactional strategies in English.

Lower Motivation to Use English





If students know that teachers will always switch to L1 for explanations, they may feel less motivated to listen carefully or attempt to understand English instructions. This decreases their willingness to speak and reduces confidence in using English.

Classroom Management Challenges

Overuse of L1 may also create difficulties in maintaining a fully English-speaking environment. Students may begin using L1 for group work, discussions, and answering questions, which weakens the immersive atmosphere necessary for language acquisition.

Strategies to Reduce Difficulties

Although L1 cannot be completely avoided, teachers can minimize difficulties by:

- encouraging English-only interaction during tasks;
- using visual aids, gestures, and realia instead of L1 explanations;
- applying simple English instructions;
- gradually reducing L1 support;
- promoting pair and group activities in English.

Conclusion : While the mother tongue can serve as a useful support tool in certain cases, its overuse in English classes can lead to reduced exposure, dependency on translation, transfer errors, and lower communicative competence. A balanced approach, where L1 is used minimally and purposefully, contributes to effective English language learning.

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