

ADVANTAGES OF MOTHER TONGUE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

CLASSES

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Abstract

In general, depending on learner's proficiency, in one way or another, more or less, it has been proved that some student feels comfortable if they speak their native language in a situation when they need to address the teacher. Students often do not have self esteem; therefore they welcome Teacher's speech in the L1 while learning foreign language with great appreciation. The communication between the teacher and student in L1 creates comfortable environment for the students and make them feel more close to the teacher. Regardless the success that student achieved in learning foreign language, teacher-students communication in L1 promotes positive energy which can motivate for further learning. Therefore is more than important for teacher to find the appropriate method and strategy in creating calm and warm environment which might avoid students' stress. If the teacher does not offer the opportunity for the students to ask about things they did not understand on the lesson taught, then the students will not achieve the aimed objective in learning foreign language. According to many researchers, Teachers' Code-Switching must necessarily be applied, but in a sufficient extent, in the right place and time, especially in cases students necessities. This paper will research and will proof if the use of mother tongue in the L1, when both students and teachers native language is same, is a helpful and unavoidable method during FL teaching and learning process. Therefore, the main question of research would be as follows: What are functions that induce both students and English language teachers to use mother tongue in L2 classes? In what extent should this method be applied? And, does this method impacts on students' learning L2 development? To accomplish this, the paper includes questionnaires for students of pre-school program, first year, and teachers of the "University of Gjakova- Fehmi Agani", that will bring conclusions regarding the use of mother tongue as a technique. All the data resulted from all performed steps by the researcher will be analyzed and will provide a clear picture of the importance of this method and its role in students English language development proficiency.

Key Words: *Mother Tongue, English Language, Functions, Advantages*

Introduction:

Based on previous studies on methods and techniques that teachers apply in the class during foreign language teaching, in this case English Language, this study has to do with the frequency of the Mother Tongue usage in FL lectures, the student's attitude toward this strategy and functions that induce both students and teachers to apply such a method in

English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in University of Gjakova, Faculty of Education, Pre-school program. This method in Educational field is known as a Code- Switching; and it is changing the language code from L1 to L2 and vice versa during the teaching-learning process in the classroom. It is usually used in cases when students need further explanations and the teacher switches to their native language. This paper mainly deals with the study of how they see the implementation of this method and identifies the factors that lead to its use. This study seeks to highlight how effective and positive is the usage of mother tongue during the teaching-learning process in English Foreign Language (EFL) classes in this university. To accomplish this, the study includes questionnaires for students and English Language teachers of Faculty of Education in University of Gjakova, pre-school program, which brought conclusions regarding the use of Code Switching technique. All the data have provided a clear picture of the importance of L1 in L2 lectures, Code-Switching strategy, its role in students English language development and the functions that induce foreign language teacher to use Code-Switching while teaching Foreign Language (FL) in the English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Although the scope of study was limited to a certain number of students, 77 in total, the results show that Code-Switching strategy is a beneficial and effective method for foreign language acquisition.

This method, which is one of the most applied methods in teaching EFL seems to be very unfamiliar for English teachers and also for students of University of Gjakova, pre-school program in Faculty of Education, since it is often used without any consciousness by both sides, teachers and students, during teaching and learning processes, and it seems to be very needed by the students and welcomed as well. In the very first classes of teaching-learning process of foreign language all teachers' efforts are focused in achieving the objective which deals with effective teaching towards learning foreign language by her/his students. The teachers' aim was and will always remain on how much their students manage to gain knowledge of foreign language, therefore teacher is always carefully prepared about the approach towards achieving the objectives, methods and techniques that will practice and how appropriate would they be considering the variety of student's proficiency level. On the other hand, students are aware that the teacher of foreign language is the person who speaks in second language, without being conscious that they will feel the need to include native language during EFL classes. So, students are not aware about the methods and strategies that the teacher will use during L2 teaching. One thing is clear, students in a classroom beside each other, the closest person whose help will appreciate is their teacher, and one way or the other the teacher must necessarily fulfill the students' requirements. Despite the opinion of policy decision makers and the Directorate of Education in Gjakova and beyond, who believe that teachers are applying this method in the classroom because they are non-sufficiently professionally prepared, students take this as an auxiliary method which helps them to achieve their educational goals. Usually students expect from their English language teacher to address to them in English language. They listen to their teacher with nostalgia and gain full confidence that their knowledge will grow, considering that in front of them is a teacher who has high professional skills. But, teaching must necessarily include other skills which are also necessary to complete a teacher. Strategies and teaching methods applied by a teacher have great importance in development and capacity building of students while learning English foreign language. Therefore using mother tongue while teaching and learning English Language is not only learning strategy but also a communication strategy as well. This strategy has led researchers to explore more about its use during teaching, its impact on learning, reasons why and when this technique needs to be implemented, etc. Each native foreign language teacher during teaching consciously or unconsciously involves native

language. This action is almost always conditioned by various factors which incite the teacher to use L1.

When I say that the teacher has to practice Code-Switching, as in most of the cases was required by students to do so, I am not sure teacher always is aware of it, as they unconsciously try to be clear on explanation required from students.

Based on my experience as teacher, often when new unfamiliar words appear, if synonyms are not helping the students to find out the meaning of that word, then they eventually lose their patience and they require a translation in L1 from their teacher. This also happens during grammar teaching when usually we need to compare first language grammar with FL grammar or when they need extra explanation on a given assignment. Students, even when they are aware that they are following L2 class and are required to use L1 as less as they can, they still feel the need to communicate in L1, even with a single word. This shows that the use of mother tongue technique, called Code-Switching, is an unavoidable method used in the EFL lectures.

Regardless the success that student achieved in learning foreign language, teacher-students communication in L1 promotes positive energy which can motivate for further learning. Therefore is more than important for teacher to find the appropriate method and strategy in creating calm and warm environment which might avoid students' stress. I would like to quote the words of Ellis, who in his book *Second Language Acquisition* says "We might expect, therefore, that the choice of communication strategies will reflect the learners' stage of development" (Ellis, 1997).

To be as transparent in teacher-student relationship, Code-Switching in the L1 in EFL classroom is used by the teacher to fill the gaps that students feel the need for.

Advantages and the use of L1 in L2 impacts in students' language development

In general, regardless their ability about target language and how much time students dedicate in learning the target language, students need to practice different strategies which motivate them toward achieving the goal of learning. According to many researchers, Teachers' Code-Switching must necessarily be applied, but in a sufficient extent, in the right place and time, especially in cases students necessities.

Butzkamm summarizes the principles and advantages of using L1 as follows:

L1 use gives a sense of security and helps learners to be stress-free.

L1 is the greatest asset people bring to the task of FL learning.

A foreign language friendly atmosphere is best achieved through selective use of the L1.

The use of the L1 saves learners from a feeling of frustration they might have within their FL learning.

L1 techniques allow teachers to use a richer and more authentic text, which means more comprehensible input and faster acquisition, Butzkamm (2003). Learners do not appreciate Teachers' action by speaking only in target language, especially when they need to learn about the meaning of unfamiliar words, any grammar explanation and instructions for activities in the classroom. Therefore, the use of code-switching can be said to build a bridge from known to unknown and when used efficiently, can be considered as an important element in ESL/EFL teaching, Skiba (1997). When we speak about the connection of native language with target language, it may be suggested that a bridge from known (native

language) to unknown (new foreign language content) is constructed in order to transfer the new content and meaning is made clear in this way as it is also suggested by Cole: “a teacher can exploit students’ previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2”, Cole (1998).

Aim of study/research:

One of the reasons of this study was the knowledge of advantages of mother tongue’s usage in “University of Gjakova” pre-school students - Faculty of Education. Since the teacher and the students did not have any clear definition that whether or not teachers should code switch, this study made them think about this issue and encouraged them to give their own opinions, which will lead to a result and the exact definition regarding the use of this technique in EFL classroom. One of the strong reasons is to come up with a conclusion if teachers should or not use L1 in the English lectures. If yes, then in which functions, why and when should teacher code switch in L1?

The purpose of this study is to find out if Teachers’ Code-Switching in the L1 in the EFL classroom has more advantages than disadvantages.

Research questions:

What are functions that induce both students and English language teachers to use mother tongue in L2 classes?

Despite Teachers’ code switching impacts in the EFL classroom, researchers have done surveys regarding functions that require the use of mother tongue in the EFL classrooms. Furthermore, this study researched for functions which motivate teacher to code switch in mother tongue in the EFL classroom.

According to students of University of Gjakova, Pre-school program, the research has done surveys about functions that require the use of mother tongue in the EFL classrooms. And these are:

Class management

When it comes to manage the classroom, code switching plays an important role because teacher should try to make a comfortable environment for all students so he/she manages to get the attention of all students for second language learning. Usually EFL classroom invites students on different activity in order to acquire foreign language in more successful way, including individual work, peer work or group work.

When in front of teachers are talkative students with low level proficiency, and then teacher is forced to intervene or switch in the L1 to create a quite environment.

Therefore, teacher does not use mother tongue only to direct her/his students into the lesson but first of all to create quite environment so students will be able to view the lesson.

Check comprehension

Usually if a student fails to understand what the lesson is about, then English teacher does not show the readiness for further learning. Same feeling is shared by Harbord, who states:if students are unfamiliar with a new approach, the teacher who cannot or will not give an explanation in the L1 may cause considerable student de-motivation Harbord (1992. p, 352). If the teacher does not offer the opportunity for students to understand the particular lesson then students has no access in that lesson, and if this happens continually it will lose motivation to learn second language.

Giving instructions

Obviously, the students in EFL classroom expect teacher's initiative to learn. For what, how and why they need whatever is offered by the teacher, students await instructions from the teacher for clearer understanding.

Swain and Lapkin (2000) argue that the L1 may facilitate L2 classroom activities, particularly for low proficiency students and on complex tasks.

The success of foreign language learning in the classroom is unavoidable if the teacher previously explains what has been required from them, regardless if there is a story and they need to speak, if there is grammar and they need to write, etc. all these activities in the classroom require instructions so students feel certain that they are in a right path.

Grammar explanation

Based on my experience as a foreign language teacher, I really support statement given by Martin Jones (2000) who reported that teachers teach grammar in L2-L1-L2 sequence.

It is impossible to explain each detail in FL grammar without code switching in the L1, basing on the comparison of L1 and L2 grammar patterns. Students used to compare grammar patterns within their native language grammar exercises. For example, past simple of verb-be, in first and third person singular is – I was, She/he/It was. When teacher teaches Conditionals they confuse on why do we say know: If I were.....

Unknown vocabulary items translation

Although Albanian language includes several international words which nowadays are familiar for Albanian people, there are many words that need to be translated since they may have different cultural meaning. These words provoke teachers to try and find the synonyms, therefore for the sake of the limited time and student's patient, the teacher is forced to use first language to translate certain vocabulary item.

Therefore, this study aims to research when teacher should Code Switch in the first language in order to achieve good results in L2 learning.

Scientific methods:

This study was certainly done in the building of University of Gjakova ‘‘Fehmi Agani’’. It is essential for this study to take place inside the classroom, the place where students face this

phenomenon and the place where the opinion of students who are learning the foreign language can be collected.

This study includes three English teachers and 77 students of pre-school program, Faculty of Education in Gjakova. Teachers were told to fill up the questionnaires prepared only for teachers and students to fill questionnaires only for students. All students had to answer the same questions in the classroom settings as an appropriate place.

Data analysis:

The data gathered throughout the study was analyzed carefully with the purpose of providing accurate results. The questionnaires, both teachers and students contribute for the following findings.

This study carries out all data gathered from the questionnaires filled by students and teachers, which shows us in which functions of foreign language is code switching applied.

Attitude towards the use of Albanian Language in the EFL class

In general 77 students of Faculty of Education, Pre-school program students in University of Gjakova, responded to this question and their attitude towards the use of Mother Tongue, known as Code switching method in L1 to L2 seems to be unavoidable. They mainly agree with applying code switching method and they see it as a method which facilitates EFL learning progress.

Question	Student's Response		
		Number	Percentage
5. What's your attitude towards the use of Albanian language in the EFL class?	Extremely agree	15	19.48 %
	Agree	54	70.12%
	Do not care	/	0%
	Disagree	8	10.38 %

Table 1. *The attitude towards the use of L1 in the EFL classroom*

Frequency on use of L1 in the EFL class

If pre surveys and researchers came to conclusion that it is required method in the FL classes, then what are some functions that induce both teacher and students to use this method in teaching-learning process?

Students were asked to answer the question: How often does your English teacher switches in L1 while teaching English Language?

According to the students this research is being done, they have chosen between the options: always, sometimes, occasionally and never, the resulted findings are as follows:

Question	Always	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
<i>How often does the teacher use L1 in the EFL lectures?</i>	6	32	37	2

Table 1: Frequency on use of L1 in the EFL class

Impacts, advantages and benefits of Native Language in EFL classes

The data and the results of this study show that there are several advantages and benefits while applying Mother Tongue usage strategy just like as many researchers of this phenomenon concluded based on their studies.

Harbord quotes Duff (1989) in saying that “ The mother tongue should be used to provoke discussion and speculation, to develop clarity and flexibility of thinking, and to help us increase our own and our students’ awareness of the inevitable interaction between the mother tongue and the target language that occurs during any type of language acquisition , Harbord (1992,p.355).

Student’s response on their questionnaire has come up with findings shown in the table 2.

Questions	Students Response		
		Number	Percentage
How does CS impacts in your language improvement?	Positively	69	89.61 %
	Negatively	8	10.38 %
How does L1 influence in the EFL classes?	Greatly beneficial	12	15.58 %
	Beneficial	54	70.12 %
	No influence	5	6.49 %
	Harmful	6	7.79 %
Will you benefit if your teacher	Yes	71	92.20 %
	No	6	7.79 %

switches to L1?			
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Table 2. *Findings that show CS as a positive strategy*

Findings about functions that FL teachers should Code Switch in L1

Random sample of this research gave its opinion on why should teacher code switch in the L1 during the teaching-learning process in the EFL lectures. Here all students participated, precisely 77 students. Since they were allowed to select more than one option (if they felt that they need to select more than one option) the number of the answer does not correspond with the number of students. This certainly helped in the accuracy of the student's responds.

Functions	Frequency	
	Students Number	Percentage
To translate unknown words	65	90.09%
To give homework instructions	45	21.22%
To give test instructions	75	42.92%
To explain grammar	71	70.28%
To manage class	37	28.77%

Table 3. *Frequency on functions that Teacher should switch in L1 in L2 lectures*

Findings in this question show that each student gave more than one option in question asked for their opinion about why should teacher Code Switch. To this questionnaire responded 77 students while 293 options were selected (ticked), depending on their preferences, which means that the students of pre-school program believe that while teaching and learning English language, the teacher should use L1 not only in one of the functions, but others as well.

These findings show that students believe teacher should switch in L1 in the EFL classes more when it is necessary to give test instructions, to explain grammar and translate unknown words.

Findings from teacher questionnaires

This study was well accepted and it was one of the subjects that were never discussed before. They showed great interest on this matter and seriousness in their answers, which was of great assistance to this research.

In the table below are presented questions and answers provided by three English language teachers regarding both students and teacher's L1 in the EFL lectures in preschool and elementary program in University of Gjakova.

Questions	Teachers Response			
1. What's your attitude towards the use of Albanian in the EFL class?	Extremely agree	agree	disagree	
	1	2	/	
2. CS in L1 is one of the methods that should undoubtedly be used.	agree		disagree	
	3		/	
3. Are you conscious while you are switching in the L1?	Never	sometimes	always	
	/	2	1	
4. Is Teachers' CS required by students?	never	sometimes	always	
	/	1	2	
5. How often do you use Albanian language in the EFL classes?	always	sometimes	occasionally	never
	/	1	2	/
6. CS in the L1 helps in students' language learning progress?	agree		disagree	
	3		/	
7. Do you think CS to Albanian is an efficient strategy on teaching English?	Yes		No	
	3		/	
8. How does CS in the L1 influence in the EFL class?	Greatly beneficial	beneficial	No influence	harmful
	1	2	/	/

Table 4. *Finding from teachers' questionnaires*

Conclusions:

The findings of this research have not only revealed advantages of Teachers' Code Switching in the L1 in the EFL classes in pre-school students of Faculty of Education - University of

Gjakova, but it also shows its role in English Language learning process and reasons why does this method occur during teaching-learning process in the EFL classes.

This research was completed with the great help of three English teachers and 77 students who attend first year studies in the Faculty of Education-University of Gjakova, pre-school program.

From the findings revealed from both students and teachers questionnaires, it has been concluded that Teachers Code Switching in L1 while teaching L2 should be applied. From many previous studies and also from this study, the advantages of Code Switching prevail the disadvantages of this technique in teaching-learning process, but one must always be careful to what extent should Mother tongue in English lectures be used.

Recommendations:

All data of this study provided by teacher's and student's questionnaires, showed that Code Switching Strategy is a method that has been used in Faculty of Education, pre-school program in Gjakova, but not in an official manner. According to this research and other previous studies and the positive evaluation of Code Switching strategy on teaching-learning process regarding its frequentation in EFL classes, the following suggestions might be relevant. This study might further investigate on the extent of its use in the schools, how and where it should be used so the students might always benefit from this method and not to apply it to a degree where its application would be excessive.

Further recommendations include performance of this study to all schools in Gjakova and Kosova.

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