

The Role of Mother Tongue in English Language Teaching

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Abstract:

This article discusses the controversy around the scholars' use of mother tongue in foreign language teaching. It has been a longstanding debate over whether the use of mother tongue (L1) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes should be accepted or avoided. The purpose of this study was to explain the advantages of using mother tongue in English classes.

Keywords: Mother tongue, foreign languages, role, second language, teaching, advantages.

Introduction

Using mother tongue in foreign language classes has long been seen as ongoing and controversy discussion for a long time. A second language affects people's carriers and possible features, their identifies and carriers. Each language has its own significance according it's purpose and situations. English is becoming more and more outstanding language throughout the world. In recent years, English plays an essential role in Uzbekistan in every direction that is belonging to tourism, medicine, technology and others. In today's world, English language considers well-known and useful among the world, as well as in our culture. But the role of mother language is existed in the field of teaching this foreign language.

Regarding the role of mother tongue Kavaliauskiene (2009) has conducted a research and found out that all the learners customarily rely on their mother tongue in learning English. Likewise, Schweers (1999) has also conducted a research into this issue and investigated that a high percentage (88,7%) of the participants felt that mother tongue should be used in their English classes.

In order to analyze the role of native language in teaching process we should discuss what is L1 itself? L1 refers to an individual's first language that they learned as a child. Mother tongue is valuable due to several reasons. Mother tongue is vital in framing the thinking and emotions of people. Learning to speak in the mother tongue is very necessary for a child's comprehensive development. Being fluent in their mother tongue, which is also known as the native language, can give lots of benefits to the child in numerous ways. It associates him to his culture, ensures enhanced cognitive development, and supports in the learning of other languages. A child first comprehends what is around them through the language they hear their mother communicating in from before they are born and thought their lives.

The first language is the key to the second language. Those who have mastered their mother tongue have laid the foundation for learning other languages. It is the motor of our cognitive development until the foreign language can take over this role. English is taught as a foreign language in Uzbekistan. With reference to school level (Grade I to XII), almost in all schools English is taught from A1 level to B2. Using Uzbek language in English classes can be a helpful tool for Uzbek-speaking students who may be facing language barriers in the classroom. Allowing students to use their native language to clarify a point or ask a question can help them better understand the material and improve their overall learning experience. However, it is important to ensure that the majority of the class is conducted in English to help students build their language proficiency and prepare them for real-world situations where English is the primary language used. Additionally, teachers should provide resources and support for students who may be struggling with the language, whether it be through additional tutoring or language programs.

Materials and methods

Application of the principle of taking into account the native language in the study of a foreign language - one of the most effective and efficient principles of foreign language teaching, it should be applied at different stages and methods of language learning. This principle allows students to most clearly see the subtleties of learning a foreign language, deeply imbued with the culture of the target language. This principle allows the teacher to explain the material freely, using the comparison of Uzbek and English grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, phraseology, culture. The principle of accounting for the native language like no other principle helps in teaching a foreign language. Currently, it is almost impossible not to take into account and not to use the native language when studying a foreign language. It happens unintentionally, spontaneously, naturally. Uzbek and foreign language lessons at the initial stages of learning a foreign language, we speak with students in their native language (in Uzbek), explain all the rules in Uzbek, try to draw analogies with the Uzbek language, use exercises based on the native language. In high school there is a comparison of native and studied languages, comparison of phenomena, structures and constructions. Of course, students have most of the lesson speak and write in a foreign language, but the native language cannot be ignored. Explanation of grammatical structures, lexical units, phraseological units, ways of translation - all this cannot rely on the native language of students.

The principle of accounting for the native language is used in different areas: bilingual education, specially organized approaches to the study of a foreign language, based on the account of the native, various exercises, games and translations, focused on the comparison of the native language with a foreign one. One can observe a number of advantage and disadvantage sites of this principle, noted by various Methodists and linguists in their works.

In addition, research increasingly shows that children's ability to learn a second or additional local or an international language such as English, French, or German, does not suffer when their mother tongue is the primary language of instruction throughout primary school. Fluency and literacy in the mother tongue lay a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning additional languages e.g. English language.

It is proved that students can learn better through their mother tongue. The educational benefits of mother-tongue teaching include:

- Native language teaching has positive effects on students' learning;
- Most students prefer learning in their native language;
- Students learning in their mother tongue generally perform better than their counterparts using English as medium of instruction (MOI);
- Students of traditional Uzbek medium schools consistently achieve a higher pass percentage than the territory-wide average in both Uzbek Language
- Uzbekistan accepted significant reforms by performing use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the country. CEFR standards provide effective learning of foreign language EFL classes. This shows the positive impact of mother-tongue teaching on the learning of Uzbek and English as a subject.

Causes and features

There are some benefits that should be mentioned using native language. The target language must be used where possible and L1 when necessary. Here you can see some examples benefits of L1 for teaching English as a foreign language. It is especially necessary for beginners.

Using native language can be time-saving: Instead of going through long explanations in the target language, it is sometimes easier and more efficient to give a translation of a vocabulary item or an explanation of a grammar point. Imagine a teacher who wants to teach the word “cat” to Uzbek students and starts by phrasing the explanation as follows “a small domesticated carnivorous mammal with soft fur, a short snout, and retractable claws. It is widely kept as a pet or for catching mice, and many breeds have been developed.” while a simple translation of the word (or perhaps the use of visual aids) would be enough.

Cultural impact of the language. Language is a vehicle for cultural aspects. If teachers ban the use of the mother tongue, this underlies an ideological conception of L1 culture as being inferior. Alternatively, cultural differences and similarities can be highlighted to help learners accept and tolerate differences while at the same time preserve their cultural uniqueness. This can be done through various activities where L1 plays an important role.

Using proverbs during the lessons. Students may be given a set of proverbs in the target language and be asked to find the corresponding ones in their mother tongue if they exist. If not they try to translate the proverbs into their language.

Idiomatic Expressions Again, finding the corresponding idioms or a translation of target language idioms might be very helpful to detect cultural differences or similarities

Using songs. The translation of lyrics from the students’ favorite songs can be a pleasant experience and this can give a huge impression to students singing together after knowing the translation of their favourite songs.

Using jokes. Funny EFL activities can be built on jokes. Students may translate and tell or act jokes to create an environment where there is no stress. It helps them to create an enjoyable atmosphere to their EFL classes.

Classroom management: Management of the class and holding discipline is sometimes hard to be done in the target language. For instance, if a serious problem emerges in the classroom, will the teacher really insist on an English only policy when coping with it?

- Grammar. L1 can be an enormous help when teaching grammar. Translation exercises for example may be the perfect practice when there is a grammar point that is causing trouble to students.
- Instructions. Many failures in tests are due to learner's lack of understanding of instructions. L1 can be used to tackle this issue, helping students to understand what is exactly asked from them.
- Rationale. Students need to understand the rationale behind activities or methods. They should understand what lies behind the methods the teacher is using.
- Errors. The discussion of some recurring errors can be a helpful activity for the students. It is true that a lot of errors are caused by L1 transfer. A discussion in L1 of such errors will help students overcome these problems.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that using Uzbek language in English classes has long been considered an important principle of teaching this language. According to this study, the teacher appears to be the initial source of language input and therefore responsible for maximizing its use in the classroom. From my own experience, I can conclude that students are highly motivated and engaged learning English through using their native language. They regard their English language as a symbol of their identity and a route to future academic and employment opportunities. L1 use in the English classroom does not hinder the learning of an L2, and can actually facilitate it. It is hoped that these findings will help make more people acknowledge the role of the native language in the foreign language classroom and make teachers, experienced or not, stop feeling uneasy about using L1 or permitting its use in the classroom.

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