



USING MUSIC TO REDUCE NATIVE LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract:

The main factors that lead to the usage of the native language in an EFL classroom are the incomplete preparation of students from the teachers, during their years of studies. In this case, the difficulty is met for the Medical Secondary School students to whom the English language is used as a foreign language. In a context where students should improve their language, the interference of L1 might not be useful. Firstly, this paper explains the influence of L1 and its exposure at the Medical Secondary School in Gostivar. Secondly, it argues how often the foreign language should be used and how it should be used to help students improve their English learning. It details some facts about difficulties students have encountered in the past with a non-native teacher who also integrated L1 into the teaching setting. What will the future bring, and how to limit L1 usage? It then concludes by identifying music and lyrics as strategies for improving and reducing L1 usage in the classroom. Students should learn the English language to have a foreign language educational prosperity.

Keywords: proficiency level, interference of L1, limit L1 usage, music and lyrics

1. Introduction

Qualitative and innovative teachers have been required the most during these last few years. The teaching of new languages is becoming more and more attractive to students in North Macedonia, and that is the reason educators should bring innovative techniques for foreign language learning.

To have an idea of what this topic will deal with, we first need to say that code-switching is needed and inevitable for teachers in an English foreign language classroom (EFL). The question that arises when wondering whether L1 should be used or not with students is will the students depend continuously on the L1 when speaking the English language, and codeswitch. Some educators believe that using L1 in the classroom helps

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during the explanation of some lessons, especially the ones that are grammar-related. However, the learning style is unique for each of the students.

Teaching English as a foreign language plays one of the leading roles in the educational area, and an issue worth considering is what methods teachers use to teach EFL. Some methods that include fun activities and a fun environment for the students include listening to songs and lyrics-related activities during the lessons. This would be an opportunity to reduce L1 usage in the classroom.

Raising teachers' and students' awareness about the use of EFL in EFL classrooms is a step forward because teachers should be aware that too much usage of L1 in the classroom makes students feel in their comfort zone. In addition, this study will portray what teachers should improve in the management of L1 usage and always be prepared with new approaches and different methods to assist target language teaching most beneficially.

2. Literature review

The methodologies used in EFL classrooms are constantly changing. Teachers are following the steps directed by the state curriculum. However, some methods encourage native language speaking, others less. While analyzing the students at the Secondary Medical School in Gostivar, it could be easily said that teachers, starting from primary school emphasized the usage of L1 in the classroom, and the opposite should happen. To follow the trends and have students who communicate fluently, educators need to be focused on implementing new teaching strategies that reduce native language usage.

2.1. Previous studies and research

Some scholars think that L1 should be included in the classroom. According to Afzal (2003), *"the use of L1, if used properly and judiciously, is a needful, and worthy, pedagogical ally in the teaching and learning of English as language"* (p. 1846). It is believed that L1 can especially help beginner-level students because those students need someone to lead their way, and while they compare the two languages, they can learn new teaching techniques.

Instead, others believe the only way to acquire fluency and vocabulary knowledge of this language is by using language only, the English language. As stated by (Kalanzadeh, Hemati, Shahivand, & Bakhtiarvand, 2013), *"the overuse of L1 in L2 classes might lead to students' dissatisfaction."* (p. 30)

Furthermore, using the L1 has been said to be helpful, but how do we incorporate methods that reduce L1 usage? Students are attached emotionally to songs and lyrics, and this could help them while learning a foreign language, as mentioned by Shen (2009):

"Songs enter the human brain—from left ear to right hemisphere—in a rather different way from our speech and thus can stimulate language learning in the right hemisphere, whose involvement in language processing become more active in eliciting the overall meaning and processing formulaic speech." (Ellis, 1985, p.90)

Instead, according to Fernández-García & Fonseca-Mora (2019):

“Although this relationship between music and the emotional brain can be found at an early age, adolescence is often referred as the crucial stage. Adolescence is a period during which music plays a major role, and has been shown to serve as a medium for adolescents’ emotional self-regulation, peer-group affiliation, and identity formation.” ([Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007](#), p.128)

Furthermore, another study by Mots (2016) mentions that even though students have different tastes in music, it can still work out:

“Although people have different tastes in music, it still is possible to choose songs that everybody likes working with, as the selection of additional exercises and tasks could stimulate students even though the songs in the lesson are not their favorite. Moreover, opinions about students’ preferences can be asked beforehand and taken into consideration, if possible.” (p. 16)

2.2 Disadvantages of using native language in the classroom

Native language is essential, but teachers should be concerned with finding different English language teaching methods to incorporate EFL in the classroom. We could consider the cultural background an issue that affects L1 use in the classroom, but the teachers need to help students understand the foreign language by using synonyms and flashcards and maybe keep the translations low.

According to Giang (2022):

“Students need to have opportunities to remember and reuse what they have obtained and foster their skills. That means if lecturers use their mother tongue when teaching English, students will have fewer chances to listen and speak English, so it is very hard for their speaking and listening skills to improve.” (p. 20)

By being always in contact with L1, students will encounter problems when trying to explain themselves freely.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research aim

The research aims to raise once more awareness among teachers to reduce the massive use of L1 in the classroom. Moreover, this research will be another warning sign that if it continues that way, every teacher will be offering a qualitative foreign language usage.

This research will aim to:

- Explain the influence of L1 and its exposure in the classroom;
- Offer teaching methods for the growth of foreign language communication;

- Raise awareness among teachers about the usage of songs and lyrics in the classrooms.

3.2. Research questions

This research will have to answer the following questions:

Q1: How much do teachers use the L1 in the classroom?

Q2: How does using songs and lyrics change the students' performance in the classroom?

Q3: Is code-switching helpful when speaking in an EFL environment?

3.3. Research hypothesis

H1: Usage of the L1 in classrooms is regular.

H2: There is a positive change in the student's performance when there are songs and lyrics.

H3: Code switching should be avoided when speaking in the EFL environment.

3.4. Methods

In this quantitative and qualitative research, the methodology used for collecting information about the advantages and disadvantages of using native language in the classroom is basically through questionnaires, open interviews, and books obtained online through Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, etc. The study was undertaken in the student's classrooms.

3.5. Participants

The participants of the study are the Medical Second year students of 'Gostivar' in Gostivar. The number of students is 42, with 12 male and 30 female students, all aged 18-19. There was an interview conducted with professors, who were asked some questions about their own experiences and how much they had used the L1 in the classroom. Does this have to do mostly with students having difficulties in understanding EFL? Do they use songs or other methods in the classroom? Also, ask them to provide some examples of how they can be changed.

3.5.1. Research results

The first method used for this study was the interview. Two teachers brought a closer look at the importance of using English in an EFL environment. There were 10 questions in this interview, and the interviews were performed individually.

- R = Researcher,
- P = Participant.

Q4: *"How willing are you to afford an only EFL speaking class for the students?"*

P1: *"Sometimes I speak only a foreign language; however, I encounter students who don't fully understand me."*

Q5: *"What kind of activities do you use that students are mostly active in EFL usage in the classroom?"*

P2: *“When it comes to reading, students are always active and participate; I also use short videos in the classroom to which they respond positively.”*

Q6: *“Do you believe songs and lyrics help give students a foreign language studying environment?”*

P1: *“In our curriculum, we present students with songs and lyrics, and I believe that repetition of the same helps students immensely.”*

Q7: *“Do you have any suggestions on how to incorporate the foreign language in the classroom?”*

P2: *“Short stories are interesting for all ages, but also media is nowadays a good way to make a class interesting, by incorporating videos, songs, watching movies together with the students, etc.”*

3.5.2. Observation results

The second method used for this study was observation. It was important to see how much the mother tongue was used in the classroom and how everything proceeded. The students were not motivated to express themselves in the English language. The interaction between the teacher and the student was great. However, L1 was incorporated most of the time, or code-switching. Some students had difficulties communicating in the English language, but the ones who were good at speaking the language had no difficulties. The observation was done through the specific observation protocol (Appendix 2).

4. Conclusion

Generally, the main idea when doing research is searching for information, digging, and finding data that will help people in general, be it a teacher, students, etc. Helpful information is always welcome for everybody. That is why it is believed that raising awareness can positively influence teachers and students in their future performances by analyzing this area of English language teaching. Teachers as mentors can help students use modern methods. They should help students raise their comprehension level and also prepare them for the near future so they can produce fluent English-speaking ability. I regard this topic as a real issue that should be researched in every school because we need future successful generations who will represent modern teaching.

This research found that although native language was used, it could not help student in their speaking skills. It only drew them backward. It was interesting how the teachers agreed that the usage of songs and lyrics could create a student-friendly environment. They also believed that even though it would not help them, using L1 is helpful. Just as in Afzal’s (2013) study, who found the following:

“The research seems to show that limited and judicious use of the mother tongue in the English classroom does not reduce students’ exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning processes. This is not to overstate the role of the L1 or advocate greater use of L1 in the EFL classroom but rather to clarify some misconceptions that have

troubled foreign language teachers for years, such as whether they should use the mother tongue when there is a need for it and whether the often-mentioned principle of no native language in the classroom is justifiable. It is hoped that these findings will help make more people acknowledge the role of the native language in the foreign language classroom and stimulate further study in this area.” (p.73)

In the end, there will always be controversies but the important thing is always to consider the generations to come and that native language should not be forgotten, but it also should not be used as much as secondary school teachers use it nowadays.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Flora Amiti holds the position of Executive Assistant at “Ital Rolet” in Gostivar. Alongside this role, they also engage in teaching English courses. Their primary research interests encompass artificial intelligence (AI), cultural studies, and methodologies for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Flora Amiti is dedicated to investigating the convergence of these fields and contributing valuable insights to the academic community.

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Appendix 1: Interview

1. How eager are you to use the native language in the classroom?
2. Do you code-switch during your classes?
3. What can be improved when conducting an EFL course?
4. How willing are you to afford an only EFL speaking class for the students?
5. What kind of activities do you use that students are mostly active in EFL usage in the classroom?
6. Do you believe songs and lyrics help give students a foreign language studying environment?
7. Do you have any suggestions on how to incorporate the foreign language in the classroom?
8. Do you think students improve their speaking skills if they repeat song lyrics several times during the day?
9. Which one, of the four skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) do you focus on teaching the most?
10. Which one, of the four skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) do students like and active the most?

Appendix 2: Observation

Observation sheet

Number of students:

Class:

Book:

Title:

Usage of mother tongue:

Teacher-student interaction:

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