

Contemporary Issues in Applied Linguistics: A Case Study of GHSMC Samanabad Faisalabad

Muhammad Ansar Ejaz (Visiting Lecturer GCU Faisalabad)

niaziiejaz@gmail.com

Afzal ul Haq

Ph. D Scholar

PhD Scholar Riphah International University Faisalabad

afzaal2015ok@gmail.com

Rashid Mahmood

PhD Scholar Riphah International University Faisalabad

rashidma91@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The role of L1 in instructed English learning has been the subject of much controversy. Some teachers have the opinion that L1 may be used under certain limitations and others feel that it should not be allowed at all. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the use of L1 in promoting English learning by observing and interviewing five kindergarten teachers in Bandar Lampung. The result showed that L1 has a valuable role to play in the English classroom. Teaching English to young learners requires teachers to teach efficiently and appropriately. It indicates that the L1 gains more benefits by incorporating the students' L1 as a learning tool and a facilitator for efficient teaching. L1 is most useful at the beginning and elementary school level.

Keywords: First Language, Second Language, Young ESL Learners

Introduction

Contrastive analysis (CA) systematically compares two or more languages to highlight their similarities and differences, often for pedagogical purposes, such as enhancing teaching materials for language learners. It can sharpen understanding of linguistic nuances, as suggested by Ädel (2006), who argues that recognizing language differences fosters a better grasp of language mechanisms. This method not only clarifies individual languages but also reveals broader linguistic characteristics, aiding the study of language universals. While CA has historically aimed to predict learning challenges based on native and target language differences, it has limitations; not all predicted difficulties arise, and unanticipated errors often occur. This shortcoming led to the development of error analysis, which focuses on actual learner mistakes and views errors as a crucial part of the learning process. Integrating both CA and error analysis provides a more comprehensive approach to language teaching, acknowledging that learner errors are a sign of progress and part of developing interlanguage (Dyvik, 1998).

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, initially proposed by Robert Lado in *Linguistics across Cultures* (1957), posits that elements similar to a learner's native language are easier to acquire, while differences pose challenges. Although Lado provided a systematic framework for comparing languages to aid language teaching, the hypothesis faced criticism for lacking empirical support, as many predicted errors did not materialize, and some errors occurred across different native languages. This led to a shift towards error analysis in the 1970s, which examined learner mistakes as developmental rather than solely transfer errors. Despite its limitations, contrastive analysis remains valuable for predicting specific difficulties, particularly in phonology, and is often supplemented by error analysis to enhance language teaching. The method emphasizes systematic comparisons between a learner's native and target languages to improve educational materials, though it recognizes that language learning is influenced by more than just linguistic differences (Ebeling, 2000).

Selinker (1987) introduced the concept of interlanguage, which describes the evolving linguistic state of second language learners as they navigate between their first language (L1) and the target language (TL). This concept challenges the notion of learner language as

merely an imperfect version of the TL, highlighting a continuum shaped by factors like language transfer, instructional methods, and individual strategies, leading to unique rules with overgeneralizations and innovations. Interlanguage can become fossilized, particularly in adult learners, halting progress despite continued effort. Errors during this learning process reflect hypothesis testing, common among both L1 and L2 learners. Effective learners actively seek practice, engage well in group settings, employ diverse study techniques, and exhibit strong motivation and adaptability. Additionally, contrastive analysis aims to identify differences and similarities between languages to predict learning challenges; however, it has been criticized for not consistently forecasting difficulties and for failing to account for unexpected errors (Firbas, 1992).

This research study will benefit L2 teachers and students by demonstrating the importance of using L1 in L2 learning and providing strategies to improve teaching techniques.

Research Objectives:

To find out the behavior of teachers towards the use of L1 in L2 classes.

To find out the purposes for which L1 is used in L2 classes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of whether or not to use the L1 in the L2 classroom is complex. There are some studies done on what use of L1 is made in the classroom.

Prodromou (2002) carried out research into the perceptions of three hundred Greek students regarding L1 use in the monolingual classroom at three levels that are beginner, intermediate, and advanced. He tried to investigate the reactions and attitudes of students with different levels of proficiency. He found that the L1 was used for certain procedures, for example, explaining difficult concepts, checking comprehension, raising confidence, explaining the rationale of language learning activities, error analysis, or vocabulary clarification. The findings showed that students at lower levels showed more tendencies to accept the use of L1 while for higher level students, they have a negative attitude toward the use of L1 in their classroom.

Dujmovic (2007) examined the attitudes of his hundred EFL students. He concluded that his students responded positively to the use of L1 in L2 contexts and showed their interest as well.

Harmer (2002) claims that learners resort to the mother tongue when the choice of task is not compatible with their target language level. It is natural for them to use L1 to communicate, while the teacher does not create situations that would make it natural for them to use L2.

Papamihel (2001) claims that L1 has aided in L2 skills in a way that the use of the former supports the acquisition of the latter.

Schweers (1999) investigated the use of L1 in his monolingual Spanish-speaking classes in Puerto Rico. He found that the use of L1 in the classroom was useful. The L1 can be used to explain difficult concepts, to make the situation more comfortable, to check comprehension, to define new vocabulary items, and to switch language when they feel lost and not confident. He encouraged teachers to incorporate the native language into lessons to influence the classroom dynamic and suggested that starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves.

Reineman (2001) proposes that there is no hard fast rule for when L1 should be allowed or prohibited in the classroom. She said that the use of L1 should be allowed conditionally. When communicating abstract ideas, L1 can be used. However, when introducing new vocabulary, which can be expressed through drawings, pantomimes, noises, etc, the L2 or target language can be used. Nevertheless, students should not be allowed to use their L1 too much. Some factors should be taken into account when a teacher decides the use of L1 in an L2 classroom (Susan Connick-Hirtz, 2001): (1) What is the learner's first language; (2)

What is the learner's age; (3) Are we teaching beginners of advanced levels?; (4) What is the ratio of students/teaching time per class; (5) How long is the learner going to study the second language; (6) What are his/her learning purposes; (7) Is it one nationality or mixed nationality group; (8) What is the institution's pedagogical policy; (9) What kind of educational background does the learner have; (10) In what kind of social context is the teaching of L2 taking place?

METHODOLOGY

The current research study is exploratory and explanatory having an experimental research design. A sample of 5 teachers has been selected with the help of the purposive Sampling method. Three methods for the Collection of data and its analysis have been used. These are the observation questionnaire and interview. The researcher has used these three methods to achieve maximum validity and reliability in the results of the research study. The research study has been conducted on a sample of 5 teachers of English at Government MC High School Samanabad Faisalabad. The teachers are teaching English as a foreign language at the elementary level. They are teaching English to class six students. They have got special training for teaching English. They are masters from various universities in English linguistics. All five are male teachers. All of them have teaching experience of more than five years.

Data was collected in September 2024, using three tools: classroom observation, questionnaire, and interview. Five purposively selected English classes (for 45 minutes per class) were conducted to be observed and recorded to find out how frequently and in what situations L1 was used. A questionnaire was distributed to 5 teachers to discover their behavior toward using L1 in the English classroom. The questionnaire items focused on the subjects' opinions towards the use of L1, the various situations when they think L1 can be used, and the perceived effectiveness of L1 in the classroom. Semi-structured interviews, after the classroom observations, the teachers were interviewed with questions focusing on the issues that arose from classroom observations to clarify.

Table 1. The teachers' sample				
Teacher	G. M. C. H. School	Masters from	Subject	Teaching Experience
A	X	U	English	>5
B	X	U	English	>5
C	X	U	English	>5
D	X	U	English	>5
E	X	U	English	>5

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the results of the data analysis and their description.

Classroom observations

Table 2 shows the number of times and situations in which L1 was used in the three-session English classes.

Table 2. Classroom observation results

Situation	Situations in which L1 was used			Total	
	Giving Instructions	Explaining meanings of words	Explaining Complex or new Ideas	Disciplining the class	
Teacher A	2	3	2	0	7
Teacher B	0	2	1	2	5
Teacher C	0	1	1	1	3
Teacher D	4	4	2	1	11
Teacher E	4	7	3	3	13
Total	10	17	9	7	39

The table shows that L1 was used by all five teachers in the class when they teach English to give instructions and explain the meaning of words, and complex ideas, and discipline the class. The greatest use of L1, 17 times, was to explain the words. Teacher E used L1 to explain the address of the word, dear, with love, (to) stick, memory, warm regard, and fold after her English explanations, which proved to be quite effective looking at the students' responses. Teacher D used L1 to explain the meanings of the words spell, news, cost, and headline following her English explanations. It can be concluded that the teachers use L1 only when they explain abstract or new words. All five teachers first attempted to explain the words and meanings of complex ideas in English but resorted to L1 when they thought the students could not understand their English explanations.

Teachers D and E used L1 most frequently to give instructions. The teachers used L1 only after first giving instructions in English to make sure that their students understood what was said. Since it was quite noisy in those classes at the time, the teacher also used L1 instructions to discipline the students so they were clear that their teacher wanted their attention. These three class observations indicate that L1 is used in situations when English explanation does not work smoothly therefore the L1 takes the role of facilitating and supporting English teaching learning in the classroom.

Interviews: After the classroom observations, the five teachers whose classes had been observed were interviewed with questions focusing on the issues that arose from classroom observations for clarification. Mostly it is about their situational use of L1 in the English classroom and how they perceive the common issue that using L1 weakens the students' exposure to English. Their answers are summarized as follows:

Teacher A: The main reason I use L1 in the English classroom is that students come from Punjabi and Urdu backgrounds. They do not speak English at all at their homes. They have the only opportunity to learn English at the school. I have to assist them to understand. So whenever the students cannot catch on I try to explain to them in Urdu.

Teacher B: The main reason I use L1 in the English classroom is that sometimes just because of their low proficiency level in English (yeah you know, they are still in the Elementary class). I try to use English only to explain the meaning of the vocabulary or when to give instructions; however, if they look blank I immediately translate the meaning into Urdu.

Teacher C: I think using some L1 is more effective and less time-consuming. Usually, when I spend some time or use several English utterances to explain one idea, and the students still have no idea, using a simple L1 word or utterance might solve the problem. Class time is also limited, only 45 minutes per meeting. About the issue of the use of L1 that could reduce students' exposure to English, I think it does not make sense. The use of L1 in the English classroom does not mean that they do not speak English. You can see from our wall. There are so many English texts, that they can read them. Even if it is not in an English session, we still try to communicate with English each other.

Teacher D: I use L1 to discuss the meaning of some difficult and abstract words and to explain some complicated sentences. Honestly speaking, since I did not graduate from English education, my English is poor. So while the students learn English, I learn it as well. No wonder when students look puzzled after my poor English explanation I use L1 to make it safe. Furthermore, I think the use of L1 is best for disciplining the students since it sounds more effective than using English.

Teacher E: I have been teaching English for almost 6 years in this elementary. The students are not expected to speak English. I only must introduce some vocabulary just as an introduction. Therefore, I emphasize the emotional attachment the students have toward their language and introduce English through Urdu. I think that positive feedback should be expressed in both languages so they can understand and keep it in their heart. I do not want to burden my students to learn English in their childhood time.

Results of the Questionnaires.

As stated in the previous section, questionnaires were distributed to the 5 teachers.

The findings are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Results of the questionnaires on the use of L1 in the English classroom.

Question	Yes			No
Q1: Should L1 be used in the English classroom?	100%			0%
Q2: Do you use L1 in the English classroom?	Not at all	A little	Sometimes	A lot
	0%	20%	40%	40%
Q3: When do you think it is necessary to use L1 in the English Classroom?				
To help define some abstract words or new vocabulary.				40%
To explain difficult concepts or ideas				20%
To give instructions.				20%
To discipline the class.				20%
Other, please specify.				0%
Q4: If you think the use of L1 is necessary in the English classroom, why?				
It is less time-consuming.				40%
It is more effective.				40%
It aids comprehensively and greatly				20%
Other, Please Specify				0%

Q5: Up to what extent do you think the use of L1 in the English classroom helps you teach this language?			
NOT			0%
A little bit			20%
Fairly Much			60%
A lot			20%
Question 6: How often do you think L1 should be used in the			
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
0%	0%	60%	40%

Table 3 shows that all the teachers who participated in the study think that L1 should be used in the English classroom. One of them uses a little L1 when he teaches English, two confess that they sometimes use it, and the rest of the teachers stated that they use L1 a lot when they teach English. For them, L1 was most necessary to help define some abstract words or when they tried to introduce new vocabulary (40%) while explaining difficult concepts or ideas, giving instruction, and disciplining the class the same percentage (20%). Concerning why the use of L1 was necessary, they answered because “it is less time consuming” (40%), “it is more effective” (40%), and “it aids comprehension greatly” (20%). All of them agree that the use of L1 in the English classroom helps them in teaching English. More than half of the teachers (60%) think L1 should be used in the classroom ‘sometimes’.

Why L1 is used in the English classrooms.

The focus of the class often determines how much exposure gets placed on using or limiting L1 in the classroom. A bilingual school may often be better served if students try to use English as much as possible. When a student cannot understand a word or utterance, or cannot follow the teaching-learning process, then he/she has the chance to interpret the meaning by looking at the situation. But in the school where English is only seen as a supplementary subject, then the focus is only on introduction. Students practice in English with the vocabulary introduction only provided by the teacher. In general, when students can use their L1 to ask questions and confirm their misunderstanding or confusion, it often leads to a clearer realization of the form and meaning of the language. Lower-grade level students may also need further explanation and clarification on some points of the new materials. It should be noted that the teacher can sometimes use the L1 to help students produce utterances beyond their ability. Students produce utterances in their L1 then the teacher translates and asks them to repeat after her/him. The teacher might also consider using the L1 in the English classroom to shortcut the time. An explanation in L1 may be necessary in a class of where no one speaks English. A student may get stuck in a teaching-learning process and find themselves unable to express their opinions, answers, or ask questions. Therefore, the teacher can simply allow them to use their L1 but stimulate them to say it again in English with the teacher’s help.

The study indicates that the L1 was used by the majority of teachers investigated. They responded positively toward the use of L1 in the English classroom. The teachers that were investigated in this study indicated that do translation of some words, and ideas, or even conducting disciplines in the classroom are good ways to learn a foreign language. Based on the classroom observation I can assume that without switching the language, young learners would be likely to lose and fail to learn English. This study also finds that in the Elementary school, L1 has a valuable role to play in the English classroom. Teaching English to young learners requires teachers to teach efficiently and appropriately. It indicates that the L1 gains more benefits by incorporating the students’ L1 as a learning tool and a facilitator for efficient teaching.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that the use of L1 in the English classroom does not reduce students' exposure to English. It can support the teaching-learning process. It is hoped that the findings will make people realize that L1 has a lot of roles in the English classroom. The comparison between Teachers A, B, C, D, and E's qualifications as well as the perceived centrality of the L1 in the teaching-learning process, bring up issues concerning teacher education and the knowledge base required for teaching languages to young learners. Who is the ideal teacher in young language learner's programs? Should it be an expert English teacher? A teacher whose expertise is in teaching young learners? Whoever the teacher is and whatever his/her educational background is, he/she should be encouraged to read a lot of literature related to Teaching English to Young Learners, share problems, and look for solutions together with his/her colleagues. We can see from the findings above that the L1 has a valuable role to play in the L2 classroom. Teaching English to young learners requires teachers to teach efficiently and appropriately. By referring to some related theories and research on the use of L1 in L2 classrooms, it can be seen that the use of L1 has an important role and can facilitate all aspects of language instruction. It indicates that the L1 gains more benefits by incorporating the students' L1 as a learning tool and a facilitator for efficient teaching. L1 is most useful at beginning and Elementary schools. If students have little or no knowledge of the L2, L1 can be used as an introduction. As for the teacher, fluent L2 teachers can collaborate with non-fluent L2 teachers. Nonfluent L2 teachers are advised to learn and practice more so with consideration of when and how to use L1 and L2, their skill in teaching foreign languages for young learners will develop.

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