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**Using L1 in the
English
Classroom**

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Using L1 in the English Classroom

- There have always been contradicting views about whether to use the mother tongue of the students in the foreign language classroom.
- The monolingual approach suggest that the target language ought to be the sole medium of communication.
- Implying the prohibition of the native language would maximize the effectiveness of learning the target language.

Background

- Krashen has argued that people learning foreign languages follow basically the same route as they acquire their mother tongue, hence the use of the mother tongue in the learning process should be minimized(1981).
- The mother tongue does not play an important role in foreign language teaching (Dornyer, personal communication).

- Professionals in second language acquisition have become increasingly aware of the role the mother tongue plays in the ESL classroom. Nunan and Lamb (1996).
- Results indicate that the majority of students and teacher agreed that Spanish should be used in the ESL classroom (Schweers 1999).

Research design

- Question
- Is Chinese as the L1 used in tertiary-level English classrooms
- If so how frequently is it used and for what purposes
- What are the attitudes of the students and teachers toward using L1 in the classroom.

Participant

- The 20 teacher participants were all faculty members at the same university.

White their teaching experience ranging from one year to 30 years.

Methods and Procedures

- Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used.
- Classroom observations
- Interviews
- And questionnaires.

Classroom Observations

- There randomly-selected first-year reading classes.
- observed and recorded to find out how frequently and on what occasions Chinese was used
- To obtain more authentic classroom data, the teachers and students were not informed of the observation purpose beforehand.



Once upon a time there lived a girl Masha with her Grandma and Dima.
One day she went to a forest with her friends to pick mushrooms and berries.
But she got lost.

Suddenly she saw a wooden house deep in the forest. A huge bear lived
in the wooden house.



Discussion

- Both studies indicate that the mother tongue was used by the majority of teachers investigated.
- Both students and teachers responded positively toward its use.
- The teachers participating in this study indicated that the translation of some word, complex ideas, or even whole passages is a good way to learn a foreign language.

- This study also reveals that in the EFL classes observed Chinese plays only a supportive and facilitating role.
- The chief medium of communication in the class is still English.
- Majority of student participants (about 63 percent combined) that no more than 10 percent of class time should be spent using Chinese/L1.

Conclusion

- 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.