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Use of Learner's First Language in ESL Classroom

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This paper attempts to appraise the success of allowing L1 to be used in ESL classroom to a limited extent in achieving the targets of ESL teaching, first teachers being aware of instances where and how they should use L1 effectively. Despite the fact that English, after much controversy, is recommended by many to be used as the sole medium of teaching in ESL classroom, after years of careful observation, it is firmly convinced that English only policy no more helps meeting the targets in ESL classroom. English only concept probably creates a rather threatening than facilitating environment for the learners. This study inquires why teachers should use L1 in ESL teaching and instances where it is much more effective than sticking to English. For the purpose, two ESL classes of a state university each of which consisted of around 20 undergraduate students of the first year were taken into consideration. Evaluation of the performance of the students by a test, questionnaires and interviews held with the teachers from the same university were used in reaching the findings. In this study, it was revealed through observation that 85% of the students do not actively participate in the classroom activities and that the performance of their productive skills, as was revealed at the pre and post assessment tests, is far behind than that of the receptive skills, when the things are taught only in English. Another fact mostly highlighted was that even if the teachers are always encouraged by the system to use only English in ESL classroom, still around 90% of the interviewed teachers use L1 to some extent based on their experience. Another important finding was that, as admitted by 80% of the interviewed teachers, there are instances where teachers do not find a better option than using L1 in order to teach the intended point effectively. In conclusion, it is suggested through the research that L1 should not be used only when all the other attempts fail to meet the targets, but it should be used to make teaching and learning process more efficient and effective.

Key words: Effective Teaching, ESL, First Language, Performance, Productive Skills