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*Jalilov Olimjon Muhidinovich.*

*Teacher of Department of Foreign Languages in Social Sciences and Humanities.*

*Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute*

*E-mail address: [jalilov@jspi.uz](mailto:jalilov@jspi.uz)*

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## **THE USE OF NATIVE LANGUAGE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING.**

**Jalilov Olimjon Muhidinovich.**

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**Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute**

**E-mail address: [jalilov@jspi.uz](mailto:jalilov@jspi.uz)**

**Abstract** – The Use of native language in Foreign Language Teaching – When the historical development of the foreign language teaching methods is studied, it is observed that the dispute over the use of the native language (L1) has kept its liveliness in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes. While some condemn the use of L1, others argue the monolingual approaches like the English-Only policy are not educational. However, with the evolution of English into a global language, foreign language teaching methods have been diversified and the ban on L1 use has come into question. In this study, classroom discourse analyses and research on teacher- student ideas about L1 use were outlined and when, how much and why L1 is used in the EFL classes were discussed.

**Keywords:** English-only policy, the monolingual approaches, native language use, classroom discourse analyzes, teacher-student views.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The use of mother tongue in foreign language teaching has been discussed in methodology for a long time. While Prodromou (as cited in Gabrielatos,

2001) likens the subject of the place of the mother tongue in the foreign language class to a skeleton that we hide in the closet and avoid talking about, Gabrielatos (2001) states that it is always a subject of contention. When the historical development of foreign language teaching methods is examined, it is seen that since the Reform Movement of the 1880s, it has been insisted that teaching techniques should not be based on the mother tongue in all language teaching methods, whether audio-lingual methods, communicative methods or The Silent Way (Cook, 1999). This monolingual approach is based on the following principles: (i) “learning of a second language should model native language learning through exposure to maximum input”; (ii) “successful learning requires separation and separation of mother tongue and target language”; (iii) “the importance of target language should be shown to students by using it continuously” (Cook; cited by Miles, 2004, p. 10).

According to Auerbach (1993), such monolingual approaches are political, not educational; because by operating ideological control mechanisms through language policy, English was turned into a key component in the spread of British neocolonialism. The following five principles that emerged from the conference convened at Makerere University (Uganda) in 1961 for the sharing and dissemination of expertise in teaching English between so-called developed and developing countries have been the unofficial but undisputed accepted doctrine that underlies most English teaching work: “English is best taught as a monolingual; the best English teacher is a native speaker; The sooner and more English is taught, the better results will be achieved, and if other languages are used more, the standards of English will decrease” (Phillipson; cited in Auerbach, 1993, p. 14). Thus, in the English Only movement, which Phillipson evaluated within the scope of linguistic colonialism, the other two elements of the trivet were English teachers selected from among native speakers and monolingual textbooks. Undoubtedly, the blind acceptance of monolingualism

has worked best for native speakers: this dogma has not only allowed them to teach English all over the world without having to learn other languages; It has made a worldwide audience a huge export market by making the textbooks produced in one language cheap for multilingual foreign language classes (Swan; cited by Barker, 2003; Buckmaster, 2000; Weschler, 1997). But in the 20th century, the US and UK monopoly of teaching English is on the way to being broken by changes in the population of English speakers: in a multilingual world, there are thousands of millions of speakers of English as a second or foreign language, so native speakers are in the minority and are no longer in a few specific countries or countries. English, which does not belong to the culture, is globalized with different dialects such as European English [Euro-English] and East Asian English [East Asian English] and sub-dialect groups such as German/Korean/Chinese English (Buckmaster, 2000; Jenkins, 2005; Shepherd, 2008). As a result of this demographic diversification, English has now become the common language of communication [English as a Lingua Franca – ELF] for those who have different mother tongues but do not speak English as their mother tongue. Since English as a foreign language [EFL] speakers use English to communicate with native speakers, ELFs [The "Elves"] use their English to communicate with non-native speakers such as themselves, so they do not have to worry about mingling with native speakers and speaking and It is also native speakers who have to adjust their listening styles according to non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2005). The substitution of F and L in EFL, in addition to forming the acronym ELF, also symbolizes the conceptual and practical contrasts between English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF): since the common language of communication has no native speakers, learners they also do not have native speaker goals that they would like (Jenkins, 2005). In this context, it has become important to develop an "active-speaker-like" language competence, not a native-speaker-like,

considering the "desire to bring learners to the level of native speakers, objectionable, unnecessary and impossible". (Rinvolutri, 2008). Thus, with the methodological practices such as the English Only movement imposed by core countries such as the USA and England, the mother tongue ban began to be questioned: "Why should the minority of native speakers who speak only one language dictate how to teach English"; "... times have changed and now there are two opposing camps" (Buckmaster, 2000, p. 1). The purpose of this study is not to discuss the necessity of mother tongue in foreign language teaching. "No matter what the teachers say or do, there is no doubt that students will use their mother tongue in the classroom" (Harmer, 2001, p. 132). In fact, the mother tongue is used secretly and haphazardly by teachers, so it may not be used well (Prodromou, 2002, p. 5). The real question is "...whether we should stop using the mother tongue" (Harmer, 2001, p. 132). For this reason, the following questions were sought by scanning the literature: (i) "When and how much is the mother tongue used in the foreign language class?" (ii) "What are the views of teachers and students on the use of mother tongue?"

### **Classroom Discourse Analyzes on Native Language Usage**

"Should we stop using the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom?" parallel to the question "Do you believe that English as a second language (ESL) learners should be allowed to use their mother tongue in the classroom?" The question was posed by Auerbach (1993, p. 14) at a TESOL conference and it was observed that only 20% of the participants gave a definite "yes" answer and 30% gave a definite "no" answer. Stating that this question cannot be answered without more information, Polio (1994) argued that Auerbach's views supporting mother tongue use should not be generalized to English as a foreign language (EFL) classes where the input in the target language is already limited, and that teachers stray from the English only policy and delay the development of their students. Auerbach (1994), who accepts that

the context determines when the use of the mother tongue will be productive or not, on the other hand, stated that the exclusion of the mother tongue is not a wise target in the conditions where English is taught as a foreign language, and instead of fearing that the teachers will abuse the mother tongue permission, they evaluate the mother tongue use selectively by evaluating the conditions they are in. stated that it is necessary to rely on their ability to integrate with teaching. Therefore, before (negating) the question regarding the use of mother tongue in foreign language teaching, it is useful to review the findings obtained from the classroom discourse analyzes describing when and how much the mother tongue is used.

Duff and Polio (1990), who complained about the scarcity of data showing what actually happened despite the general opinion to increase the target language input in foreign language classes, obtained the following results by examining the observation and sound recordings of 13 different languages typologically in classroom discourse samples: while the average is 67.9%, the median is 79%, the lowest target language use is 10% and the highest is 100%. In addition, according to the results of the student survey in the study, 71-100% of each class were satisfied with the amount of mother tongue in the lesson, and 9-18% of the students in the three classes where the target language is spoken the most (Duff & Polio, 1990). In another study by Polio and Duff (1994), in which the classroom discourse sample and interview records of six teachers included in this research were examined, teachers were unaware of how, when and to what extent they actually used the mother tongue in the classroom; when they have difficulty in understanding, it has been observed that they lack strategies such as rephrasing and modified speech; In the classrooms where the differences between the target language and the mother tongue are great, it was understood that the teachers avoided teaching grammar in the target language and tried to alleviate the pressure on the students who had to pass the common

exams in which grammatical structures were asked. found to be useful. These early studies investigating the rate and timing of the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom focused on the functions of the mother tongue as a "crutch" or "lubricant", in the words of Prodromou (2002, p. 5). As can be seen in the following researches, the mother tongue has been the preferred language in creating classroom discourse, especially since it helps the lesson to be successful when there is a lack of strategy, and it saves time by providing the flow of the lesson when there is a difficulty in understanding. Mee-ling's (1996) research, which used diaries of four trainee teachers, audio recordings and interviews, drew attention to compensatory uses of the mother tongue: Since the demonstration technique requires more attention and cooperation of the students; When they wanted to get quick and effective results, wasted time with ineffective teaching and question techniques, and could not resist the pressure of students who caused panic with their incomprehensible eyes, trainee teachers saw the mother tongue as a survival strategy because it was easier and more effective than other methods. When Gearon (cited in Turnbull & Arnett, 2002) also examined the code-switching behaviors in the discourse produced by six secondary school French teachers using Myers-Scotton's Mother Tongue-Frame model [The Matrix Language-Frame]; determined that four of them knew the students' mother tongue (English) as the dominant language and were not aware of how many language exchange activities they were involved in; On the other hand, teachers also reported that they used the mother tongue for help, due to the confused expressions on the faces of their students. In the same year, Macaro (as cited in Turnbull & Arnett, 2002), as a result of classroom observations he made to investigate the use of target language and mother tongue among experienced, novice and trainee teachers at secondary level in England and Wales, found that teachers gave instructions and explained the most frequent lesson activities. stated that they used the mother tongue to provide feedback and to control

translation and understanding. Similarly, Arnett (as cited in Turnbull & Arnett, 2002) in his study of how a ninth grade French teacher met the needs of his students with learning difficulties found that "explanatory mother tongue use" was the most common input modification strategy: In 44.9% of the departments where the main language of instruction is French, the teacher used the students' mother tongue to clarify difficult topics such as grammar concepts and foreign words in the target language. In these studies, which examine the phenomenon of language change in the foreign language class, the usefulness of the mother tongue in areas such as executing the administrative tasks, correcting mistakes, removing ambiguities and checking understanding is described. However, the relationship between the language change rate of the teacher and the amount of mother tongue use by the students has been another research topic. In the first of two consecutive quantitative studies, Macaro (2001) found that the language switching rate seen in six trainee teachers who underwent 36 weeks of training, on average, did not exceed 4.8% of the whole lesson time and only 6.9% of the entire speaking time. . In addition, it was determined that there was no significant relationship between the teacher and the students' mother tongue use in terms of quantity, and it was concluded that the teacher's language change was not related to the amount of speech made by the students in the target language or mother tongue (Macaro, 2001). Although two experienced teachers (both native speakers) participated in the study of Macaro and Mutton (as cited in Macaro, 2005), similar results were obtained: 5.5% of the interaction time and the entire course duration.

These rates, which were determined as 5%, are far below the estimation of Chaudron (as cited in Macaro, 2001), who stated that the mother tongue use of teachers is around 30%; because the analysis of transcripts shows that the communicative content of a mother tongue utterance is transmitted in a much shorter time than the long sequences seen in the interactions in the target

language in which input substitution and repetition techniques are used (Macaro, 2001). In other words, teachers allocate more discourse space for the target language by saying a lot in a short time through the mother tongue (Macaro, 2005). In that case; minimizing language switching is an imperative of the National Curriculum for Modern Languages in England and Wales (Macaro, 2001). Examining the language choices made by seven native speakers who teach Japanese, Korean, German, and French in secondary schools in New Zealand, Kim and Elder (2005), as in the study of Polio and Duff in 1990, showed how the target language use in their lessons is despite the native speaker proficiency of teachers. They found that it increased both quantitatively and qualitatively and therefore limited perceptual input and meaningful communication power for students. In another interlingual study, in which the teacher's speech analysis was conducted, it was determined that the target language is not always the preferred language in the target language classes and that the language preferred by the students to use is the language that enables them to adapt to the instructional focus of the teacher at a certain stage in the developing speech sequence: mother tongue to speak; they can use the target language to make them speak in the mother tongue or the target language to make them speak in the target language. As a result, neither the fact that the teacher is a native speaker has increased the quality of the target language used by the students, nor the language change of the non-native speaker teacher has increased the amount of the mother tongue used by the students. In the choice of students and teachers to change language, the instructional goal in the lesson and the motivation to provide understanding have been decisive.

As can be seen from the analyzes of the classroom discourse, teachers adopt one of the following three theoretical views when it comes to using the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom: (i) the virtual use view, in which the foreign language class is assumed to be a target language country and

therefore the mother tongue is completely excluded, which is thought to have no educational value. [the virtual position]; (ii) considering that the use of mother tongue has no instructional value; the maximal position, where teachers have to apply to the mother tongue because perfect teaching and learning conditions cannot be provided; (iii) the optimal position, which explores in which situations the use of the mother tongue is appropriate, believing that some aspects of learning can be strengthened by the use of the mother tongue (Macaro, 2001).

### **Teacher-Student Views on Native Language Usage.**

While determining how much target language/mother tongue is used in the foreign language class and for what purpose the teachers change languages, another dimension of the problem, what the teachers and students think about the use of mother tongue, was investigated by using survey and interview techniques. In this context, the results of the first studies we examined show parallelism with the use of the mother tongue, which is described by discourse solutions. In other words, the times when teachers find it necessary and appropriate to use the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom overlap.

Another question sought to be answered in these studies, which compile the views of teachers and students on the place of mother tongue in the foreign language classroom, is whether the opinions of students at different levels about the use of mother tongue will change. However, when the areas where the teacher should benefit from the use of mother tongue are asked, the differences of opinion between the levels increase. For example, 31% of beginners and only 7% of intermediate students approve of grammar explanations in the mother tongue, while all advanced students reject this suggestion; On the other hand, when it comes to explaining the grammatical differences of mother tongue and target language using the mother tongue, the approval of 27% of the beginners, 4% of the intermediate level and 6% of the advanced students was obtained (Prodromou, 2000).

Another study in which students' opinions on the use of mother tongue in classrooms where English is taught as a foreign language is the example of Croatian, which came after Japanese in 2007. As a result of Dujmović's (2007) research conducted on 100 freshmen middle and upper-intermediate level students, all of the students stated that the mother tongue should be used in the course, while 97% stated that the mother tongue is necessary for explaining complex grammar topics and 90% for defining new words. defended. When asked why it is necessary to use Croatian, 81% said that using the mother tongue was more effective in understanding difficult concepts, 70% said they understood new words more easily, and 43% stated that their feelings of loss decreased. In addition, about the time to be allocated to Croatian in English class, 70% of the students spend 10-50% of the lesson; 27% said that they found 60-90% of this time appropriate (Dujmović, 2007).

Students also strongly support the teacher's explanations on important issues using only the mother tongue, as it strengthens their understanding: 34 out of 38 students stated that their teachers were more willing to learn a foreign language due to the appropriate language use, while they stated that their interest in learning a foreign language was lost because of the teachers who used only the target language in the previous year ( Kang, 2008). Therefore, in this study, it was determined that the views of the students on the use of language by the teacher overlapped with the motivations of the teachers.

Based on these studies, it can be said that the views of teachers and students agree on the following common denominator: the use of mother tongue is necessary and positive for the quantity and quality of learning, even if the institutional policy prescribes the opposite. Therefore, as stated by Prodromou (2002, p. 5), “our strategic aim will be to maintain the highest level of interaction in the target language, and the mother tongue will undertake the task of enriching the quality and quantity of in-class interaction”.

## CONCLUSION

There are two immediate conclusions that can be drawn from these studies, which investigate when and how much the mother tongue is used in foreign language classes, and what teachers and students think about mother tongue use: (i) Whether the teacher is a native speaker or not; whether the student is at the beginner or advanced level, and whether the use of the mother tongue is prohibited or freed according to the teaching policy; the existence of mother tongue use in foreign language teaching is undeniable; (ii) Both the teacher and the student are aware of the severe need for mother tongue use, especially in situations where learning-teaching difficulties such as providing understanding, learning fast vocabulary and developing difficult concepts are present. Therefore, the exclusion of mother tongue use from foreign language teaching is the product of circles that advocate the superiority of native speakers and direct methods, and does not reflect the reality of the foreign language classroom.

Because the global mobility of native speakers, who are monolingual teachers, has caused students to see their mother tongue knowledge and use as an obstacle; It has also had disastrous consequences for non-native speakers worldwide: although this misguided dogmatic practice in English teaching has prevented bilingual teachers from accessing a powerful tool – their students' mother tongue and culture – the stigma of mother tongue in foreign language teaching is now being questioned (Prodromou, 2002). In the personal prefaces of their works named "Using the mother tongue", which they wrote in order to relieve the teachers who use the mother tongue secretly from the sense of guilt and to show the ways of using the mother tongue as a living and vital resource for the students, the mother tongue is "the womb where the second language is born" and While Rinvolutri (2002, p. 4), who described his foreign language studies as the "semantic basis" in his adolescence, could not understand how he managed to exclude his real experience as a language learner all these years as a

language teacher, Deller (2002, p. 3) He expressed the indispensability and inevitability of the use of mother tongue as follows: “Ultimately, students bring [mother tongue] with them to our classrooms and that's why [mother tongue] cannot be ignored. [Mother tongue] will always be in their heads; then why not [mother tongue] not come out of our mouths if it will encourage and support understanding and learning”.

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