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The Use of First Language in Second/Foreign Language Classes

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Abstract

This paper presents a synthesis of theoretical and empirical literature to re-evaluate the pedagogical utility of the first language (L1) in second/foreign language (L2) acquisition. While maximizing L2 exposure remains a foundational principle in instruction, traditional views that treat any native language use as an impediment are increasingly challenged. Recent scholarly consensus indicates that strategic, judicious integration of the L1 yields significant cognitive and emotional advantages. Specifically, the L1 functions as a vital mediational resource, helping lower-proficiency learners connect new vocabulary in the target language (L2) to their pre-existing conceptual frameworks. Furthermore, by facilitating the execution of complex cognitive tasks, L1 scaffolding helps mitigate cognitive overload and acts as an affective strategy to lower learner anxiety. In conclusion, this paper highlights that a balanced and principled use of the L1 does not hinder L2 immersion; rather, it serves as an essential scaffolding mechanism that enhances the overall process of second language acquisition. However, both L2 teachers and students should be cautious about over-reliance on the L1 in the classroom.

Keywords: Second/Foreign Language, Pedagogy, Implications

استخدام اللغة الأم في فصول اللغة الثانية/الأجنبية

رمضان محمد الصادق أحمد، حسونة بشير كريم، هاجر رمضان احمد

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ملخص البحث

تُقدّم هذه الورقة البحثية توليفاً للأدبيات النظرية والتجريبية لإعادة تقييم الفائدة التربوية للغة الأم في اكتساب اللغة الثانية. فبينما يظلّ تعظيم التعرّض للغة الثانية مبدأً أساسياً في التعليم، فإنّ الآراء التقليدية التي تعدّ استخدام اللغة الأم عائقاً يواجه تحديات متزايدة. يشير الإجماع العلمي الحديث إلى أنّ الدمج الاستراتيجي المدروس للغة الأم يحقق مزايا معرفية كبيرة. فعلى وجه التحديد، تعمل اللغة الأم بوصفها مورداً ووسيطاً حيويّاً، يساعد المتعلمين ذوي الكفاءة الأقل على ربط المفردات الجديدة في اللغة المستهدفة بأطرهم المفاهيمية السابقة. إضافة إلى ذلك، تسهيل تنفيذ المهام المعرفية المعقدة، يساعد دعم اللغة الأم على تخفيف العبء المعرفي، ويعمل كاستراتيجية للتقليل من قلق المتعلمين. وفي الختام، تبرز هذه الورقة البحثية أنّ الاستخدام المتعمد والمدروس للغة الأم لا يُعيق الاندماج في اللغة الثانية، بل يشكل آلية دعم أساسية تحسن عملية اكتساب اللغة الثانية، ومع ذلك، يجب على كل من معلمي اللغة الثانية والطلاب توخي الحذر بشأن الاعتماد المفرط على اللغة الأم في الفصول الدراسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الثانية/الأجنبية، علم التربية (أو البيداغوجيا)، الدلالات.

Introduction

The role of learners' first language L1 in second and foreign language classrooms has long been a subject of debate in language education. While many teaching approaches advocate maximizing exposure to the target language TL, classroom-based research consistently demonstrates that teachers and learners frequently engage in code-switching between the L1 and the TL (Chang, 2009; Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018). This widespread practice has prompted scholars to reconsider the pedagogical value of the L1 rather than viewing it solely as an obstacle to language acquisition.

Researchers such as Cook (2001), Altun (2021), and Shahidan & Syahreena (2023) argue that although excessive reliance on the L1 should be avoided, its strategic and purposeful use can facilitate language learning in specific instructional contexts.

A growing body of research suggests that the judicious use of the L1 can support learners' comprehension, participation, and overall language development. For instance, L2 teachers may employ the L1 to explain intricate grammatical concepts, clarify task instructions, assess learners' understanding, or elicit nuanced meanings that may be difficult to convey exclusively through the TL. In such situations, the integration of the L1 serves as a form of pedagogical scaffolding that assists learners in completing cognitively demanding tasks and facilitates a smoother transition to greater use of the TL (Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Turnbull, 2001).

Empirical studies have provided substantial evidence regarding the benefits of L1 use in language learning. Villamil and de Guerrero (1996), for example, examined the interactions of Spanish-speaking university students during peer revision of English writing tasks and found that the L1 functioned as an important cognitive tool for text comprehension, vocabulary retrieval, content generation, task management, and collaborative dialogue. Similarly, Swain and Lapkin (2000) investigated the language choices of Grade 8 students enrolled in a French immersion programme and concluded that the use of the L1 played a crucial role in facilitating communication, negotiating meaning, and successfully completing instructional tasks. Likewise, Hsieh (2000) reported that translation activities contributed positively to English reading comprehension, vocabulary development, reading strategies, and cultural awareness among college learners. Yi-chun and Yi-ching (2010) further emphasized the importance of incorporating learners' L1 into classroom instruction as a means of supporting language development.

Despite these documented benefits, language teaching policies in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context have traditionally emphasized maximizing exposure to English and minimizing reliance on the L1. This tendency can also be observed

in Libya and other EFL settings, where English language teaching has often been influenced by monolingual assumptions that regard extensive use of the target language as the most effective route to language acquisition (Lu et al., 2004; Hussain, 2023; Abdulah, 2025). Consequently, some teachers may feel reluctant to employ the L1 in their classrooms for fear that doing so might hinder language learning. However, contemporary research increasingly suggests that when used selectively and purposefully, the L1 can function as a valuable pedagogical resource rather than an impediment to language development (Burdujan, 2021; Elmangoush, 2023).

Although considerable research has explored the role of the L1 in language learning, debate continues regarding the extent to which it should be incorporated into classroom instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This paper aimed to understanding by illuminating theoretical viewpoints and empirical evidence concerning the use of the L1 in second/foreign language education. In particular, it addresses three central issues: the rationale for using the L1 in language classrooms, the potential benefits of L1 use for language learning and teaching, and the methods through which the L1 can support language teachers in achieving teaching objectives and goals.

The Rationale for Using the L1 in L2 Classrooms

The use of the L1 in L2 classrooms is frequently questioned by advocates of monolingual approaches such as the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, and Total Immersion programmes. Proponents of these approaches argue that extensive exposure to the target language is essential for successful language acquisition and that the use of the L1 may reduce valuable opportunities for meaningful TL input (Ketmane & Bourez, 2021; Vijayadasan & Tomy, 2020). From this perspective, maximizing L2 use is considered fundamental to developing learners' communicative competence.

Nevertheless, maximizing exposure to the target language does not necessarily imply the complete exclusion of the L1. As Turnbull (2001) notes, effective language teaching involves maximizing

meaningful target language use while recognizing situations in which limited use of the L1 may facilitate learning. Similarly, Macaro (2005) argues that strict avoidance of the L1 often results in excessive reliance on input-modification strategies such as repetition, reduced speech rate, simplified vocabulary, and syntactic simplification. Although such strategies may enhance comprehension, they can also reduce the authenticity of classroom discourse and limit learners' exposure to richer vocabulary and more complex linguistic structures.

Macaro (2005) further contends that input modification alone may not adequately support the acquisition of complex lexical items, expressions, and grammatical features. In some situations, a brief explanation in the learners' L1 may enable them to understand new language forms more efficiently than an extended target-language paraphrase. Consequently, strategic use of the L1 may increase the effectiveness of instruction without substantially reducing exposure to the target language.

The pedagogical value of the L1 has also been emphasized by scholars whose work is informed by sociocultural and interactionist theories of language learning. Anton and DiCamilla (1998) and Yi-chun and Yi-ching (2010) argue that the L1 functions as a significant cognitive resource that enables learners to regulate their thinking, solve problems, and achieve learning objectives. Similarly, Brooks and Donato (1994) demonstrate that the L1 facilitates negotiation of meaning and collaborative interaction during language-learning tasks. Zulfikar (2018) further observes that some degree of L1 use is often unavoidable in language classrooms, particularly in contexts where learners share a common linguistic background.

These perspectives are consistent with interactionist theories of second language acquisition, which emphasize that language learning emerges through meaningful interaction rather than exposure alone (Ellis, 1994). According to Long (1996), interaction promotes negotiation of meaning, encourages learners to produce output, and facilitates language development. From this viewpoint, strategic use of the L1 may enhance the quality of classroom interaction by making input more comprehensible and allowing

learners to focus on important linguistic features that might otherwise remain unnoticed (Van Lier, 1995; Zhou, 2024).

In addition to its cognitive benefits, the L1 may also contribute positively to learners' affective experiences. Research indicates that selective use of the L1 can reduce anxiety, increase learners' confidence, and create a more supportive classroom environment (Cook, 2001; Kang, 2008; Ahmad, 2022). Seng and Hashim (2006) found that learners with lower levels of proficiency often struggle to express themselves accurately and confidently when restricted to the target language. Similarly, Liao (2006) reported that exclusive reliance on the target language may discourage participation among learners who lack sufficient linguistic resources. Allowing limited use of the L1, however, can encourage greater participation, facilitate communication, and enable learners to express their ideas more effectively. Consequently, strategic use of the L1 may contribute to increased engagement and more meaningful classroom interaction.

The Positive Effects of L1 Use in Second/Foreign Language Learning

A common assumption among advocates of monolingual language teaching is that learners can achieve higher levels of proficiency when they think exclusively in the target language L2. According to this view, minimizing the use of the first language L1 reduces the likelihood of negative transfer and linguistic interference, thereby promoting more effective acquisition of the target language L2. However, research in second language acquisition suggests that learner errors cannot be attributed solely to interference from the first language. Studies have demonstrated that many errors arise from developmental processes that are characteristic of language learning itself rather than from L1 influence.

For example, Dulay and Burt (1973) investigated the sources of errors produced by Spanish-speaking children learning English and found that only a small proportion of errors resulted from L1 interference. Approximately 85% of the errors were developmental

in nature, whereas only 3% were attributable to transfer from the learners' L1. Similarly, Johnson and Newport (1994) argued that language learning difficulties cannot be explained solely by cross-linguistic interference. These findings challenge the assumption that the presence of the L1 necessarily hinders second language acquisition and suggest that concerns regarding L1 use in language classrooms may be overstated.

Beyond questioning the negative impact of L1 use, numerous studies have highlighted its pedagogical value in supporting language learning. Researchers such as Anton and DiCamilla (1998), Greggio and Gil (2007), and Kang (2008) have demonstrated that the L1 can function as an important cognitive, social, and instructional resource. In their study of Spanish-speaking adult learners engaged in English writing tasks, Anton and DiCamilla (1998) found that the L1 facilitated task completion by helping learners maintain engagement, develop problem-solving strategies, and manage complex linguistic demands. The researchers concluded that the L1 contributed to the creation of a collaborative learning environment in which students were able to support one another both cognitively and socially throughout the writing process.

The use of the L1 has also been shown to enhance learners' ability to generate and organize ideas during writing activities. Lally (2000) reported that students who planned their writing in their first language produced compositions that received higher scores for organization. Likewise, Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001) found that learners generated more ideas and demonstrated clearer thinking when they were allowed to use their L1 during the planning stages of writing. These findings suggest that the first language can serve as a valuable cognitive tool that enables learners to focus on content development while gradually transferring their ideas into the target language.

Research has further demonstrated the usefulness of the L1 in supporting oral communication and classroom interaction. Cipriani (2001), in a study of beginner-level language learners, observed that both teachers and students employed the L1 strategically to facilitate

oral participation. The teacher used the L1 to explain vocabulary, clarify task requirements, and encourage students to communicate in English, while learners relied on the L1 to sustain interaction and overcome communication difficulties. Similarly, Bergsleithner (2002) found that learners in a pre-intermediate EFL classroom used the L1 to negotiate meaning, discuss language forms, and express themselves more effectively during interactions with their teacher. The teacher also employed the L1 selectively to clarify grammatical concepts and support learners' understanding.

Additional evidence comes from collaborative learning contexts. Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) examined interactions among university ESL students engaged in joint writing tasks and reported that the use of the L1 enabled learners to discuss task requirements in greater depth, organize their compositions more effectively, and clarify unfamiliar vocabulary. The researchers concluded that strategic use of the L1 facilitated task completion and enhanced learners' ability to engage meaningfully with language-related problems.

The instructional value of the L1 has also been documented in classroom-based studies involving beginner language learners. Greggio and Gil (2007), for example, observed twelve English classes taught to Portuguese-speaking learners and found that the teacher employed the L1 to explain grammatical concepts, provide corrective feedback, and clarify lesson content. Students similarly used the L1 as a learning strategy to improve comprehension and participate more actively in classroom discussions. The researchers concluded that the L1 served as an important resource for facilitating classroom interaction and promoting language learning.

In addition to its cognitive and instructional functions, the L1 may provide important affective benefits. Liao (2006) identified three primary functions of L1 use among Taiwanese learners of English. First, learners employed the L1 as a memory strategy to facilitate the learning of vocabulary, idioms, grammatical structures, and sentence patterns. Second, the L1 helped reduce learning anxiety and increased motivation to learn English. Third, it served as a social strategy that enabled learners to ask questions, seek clarification,

and collaborate more effectively with peers. Similar findings were reported by Kang (2008), whose case study of a Korean EFL teacher revealed that the L1 was used for a range of pedagogical purposes, including explaining grammar, organizing classroom tasks, maintaining discipline, and administering assessments. Importantly, students responded positively to these practices, reporting that the selective use of the L1 enhanced their understanding and sustained their interest in learning English.

Taken together, these studies suggest that the first language can serve multiple pedagogical functions in second/foreign language classrooms. It can facilitate comprehension, support collaborative learning, enhance writing and speaking performance, reduce learner anxiety, and assist teachers in managing classroom activities more effectively. Nevertheless, the benefits of L1 use should not be interpreted as a justification for excessive reliance on the learners' native language. While scholars such as Cook (2001), Turnbull (2001), and Turnbull and Arnett (2002) acknowledge the pedagogical value of the L1, they also emphasize that its use should remain purposeful, limited, and complementary to meaningful exposure to the target language. As Wells (1999) cautions, overdependence on the L1 may reduce opportunities for authentic target-language interaction. Consequently, the most effective approach appears to be a balanced one in which the L1 is employed strategically to support learning while maintaining the central role of the target language in classroom communication.

Principled Use of the First Language in Foreign Language Classrooms

While research increasingly recognizes the pedagogical value of the first language (L1) in foreign language instruction, most scholars emphasize that its use should be principled, purposeful, and limited rather than unrestricted. The central issue is therefore not whether the L1 should be used, but how it can be integrated in ways that support rather than replace meaningful exposure to the target language (L2).

Cook (2001) proposes four key principles to guide teachers in making informed decisions regarding L1 use: efficiency, learning,

naturalness, and external relevance. The principle of efficiency suggests that the L1 can be employed when it provides a quicker and more effective means of conveying meaning, particularly when explaining abstract vocabulary or complex concepts. The principle of learning emphasizes that L1 explanations can facilitate learners' understanding of difficult grammatical structures and linguistic features. Naturalness refers to the role of the L1 in establishing rapport and maintaining authentic communication between teachers and students, especially when expressing empathy, encouragement, or concern. Finally, external relevance highlights the practical value of bilingual competence, as learners often need to operate in both languages in academic, professional, and social contexts. Together, these principles provide a framework for the strategic incorporation of the L1 into language teaching without undermining the primary role of the target language.

Research on classroom code-switching has identified several situations in which the use of the L1 may be pedagogically beneficial. Drawing on the work of Chang (2009), Edstrom (2006), Ferguson (2003), Macaro (2001), Tien (2004), and Turnbull and Arnett (2002), three broad functions of teacher code-switching can be identified: facilitating access to the curriculum, managing classroom activities, and fostering interpersonal relationships.

The first function involves facilitating learners' access to the curriculum. In this context, teachers may use the L1 to explain unfamiliar vocabulary, clarify grammatical concepts, discuss cultural issues, or ensure comprehension of complex academic content. Research suggests that learners' prior knowledge encoded in the L1 can serve as a valuable resource for understanding new concepts in the target language (Prince, 1996). For example, when introducing abstract or culturally specific concepts, a brief explanation in the L1 may be more efficient and less confusing than a lengthy explanation in the L2. Atkinson (1993) argues that language learning can be a frustrating experience, particularly for lower-proficiency learners, and that occasional use of the L1 can reduce confusion and facilitate comprehension. Similarly, Lee (2000) found that learners frequently rely on the L1 to verify

meanings, infer unfamiliar vocabulary, and support reading comprehension.

Nevertheless, researchers caution against excessive dependence on the L1 for vocabulary instruction. Harbord (1992) and Bozorgian and Fallahpour (2015) argue that L1 explanations should be reserved primarily for abstract, difficult, or potentially confusing lexical items. Simpler vocabulary and structures should generally be explained through the target language whenever possible in order to maximize learners' exposure to meaningful L2 input. Excessive reliance on the L1 for routine explanations may reduce opportunities for language practice and hinder the development of communicative competence.

The use of the L1 may also be particularly valuable in the teaching of grammar. Grammatical competence constitutes an essential component of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), yet grammatical explanations delivered exclusively in the target language can be difficult for lower-level learners to understand. Cook (1997, 2001) argues that because learners process linguistic information more efficiently in their first language, strategic use of the L1 can facilitate the understanding of complex grammatical structures. Similarly, Yi-chun and Yi-ching (2010) maintain that L1 explanations provide learners with an efficient means of analysing and understanding L2 forms.

Furthermore, contrastive analysis between the first and target languages can enhance learners' awareness of structural similarities and differences. Such comparisons may help learners avoid literal word-for-word translation and reduce instances of negative transfer. In this regard, Atkinson (1987) recommends introducing grammatical rules through brief L1 explanations before engaging learners in communicative L2 activities. Likewise, Chellappan (1991) suggests incorporating translation exercises after grammar instruction to reinforce learners' understanding of key linguistic features. When employed selectively, these strategies can strengthen grammatical awareness while maintaining meaningful engagement with the target language.

Another area in which the L1 may be useful is cultural instruction. Contemporary language education increasingly recognizes that language and culture are inseparable components of communicative competence. Although many cultural concepts can be introduced through visual materials, authentic texts, and target-language discussion, there are occasions when learners' misunderstandings or stereotypical beliefs require careful clarification. Edstrom (2006) argues that in such situations, the use of the L1 may help teachers address sensitive cultural issues more effectively and ensure that learners develop informed and non-judgmental perspectives toward other cultures. Particularly in classes with lower-proficiency learners, explanations provided in the L1 may facilitate deeper cultural understanding than explanations delivered solely through the target language.

The second major function of code-switching involves classroom management. Effective classroom instruction requires learners to understand task requirements clearly and participate successfully in learning activities. For relatively simple activities, instructions delivered in the target language can provide valuable opportunities for authentic communication. However, researchers such as Willis (1981), Weschler (1997), and Yi-chun and Yi-ching (2010) argue that limited use of the L1 may be justified when introducing complex tasks, especially for learners with lower levels of proficiency. In some cases, teachers may provide instructions in the target language and then verify comprehension by asking students to restate the instructions in their first language. This approach allows teachers to maintain target-language exposure while ensuring that learners fully understand the task.

The use of the L1 may also contribute to effective classroom discipline. Franklin (1990) reported that many teachers preferred to address behavioural issues in the learners' first language because it ensured immediate comprehension and conveyed the seriousness of the message. Although disciplinary interactions should not dominate classroom discourse, the strategic use of the L1 may enable teachers to manage classroom behaviour more efficiently and minimize disruptions to learning.

The third function of code-switching concerns the development of positive interpersonal relationships. Establishing rapport, trust, and a supportive classroom atmosphere are essential components of effective teaching. Edstrom (2006) argues that selective use of the L1 can help teachers express praise, encouragement, empathy, and humour in ways that learners perceive as more genuine and emotionally meaningful. Such interactions may be particularly important for learners who experience anxiety, frustration, or low confidence in the language classroom.

Research further indicates that the judicious use of the L1 can contribute to lowering learners' affective barriers and fostering a more positive learning environment. Studies by Ahmad (2022) and Algazo (2023) suggest that learners often feel more comfortable participating in classroom activities when teachers occasionally employ the L1 to provide clarification, encouragement, or emotional support. Consequently, strategic use of the L1 may strengthen teacher–student relationships, enhance classroom participation, and promote learner confidence.

Overall, the available evidence suggests that principled L1 use can support learning by facilitating comprehension, clarifying grammar, addressing cultural issues, managing classroom activities, and strengthening interpersonal relationships. However, these benefits do not justify unrestricted use of the first language. Rather, the most effective approach is one in which the L1 serves as a pedagogical tool that complements, rather than replaces, meaningful exposure to and communication in the target language. By employing the L1 selectively and purposefully, teachers can maximize its benefits while preserving the central role of the target language in classroom learning.

Pedagogical Implications: Achieving an Effective Balance Between L1 and L2

The conclusions derived from reviewing the literature suggest that the issue facing language teachers is not whether the first language (L1) should be used in second or foreign language classrooms, but rather how it should be used. Contemporary research increasingly supports a balanced and principled approach in which the L1

functions as a pedagogical resource that facilitates learning without diminishing meaningful exposure to the target language (L2). Within such a framework, the L1 serves as a supportive tool that assists learners in overcoming linguistic, cognitive, and affective barriers while preserving the central role of the target language in classroom communication.

One important pedagogical implication concerns cognitive and linguistic scaffolding. Strategic use of the L1 can facilitate learners' understanding of complex grammatical structures, abstract concepts, and unfamiliar vocabulary. Particularly among beginner and lower-intermediate learners, brief explanations in the L1 may accelerate comprehension and enable students to engage more successfully with communicative activities conducted in the target language. Rather than replacing L2 learning, the L1 can act as a bridge that helps learners connect existing knowledge with new linguistic forms.

A second implication relates to learners' affective needs. Research has consistently shown that selective use of the L1 can reduce anxiety, increase confidence, and encourage participation, particularly among learners with limited proficiency. When students understand classroom expectations and feel capable of expressing themselves, they are more likely to engage actively in language-learning activities. Consequently, the L1 may contribute to the creation of a supportive learning environment that promotes both linguistic development and learner motivation.

The L1 may also enhance instructional efficiency and classroom management. Teachers frequently face situations in which extended explanations in the target language consume valuable instructional time without necessarily improving understanding. In such cases, brief and purposeful use of the L1 may facilitate task comprehension, clarify procedural instructions, and minimize misunderstandings. This allows more classroom time to be devoted to meaningful interaction and practice in the target language.

The Use of First Language in Second/Foreign Language Classes

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TABLE 1. Characteristics of Strategic and Excessive L1 Use in L2 Classrooms

Dimension	Strategic L1 Use	Excessive L1 Use
Purpose	Supports specific learning objectives and facilitates comprehension.	Used routinely without clear pedagogical justification.
L2 Exposure	Maintains substantial exposure to the L2 while providing necessary support.	Significantly reduces opportunities for L2 input and interaction.
Learner Comprehension	Enhances understanding of difficult concepts and tasks.	Encourages reliance on translation rather than meaning-making.
Cognitive Development	Functions as temporary scaffolding that promotes higher-level learning.	May limit learners' willingness to process information through the L2.
Classroom Atmosphere	Reduces anxiety and promotes confidence and participation.	Creates comfort at the expense of communicative challenge.
Long-Term Language Development.	Facilitates progression toward greater L2 independence.	May slow the development of communicative competence and autonomy.

Despite these benefits, the use of the L1 must remain strategic and limited (see table 1). Excessive dependence on the first language L1 may reduce opportunities for exposure to the target language and discourage learners from developing communication strategies in the L2. Therefore, the L1 should function as temporary scaffolding that is gradually withdrawn as learners gain proficiency and confidence. The ultimate goal remains the development of learners' ability to communicate effectively in the target language.

Conclusion

The debate surrounding the role of the first language L1 in second and foreign language SL/FL education has shifted considerably over recent decades. Whereas earlier approaches often advocated the exclusion of the L1 from L2 classrooms, contemporary research

increasingly recognizes its potential as a valuable pedagogical resource. Evidence from theoretical and empirical studies suggests that carefully planned use of the L1 can support language learning by facilitating comprehension, promoting cognitive engagement, reducing learner anxiety, strengthening classroom interaction, and improving instructional efficiency.

However, this body of research does not support unrestricted use of the L1. Scholars such as Wells (1999), Swain and Lapkin (2000), and Cook (2001) consistently emphasize that the effectiveness of L1 use depends on its purpose, frequency, and context. The L1 should therefore serve as a complementary resource that assists learners in constructing target-language knowledge, rather than as a substitute for meaningful engagement with the L2.

Importantly, no single formula can determine the appropriate amount of L1 use in every classroom. Decisions regarding its use should be informed by learners' proficiency levels, instructional objectives, task complexity, and classroom context. For beginner and lower-intermediate learners, more frequent use of the L1 may be necessary to provide essential scaffolding and ensure comprehension. As learners become more proficient, however, reliance on the L1 should gradually decrease to maximize opportunities for communication and interaction in the target language.

Ultimately, the evidence suggests that the most effective language classrooms are neither strictly monolingual nor excessively bilingual. Rather, they are characterized by a principled and flexible use of both languages, in which the L1 serves as a strategic support for learning while the L2 remains the primary medium of communication and instruction. Viewed from this perspective, the learners' L1 should not be regarded as an obstacle to language learning but as a valuable resource that, when used judiciously, can contribute significantly to successful second language learning.

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The Use of First Language in Second/Foreign Language Classes

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The Use of First Language in Second/Foreign Language Classes

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